

I would like to talk about one issue that I find particularly disturbing in this whole gun violence debate and that is the **war against the science of gun violence research**. How can our elected officials make good public policy if they don't have the data to help lead them?

Public health research on gun violence dried up more than a decade ago after the release of the gun violence studies from Dr. Arthur Kellerman and several other researchers who set out to study what they saw as the cost-benefit analyses of the dangers of keeping guns, particularly loaded guns, in the home. The findings were all strikingly similar. The risks of a tragedy in the home — a homicide or suicide — were actually increased if a gun was in the home. Kellerman found in his study that the number of gun owners or family members injured by their own gun seemed to greatly outnumber the number of intruders shot by the gun of a homeowner. According to the studies, a gun kept in the home was 43 times more likely to be involved in the death of a member of the household than to be used in self-defense. These studies were extremely threatening to the NRA and gun manufactures and they all but declared war on federally funded gun violence research and used their immense political power and influence to persuade Congress to restrict federal money to pay for such studies, which would in no doubt hurt their financial bottom line.

History has shown us that public health research is based on making things safer, not on taking them away. The United States has made historic progress in combating the epidemic of tobacco caused illness and death since the landmark 1964 Surgeon General's report on the health effects of smoking. An entire federal agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, was founded with the mission to understand and prevent deaths and injuries on our roads and highways. For nearly 50 years, this agency has worked to reduce death and injury. And it has succeeded. Over the last 20 years, other government funded public health research has made outstanding progress with reducing drownings in swimming pools, reducing fires in homes, as well as many other public health issues. And yet, with all of the information we have gathered through these studies, we've not banned cigarettes, automobiles, swimming pools, or matches and lighters.

Why can't we study gun violence? Why can't we find out more about the causes of gun violence? There are many questions to ask and many topics that need to be studied in order to see what would work, might work, and what would not work.

If our country is to make smart decisions and good policy to reduce the daily occurrence of gun violence, surely suppressing science is the wrong way to go. Funding for gun violence research should be a priority of the CT General Assembly as well as the U.S. Congress. I implore you and your colleagues to find the funds. They will be well spent.

Thank you.

Best Regards,

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