

To whom it may concern,

I am a lifelong resident of Sandy Hook who attended Sandy Hook Elementary School from 1968 through 1973. Other than my term of enlistment in the United States Marine Corps and U.S.M.C.R. from 1981 through 1988 I have always called Sandy Hook home. I am currently serving my community as an Educational Assistant and a part time teacher in the Newtown School System. I share this with you in hopes of describing the depth of my connection to my community and cannot begin to express the level of devastation that has been dealt to everything I hold dear. I make no claim to speak on behalf of the school system or the members of my community, but believe it is my duty to express my perspective on the firearms law issues. I would also welcome an opportunity to bring my message to your working group in person.

One Opinion on the Firearm Debate.

I emphatically support firearm law reform. I also oppose the proposed prohibitions on “assault weapons” and large capacity magazines, not because of an inalienable right to own those types of firearms, but that these laws have proven to be utterly ineffective in achieving their stated intentions. What has been conspicuously absent in this and most other discussions is any kind of objective examination of the efficacy of the assault weapons and magazine bans which were instituted nearly two decades ago. It is too easy to blame the NRA and other gun lobby organizations on the failure to renew those laws.

The truth is much more difficult to accept. The bans were unsuccessful and expired in ignominious irrelevance. I believe that the assault weapons laws of 1994 and surrounding controversy caused far, far more harm than good. Prior to then firearms in that category were a small subset of the overall civilian arsenal and thus low hanging political fruit. The ensuing national attention paid to them helped to elevate “Assault Weapons” into fetish objects imbued with power far beyond their mechanical capability. This resulted in a wave of thousands of citizens who would have never have otherwise thought to obtain such weapons, clamoring to purchase one for themselves before the government took them away. What happened to those weapons after the political firestorm burned out? Once the original purchasers lost interest in their possession, many of them were sold and resold, some at gun shows. Tragically, I believe that chicken came home to roost when five years later Columbine High became the first epicenter of our continuing national tragedy. I am filled with a sense of dread, knowing that we are now in the process of repeating this horrible mistake. Only this time the volume of weapons distributed may be in the tens of thousands, many to first time owners who have no clue about how to manage the responsibility of the firepower they have just brought into their households. Has anyone thought to ask these purchasers why they are seeking to obtain weapons? I believe many of the answers might be just as disturbing as the actions. What have we become when hundreds of thousands, if not millions of our fellow citizens have come to the conclusion that they may have more to fear from actions of our political representatives than criminals?

In order to remove these weapons from circulation we would have to do more than impinge upon the 2nd Amendment, we would have to tread upon the protections of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 9th Amendments, as well as Article II, Section 9, and Article III Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, plus numerous provisions of the Constitution of our own State of Connecticut. In short, we would have to burn our villages down in order to save them. So what then can we accomplish? Why is it that the screening process to adopt a kitten or puppy is more strenuous than to pass a background check to obtain a deadly weapon? Can we revisit our firearm seizure law

(Connecticut General Statute 29-38c) to add language which includes all members of a household rather than just the gun owner? Can we require health care professionals to become mandated reporters to the Department of Public Safety if they observe the psychopathological manifestations which nearly all of the perpetrators have had in common? Should that mandated reporting include when they prescribe the psychiatric medications which also appear to be a commonality?

To quote President Obama, whom I respect but disagree with on some of his contentions; “We must change.” To do nothing is unacceptable, and to commit ourselves to a course of action which has failed us in the past is also unacceptable. Calling for us to come together and unite as citizens in one breath, then setting neighbor against neighbor by damning and demonizing the pro-firearm segment of our population with the next is hypocrisy at its worst. Deriding the NRA, with its millions spent on lobbying for its influence on congress while ignoring the pharmaceutical industry with their billions spent, and the mass media industry with their incalculable influence is transparent folly at its most destructiveness. We must do what representative democracies do best. We must find a consensus which address the cause, rather than paper over the symptoms of this crisis, and we must do so without attacking one another. I too have taken the Sandy Hook Promise. I choose love, I choose to seek consensus but will not submit to an emotionally charged rush to judgment which will only serve to make this tragedy worse than it already is.

Marc Michaud
78 Narragansett Trail, Sandy Hook
(203) 270-8553