

To our Legislators,

My name is Lisa Leibowitz. I live in Redding, CT with my husband and our two children, nine and 11 years old. Like most Americans, we have been deeply affected by the tragedy in Newtown on December 14th and the shooting of 20 innocent children and six adults. Of course, it has felt more personal for us than Aurora, or Columbine, or Virginia Tech, or the many others, because of our proximity to Newtown. And even more so because my children attend the same local day camp as one of the young victims and his older brother.

On Friday December 14th, my nine and 11 year old found out that someone went into an elementary school less than half an hour from where we live and shot 20 first graders. That it is possible that an elementary school might not always be a safe place. On the Monday after these shootings, shortly after being reassured by faculty and administration that they are indeed safe when they are at school, my children both spent an hour or so in "lockdown" - not a drill, but the real thing - after a suspicious person was reported near a local train station. My daughter in the sixth grade spent this time in the dark, hiding under her desk. She was told by her teacher how they would exit the building and where they would go. Many kids were crying. My son in his fourth grade classroom spent the time sitting in silence on the floor up against a wall in the dark. The windows were covered. One boy vomited, he was so afraid and anxious.

That same Monday after the shootings, my kids also found out that the little boy they knew from camp had been killed. After that, my son began to routinely ask me at bedtime questions about this boy's death and the impact it would have on his family. How many times had he been shot? Did it hurt him? If he was shot a lot of times, did he die right away? And would that hurt more or less? Would he go to Heaven?

These are questions *no* child should ever have to ask or wonder about. And even writing these words right now, it brings tears to my eyes and a pit to my stomach. So when I hear on the news, or see these youtube videos, or read these blogs by people who are talking about their right to bear arms and their freedoms being violated by those of us asking simply for some *common sense* gun regulation, *I* feel violated.

Why should they give up their rights because a few people don't follow the rules? Well first of all, no one's asking them to give up their rights, or their guns for that matter. We're talking about common sense regulation, *reasonable* regulation. But second, even if we were asking for them to give up those rights...why would they not? If it might save a child, why would they not? Wouldn't it be a sacrifice worth making? Well, apparently not.

On January 28th, I listened to four hours of astounding testimony during the Gun Violence Working Group legislation hearing, mostly from the pro-gun agenda. I heard attacks on government and law enforcement alike, blatant mistrust and insults. I heard one gun shop owner declare publicly that if any restrictions are placed on his gun ownership, if *any* legislation gets passed at all, he will become a criminal. I heard one

woman, a gun owner, talk about living in the woods and her dog being shot by another gun owner, and nobody doing anything about it. I'm not even sure where she was going with that, only that she wants, no *needs*, to keep all her guns, including her assault weapons. I heard one gentleman talk about a home intruder, actually a *potential* intruder, and having only an aluminum baseball bat as defense, and his declaration never to be in that position again. Is there not something between a baseball bat and an assault weapon with a large capacity magazine? No interim step or "happy medium"? And to justify, specifically, the need/use for an assault weapon with a large capacity magazine, one man told the story of a young man who had been attacked by seven men, and only managed to gun down two of them with his particular gun, so the remaining assailants continued to beat him. *If only* he had had an assault weapon with a large capacity magazine...

I don't buy any of it. Ultimately, what I heard on Monday night sounded like a lot of repetitive, senseless, and paranoid justification for a lust for control and power and, more importantly, to maintain the status quo - to resist *any and all* progress or change or compromise - in the name of "God-given rights".

Actually, other than sadness and despair, I was left with impotent frustration. It was like listening to my nine year old have a temper tantrum. He is totally without reason or the ability to compromise. He only wants one thing and anything less is an affront and an injustice. The only difference here is that my nine year old eventually moves through his tantrum (although it can take a while) and, in the end, he knows what's right.

I know that gun regulation isn't the whole solution here. I know we need to address the mental health system in this country. I have a masters degree in Social Work and am a Licensed Psychotherapist, and have worked in the system, so I know as well as anybody. And quite frankly, after hearing the level of paranoia, narcissism, and grandiosity coming from the pro-gun side the other night, I think we may need this reform even more than they are trying to make us believe.

But more than any of the oft repeated justifications I heard from the gun advocates on Monday night, was the ridiculous statement that they, the "law-abiding citizens", are being penalized for the actions of criminals. This could not be more false. On the contrary, we, also law-abiding citizens, are trying only to protect ourselves and our fellow citizens - our innocent children, even the gun owners - from gun violence. And we are only asking for compromise.

Please do all that you can to do what is right, to protect our children and *all* our citizens. Please ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines now.

Respectfully yours,

Lisa Leibowitz
Redding, CT

