

Task Force Members:

I have been a police officer for the last 26 years, and I fully support the Second Amendment. However, I do believe that certain restrictions, changes to State Law, and gun owner responsibilities need to be achieved through our collaborative efforts.

Empirical data seems to indicate that gun bans do not reduce gun violence. Gun bans only punish the law abiding citizen, as our laws are meaningless words to criminals and those who have mental illness with violent tendencies. I believe our concentration should be a three prong approach to responsible firearms ownership.

The first approach should be training. Currently, to obtain a handgun permit and purchase a handgun, a certified training class focusing on firearms safety is required as part of the process. To obtain a hunting license, an approved DEEP Hunter's Education class, again focusing on firearms safety is required. Subsequently, I feel that we need to strengthen the training requirement for rifles and shotguns for those that do not have handgun permits or hunting licenses. If a purchaser does not have a pistol permit or a hunting license, there is merely a fourteen day waiting period and background check. This does not address safe firearms handling, including methods of safe storage in the home.

The second approach would be background checks for the purchase of all firearms including the secondary (private) sales of rifles and shotguns. Currently, in Connecticut there is no requirement for secondary sales of long guns as there is for handguns.

The third approach is responsible storage, especially for certain firearms. Many people question why anyone needs a high capacity semi-automatic firearm. Advocates of gun control call refer to these firearms "weapons of war," while the gun enthusiast call them "modern sporting rifles." Regardless of opinion, they are used for sporting competition, hunting, and self-protection. Many will also question why one requires magazine fed semi-automatic firearms for self-protection. If we look at crimes of violence that occur in one's home or place of business, many are perpetrated by multiple offenders with the most glaring example being the Cheshire home invasion murders. I feel that if a law abiding citizen owns these types of firearms, the weapons should be stored in a quality gun safe when in a residence and not under the immediate control of the owner.

Additionally, besides the gun control and responsible gun ownership aspects, I suggest that funding be made available to police departments for training in response to "active shooter" incidents and specialized equipment. Currently the soft body armor that an officer wears offers no protection against most rifle ammunition, regardless if the bullet is fired through a modern AR 15 type rifle or an antique single shot rifle. I would like to see funding allocated for police departments to purchase ballistic shields that will stop most rifle fire. Currently, State Contract pricing for such a ballistic shield that is 16 inches by 30 inches, and constructed of light-weight ballistic polyethylene, is about two thousand dollars. This ballistic shield is a portable device to be stored in the trunk of each police vehicle; furthermore, an officer can deploy the shield to cover his or her critical body areas to protect against high powered ammunition while encountering an armed subject.

Thank you for your time, and if I can be of any assistance please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

John D. Popik

Seymour, CT