

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thoughts about the debate of gun control in our State.

First, I believe that our government has a right and an obligation to protect the citizens of Connecticut. That is, all citizens not individual groups. As you begin your debate on gun control, please keep in mind that the only people that gun control will affect is law-abiding citizens. Criminals will continue to have access to weapons that will be used to rob, harm and kill people. The vast majority of firearms used in the commission of violent crimes are either unregistered guns that were purchased illegally or registered firearms stolen from law-abiding citizens. Law-abiding citizens like myself purchase firearms legally, register them with the State as required and maintain them and keep them in safe, locked locations. If you vote to take away our Second Amendment rights or to significantly limit these rights, it will have a negative impact upon the ability for law-abiding citizens to protect their family and property. If you look at states that have more liberal gun laws you actually have less violent crime than in those states that have stricter gun laws. If you look at the city of Chicago, IL, they have one of the strictest gun laws in the country yet they have one of the highest violent crime rates. This isn't to say that if law-abiding citizens maintain the right to carry firearms that crime rates will fall. What it does show however, is that criminals will still possess the means to commit these crimes even with stricter gun control and this puts the law-abiding public at a significant disadvantage.

Second, our society is always reactionary to specific situations because we are complacent with regard to preparing for a significant event. Let's look at the attack on Columbine High School in 1999. Would gun control have changed the outcome of that incident? Absolutely not, because their weapons were obtained illegally. What might have changed that outcome would have been improved security measures that are now in place in most school systems. Also, the strategy and tactics employed by police personnel at the time were to wait for specialized police officers (SWAT) in order to make entry. Had first arriving officers made entry upon arrival, more lives could have been saved. On April 16, 2007 a gunman went on a shooting rampage at Virginia Tech University. He was able to purchase his weapons legally. However, he should not have been able to due to an extensive history of mental illness. Gun control would not have changed this outcome. A thorough background check would have though. This is now required in Virginia. These incidents point to our public safety being at risk, not because of law-abiding citizens possessing firearms with 30-round magazines, but because the safety measures that were in place at the time were inadequate. We as a society need to look at our vulnerabilities and take steps to prepare for them. At one time not too long ago, I was one of these complacent naysayers. One of my employees kept telling me that "we need to be prepared." I maintained my position that it won't happen here, we're a small community. About a year ago, I relented and began preparing for a mass casualty shooting/terrorist event. The first thing we did was to train six of our members as tactical medics. This gave us the skills as EMT's to respond to a situation such as the Newtown tragedy.

This is what we all need to begin doing, preparing for the inevitable. Legislators can regulate firearms all day long but that will not stop criminals and the mentally ill from possessing firearms and using them to injure and kill. We need to look at strengthening our access and response to mental health care issues. This might have stopped Seung-Hui Cho at Virginia Tech, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris at Columbine High School and Adam Lanza in Newtown. Taking

away firearms and regulating how many rounds a magazine can hold will not change what will happen. Criminals will continue to find the weapons they need to carry out their crimes whether it is firearms, bombs or knives. The only way to protect our society is through education, planning and putting systems in place to protect people.

We have to stop responding on emotion and begin acting on knowledge. Emotional responses will not protect our residents. Responding with carefully thought out plans that put safety measures in place to protect people at places of mass gathering is the greatest single thing that we can do. If you look at the knowledge and technology that was employed following September 11, 2001 and the number of incidents that have been averted as a result of these efforts, it should prove that regulating weapons is not the answer.

There are other aspects to consider also. On September 11, 2001, we were attacked on our own soil. Since that time, countless other attacks have been averted. We have been very fortunate so far. Ultimately though, one of these attacks will be successful. When that happens, our citizens should be prepared to respond. Taking away our firearms and limiting our magazine capacity will put citizens' safety at risk. However, I don't believe our legislators are ready or willing to make this argument because it isn't popular. But, it needs to be considered. Also, those that ask why people need high capacity magazines never ask why people need expensive, gas-guzzling cars or why people need to drink alcohol. It isn't because of needs it is because we, as a society are free to make choices. As a free society, we should not be hindered in making choices as law-abiding citizens. All too often, when a life-changing event takes place, people react by enacting laws or regulations that only affect innocent people and not the class of people that should be targeted.

I hope that you will consider all facts and opportunities to provide a safer environment for our students and residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

L. Scott Andrews