

January 28th, 2013

Co-Chairs and Members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group:

My name is Judah Thomas and I am one of the pastors at Faith Living Church in Plantsville, CT. I am greatly saddened by the loss of life at Sandy Hook Elementary School and I hope and pray that another tragedy like this does not happen. I understand that a variety of new gun control laws are being proposed, but I have serious doubts to the effectiveness of them. After reading through some of the proposals I do not see anything that would have prevented Adam Lanza from carrying out his deed. The only thing that I can think of that could have prevented this tragedy is if the school was not a gun-free zone and it allowed law-abiding citizens to carry concealed.

For example, just a few days before Sandy Hook a citizen carrying a concealed handgun in Clackamas Mall in Oregon witnessed a gunman open firing. This armed citizen drew his weapon but did not shoot. However, the gunman saw the weapon and turned his gun on himself and ended the rampage.

Only a few days after Sandy Hook a gunman in San Antonio opened fire at a movie theater. After injuring one person the gunman was shot by an off-duty deputy.

If either of these locations were "gun-free" zones or if there was not law-abiding citizens armed and willing to protect the lives around them we could be also mourning the loss of many more lives. The news did not broadcast these stories as widely because they weren't as tragic. But these brave heroes should be commended for taking matters into their own hands and saving many innocent lives.

Connecticut already boasts some of the most stringent laws in the country, and even those could not prevent a mass shooting. Many people seem to think that magazine capacity should be limited, but let me remind you that America already had the Federal Assault Weapons Ban from 1994 to 2004. During that time one of the most horrific school shootings occurred at Columbine.

In 2004 the US Department of Justice and the National Institute of Justice found that should the ban be renewed the effect on gun violence would be small perhaps even too small for measurement because assault weapons are rarely used in gun crimes. The University of Pennsylvania also concluded that there was no evidence that the assault weapons ban or the ban on magazines holding more than 10 rounds had reduced gun murders. Some studies have even claimed that gun violence actually increased.

Over the past 20 years violent crime in America has fallen close to 50% while the sale of guns has steadily climbed. The cities that have instead seen crime increase are Chicago and Washington DC which both do not allow the carry of handguns. Many people cite the crime statistics of the United Kingdom but thorough investigation shows that they have nearly double the violent crimes as US and although they don't have any many murders with guns their homicide rate is also double that of the US.

We all want a safe environment for our families and loved ones, but let us not do that by eroding our Constitution and further imposing laws that will only cripple law-abiding citizens.

In closing, my hearts and prayers are with the victims families and loved-ones, may God comfort them in this time of trouble.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judah Thomas