

I am a retired Sergeant from the Vernon, CT Police Department with over 33 years of service. I was a full time Training Officer for 15 years and served 10 years with a regional SWAT Team, the last 6 as Team Leader. I was a CT POSTC certified instructor in firearms, shooting decisions, use of force, less lethal force options and numerous other subjects and was a lead instructor at the annual Capitol Region SWAT School. During my career I received many commendations and awards including Officer of the Year and the Medal of Valor. As you read this, please remember my background.

I taught Active Shooter Response to police officers for years and have studied many such incidents, including information not available to the public. The criminals who commit these crimes are cowards who target people they know to be defenseless. With rare exceptions, they don't barricade, don't take hostages and don't engage responding police officers; they commit suicide when they are aware that police are on the scene. Some people recoil in horror at the thought of armed police or security in schools. You need to know this: the only thing that stopped the Sandy Hook School incident, the only thing that EVER stops these incidents, is the intervention of the police or a legally armed person. When your deliberations are over, one fact will remain unchanged: one properly trained and equipped individual at Sandy Hook School, an armed police officer or security guard, could have ended this incident at the door. No innocent persons would have died and we would not be having this discussion. If you want to protect our schools, this is not only the MOST effective way; it is the ONLY effective way to do it.

The person responsible for these crimes, Adam Lanza, violated countless laws that day, none of which deterred him at all. Study after study in the US and other countries have concluded that increased regulation and banning of firearms does not deter violent crime. Criminals pay no attention whatsoever to gun laws. This is not only my conclusion but also that of the US Department of Justice in the following published studies:

- Killed in the Line of Duty: A Study of Selected Felonious Killings of Law Enforcement Officers, 1992
- In the Line of Fire: Violence Against Law Enforcement, A Study of Felonious Assaults on Law Enforcement Officers, 1997
- Violent Encounters: A Study of Felonious Assaults on Our Nation's Law Enforcement Officers, 2006.
- <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/january-2010/the-fbi2019s-national-law-enforcement-safety-initiative>

Firearms ownership is already one of the most heavily regulated activities in the country. Across the Federal and State justice systems we already have thousands of laws regulating firearms; laws which responsible citizens follow and criminals don't follow. Simply enacting more laws that will restrict law abiding gun owners and have no effect on criminals is not an answer.

The New York Times reported on 1-14-13 that although 80,000 firearms sales were denied in 2010 due to the applicant lying or providing inaccurate information on their background check form, only 44 of these people were prosecuted. This is outrageous and you should be taking action to make sure that persons committing these offenses are prosecuted.

People who obtain handgun permits in CT already go through a lengthy process of completing an approved safety course, including a written test and live fire test, completing a detailed application form, being fingerprinted and undergoing a background check. There are exceptions to everything, but in my experience the vast majority of these people are solid citizens who use firearms legally and responsibly.

I am an NRA certified firearms instructor and teach shooting at a CT facility. When I ask students what their interests are in shooting and what they want to get out of their lesson, almost invariably the answer includes home protection. Simply put, people are afraid of violent crime. They know they can't depend only on the police and they want protection. We do not need to look any further than the murder of a defenseless family in Connecticut's Dr. William Petit case in 2007 to understand why.

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/petit_family/index.html

Home invasion crimes are in the media almost every week. People are well aware that the police can't protect them from crimes like this. They also know that even if they are able to call the police they are on their own until the police arrive, which can be a long time. People in CT have not forgotten the case of Heather Messenger in 1998 in which the long police response time contributed to her death.

http://articles.courant.com/2001-02-18/news/0102202688_1_david-messenger-barracks-state-police

Please remember that average citizens like me don't have protection by the Secret Service, US Capitol Police, State Police Governor's Security Detail, State Capitol Police or private security details. We have to call our local law enforcement agency and our personal security is in our own hands until they arrive.

I agree that more must be done to prevent criminals and mentally ill persons from having access to firearms. I support the following:

Requiring a records check for all firearms sales including private sales.

Making mental health information part of this check through a national mental health registry that includes a provision for mandated reporting similar to such requirements for child abuse.

Restrictions on violent movies and video games.

Though firearms may be a part of these incidents, they are not the cause. If you have not done so, please read the book: [Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence](#)

“Authors Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and Gloria DeGaetano offer incontrovertible evidence, much of it based on recent major scientific studies and empirical research, that movies, TV, and video games are not just conditioning children to be violent--and unaware of the consequences of that violence--but are teaching the very mechanics of killing. Their book is a much-needed call to action for every parent, teacher, and citizen to help our children and stop the wave of killing and violence gripping America's youth. And, most important, it is a blueprint for us all on how that can be achieved.”

The influence that violent movies and video games can have on persons who subsequently engage in violent behavior is well known to Congress, having been the subject of past hearings that went largely unreported by the media. The media and the entertainment industry are essentially one and the same and they certainly are not going to reduce their profit by doing the right thing and ceasing to produce violent movies and video games, or even doing more to keep them away from children. Countless politicians across the country accept campaign contributions from these merchants of death, who are well aware of what they are doing. Why?

Many of the laws that have been proposed have no legitimate public safety benefit and are just punishment of legal gun owners. For example:

Publishing the names and addresses of permit holders or gun owners. It will alert criminals to where they can steal firearms and where they can commit crimes against defenseless victims. The end result will be more stolen, illegal weapons in the hands of criminals and more victims.

An ammunition surtax. Ammunition is already expensive and subject to state sales tax. Adding a huge tax will probably reduce, not increase revenue. With Connecticut's state finances being in the dismal condition that they are, is this really a result that you want? Do you really believe that a deranged person who is determined to commit mass murder would be deterred by having to pay a surtax on ammunition?

An instant background check for ammunition purchases. This simply will not work. If you're familiar with the present "instant" background check system for firearms purchases, as I am, you know that it is not instant and has lots of flaws. During busy sale periods the present system cannot handle the volume of requests.

Banning high capacity magazines. When I retired I was given my service pistol and its high capacity magazines as a gift for my dedicated service. During my law enforcement career I risked my life many times to protect our citizens while carrying that service pistol, and would do so again. Do you mean to tell me that MY high capacity magazines are now a THREAT to public safety? That is nothing short of an insult to my career and everything I stand for.

Limiting firearm purchases. Read the DOJ studies that I cited earlier. Criminals obtain their firearms by stealing them or buying them illegally on the street. Limiting legitimate purchases will not only reduce state sales tax income at a time when the state can least afford it, it will not keep firearms out of the hands of prohibited persons.

The fact of the matter is that firearms are inanimate objects incapable of making decisions or taking action on their own. The vast majority of legal gun owners are law abiding and responsible citizens. Simply putting more restrictions on firearms and law abiding citizens has never and will never prevent violent crime. Criminals pay no attention to gun laws. Prohibiting firearms or even certain type of firearms will only insure that criminals will still have them to commit crimes and law abiding citizens interested only in protecting themselves and their families will not have them, thus insuring only more victims of crime. I don't know how many people legally own semi-automatic rifles, legally own firearms or have pistol permits in CT, but I do know that the number of these people who committed crimes at Sandy Hook School on December 14th was ZERO.

Gun ownership is a fact of life and a constitutionally protected right in the United States. Law abiding citizens have a constitutional right to life, to keep and bear arms and to protect themselves and their loved ones.

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