

I am a police officer, the leader of a large multi agency SWAT team and I teach response to active shooter to patrol officers. Almost all of the gun proposals I have seen since the Sandy Hook tragedy have been focused on the guns themselves and particular characteristics or magazines instead of being focused on the individual. I am here today to voice my strong opposition to these bills and to present you with some facts about mass shootings and some alternatives that I feel would be more effective.

The worst school shooting in American history was Virginia Tech where 33 people were killed. The murderer did not use an assault weapon or large magazines, he used 2 handguns, one with 10 round mag and one with a mix of 10 and 15 round magazines. During his murder spree he fired 174 rounds and reloaded his weapons 17 times, almost exactly 10 rounds per reload. The commission tasked with investigating the murders determined that a ban on magazines over 10 rounds would have had no effect what so ever on the crime.

At Columbine in 1999, while a Fed AWB was in effect, the two killers used a total of 4 guns, only one of which would be considered an Assault Weapon even by the newly proposed, much more strict definition, and that gun is already illegal in CT. The majority of the deaths and injures came from a 2 shot shotgun that the killer reloaded over 20 times during his crimes.

SB 122 proposed by Senator Meyer would ban the possession of any firearm that holds more than 1 round. Senator Meyer probably believes that this bill would stop mass shootings if it were to be adopted. A man named Charles Whitman, who in 1966 climbed a tower at the Univ. of Texas, and killed 14 people and wounded 32 would probably disagree, since he used exactly the one type of weapon this bill would allow, a single shot bolt action rifle.

How about a total ban on the possession of firearms? We can look to Chicago, which has arguably the strictest gun laws in the free world with a total ban on the possession of handguns since 1982 until it was ruled unconstitutional in 2010. From 1990 until 2012 Chicago averaged 652 murders per year, the highest murder rate in the nation.

You cannot solve this problem with additional gun control that focuses on the the firearms instead of the person.

Additional restrictions on firearms or magazines would have had no effect on what happened at Sandy Hook. Banning firearms serves only the criminal and it only hurts the law abiding citizen. Adam Lanza violated over 20 laws before he even got to Sandy Hook elementary. What makes people think he would care about more?

There have been bills proposed that would ban the possession of magazines over 10 rounds, possibly requiring the current owners to get rid of the magazines they legally own. There are literally millions of these magazines already legally owned in Connecticut. These magazines are personally owned by most police officers in the state for their own purposes outside of their duties. Laws like this would force officers to choose between getting rid of their rightful and legal property or becoming a criminal. Every officer I have spoken with about this has said that they will not get rid of their property as they feel such a law is unjust, as it specifically targets people who have done nothing wrong. My father retired from law enforcement after 35 years and his agency gave him his service weapon as a token of their appreciation. Do we really want to force people like him to make a choice between their property and becoming a criminal?

My suggestions are to look at the person instead of the gun. Make mental health evaluations part of the pistol permit application process and make information about people involuntarily committed by law enforcement or doctors available to the State Police weapons unit just as is done with Protective Orders. Most importantly, enforce the laws we currently have on the books to the full extent of the law and require severe mandatory minimums of people convicted of violent crimes. Thinking we can reduce gun crimes by changing the physical characteristics of firearms is like trying to reduce DUI related accidents by changing the physical characteristics by cars. We must look at the person and not the object. Thank you.

Kevin Fleming