

Dear A Safer Connecticut Task Force,

Like millions of other US citizens and thousands of Connecticut residents, I am a responsible gun owner. Firearms have been in our family as long as I can remember. Like my father, grandfather (US Navy Veteran and retired West Hartford peace officer), uncles, and cousins, I am an avid hunter, very much enjoy target shooting and do keep firearms, (including a military styled AR-15) for self-defense and protection of my family (you all remember the Petit family home invasion?). Being a responsible gun owner, I've received training, been fingerprinted, and have had a complete background check for a concealed carry permit.

I no longer live in Connecticut, but I am writing this for the the rest of my family who still live there and for the multitudes of law abiding firearm owners out there whose voices **deserve to be heard** as you move forward with your Gun Safety Task Force and Safety discussions.

With the emotional outburst from the Sandy Hook tragedy, law-abiding firearm owners and those who firmly believe in the Second Amendment have been demonized and made to feel like criminals by the media, members of our government rushing to pass restrictive legislation, on social media, and by anti-gun citizens who don't know the difference between an already banned military machine gun and a civilian semi-automatic rifle, and by those who think that no one needs to possess firearms or do not understand the real intent of the Second Amendment. It's not fair!

I acknowledge that any violence with firearms should not be tolerated within our society, however, I cannot see how passing more gun control laws or legislation, will have any impact on reducing or preventing violent crime. In fact, many viable studies show the contrary, that increases in gun control does not have any impact on reducing violent crime. Just look at Chicago and Washington D.C., for example. Even Connecticut with some of the strictest gun laws in the nation is sadly not immune from gun violence.

The simple fact is that criminals and mentally unstable people do not pay attention to laws, and that they will always find ways to get firearms (or other weapons) to commit crimes. The media rarely mentions the fact that Adam Lanza went to a Dick's Sporting Goods store in Danbury, Conn., a few days before the shooting to buy a firearm, but was turned down because he didn't want to undergo a background check or abide by the state's waiting period for gun sales. So in fact, the existing CT gun laws did and do work. So why do we need more restrictions on law abiding gun owners? We are not the ones committing the crimes. The failure here was totally with his mother and family for allowing a mentally unstable person to be in the vicinity of, and have any access to firearms and violent media. Why not instead pursue bi-partisan studies to find the real reasons behind the increase in mass murders and for ways to fix our broken mental health care system.

Today, I am asking that you to **OPPOSE any ban, bill, or piece of legislation that even remotely infringes on our Constitutional Rights to possess firearms. This includes; banning of any firearms or arbitrary magazine capacities, registrations of firearms or ammunition purchases, taxes on ammunition, public disclosures of licensed firearm owners names and addresses, or any firearm liability insurance requirements.** Many of these proposed laws and regulations **WILL NOT** keep us safer or reduce or prevent violent crime. They will only further restrict the rights law-abiding citizens.

I also ask that you do actively **SUPPORT laws that; increase penalties for criminal use of a firearm - and enforce them!, study the relationship between the use of psychotropic drugs, violent media, and mass violence, and help increase any security measures for our school system - including possible programs to arm teachers or other school staff and removing the "gun free" zone designations.**

I understand that this is a very complex issue and that there is heavy emotional action pushing for more laws from the anti-gun populace (and others with more political agendas) however, I ask that you look at the proposed legislation from the side of law-abiding, gun owning citizens who should not have their Second Amendment rights violated or restricted in any way. These inalienable rights really do help keep us free.

Thank you,

Joseph Hollinshead
former resident of West Hartford, CT