

Testimony to the Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety
Relevant to the Public Hearings on Gun Safety (January 28, 2013) and at Newtown High School (January 30, 2013)
by Margaret Sargent Dimmick, 2 Split Rock Rd, Newtown CT
(submitted to cga.ct.gov/asafierconnecticut on January 28, 2013)

My name is Margaret Dimmick and I live in Newtown. First, I would like to say that I totally support the testimony of Robert Hutchinson, one of my very concerned neighbors on Split Rock Road in Newtown who has a firm grasp of the issues at hand. It is my opinion that he quite accurately states the facts, and I agree with his opinions as well. I have personally experienced the annoyance from – and growing fear of – shooting in areas in close proximity to our property at 2 Split Rock Road. I called the police on one occasion a year ago or so to complain about long, intolerable sessions of rapid fire shooting on the weekends. The policewoman who came to the house said the party was located in the Oak Ridge residential development which is across the woods and diagonally behind our property as the crow flies. She would not reveal his identity to me and said that she would talk to him. While it does not seem to be as often, I continue to hear shooting on the weekends when I am around although I cannot truly ascertain from where it is coming.

I have been told in the past that Newtown has “farm law” and that people are allowed to have guns and shoot on their property. On several occasions it has been quite disconcerting when I am out walking my dog. As you might imagine, one could be fearful if bullets are flying close by. Are they shooting at some animal – a deer, rabbit, raccoon, turkey - or shooting in anger? Or shooting just to shoot? Who knows? When I hear these gunshots I scramble back to the house.

I have wondered if I am crazy to go outside and walk the streets without neon orange outdoor hunting gear to increase my visibility and hopefully protect myself from a random shooter who thinks the woods are his, are isolated and that a rogue bullet from his rifle would not likely ricochet off a tree or a fence, or even a metal plate on a telephone pole, much less hit someone? But, then again, how smart would anyone be to walk outside on their property or on the local streets when shooting is going on? Hmmm ... aren't there laws to protect us from this type of seemingly reckless activity?

My own concern and fears aside, I am OUTRAGED by the fact that this shooting is allowed on residential properties AT ALL. Who are these people? Are they “responsible” gun owners? If so it would seem to me that they would NOT be shooting for hours on end in an unregulated and unprotected back yard in a residential area. It would seem that a “responsible” gun owner would ONLY want to engage in rapid fire target shooting in a SAFE location, such as at a regulated and protected range where stray bullets could not get out. Or where, for example, discharging a magazine vertically to remove the last bullet from a magazine might not launch the bullet into the air, set up a trajectory and end up hitting a man on the roof of a home 1,750 feet across the woods into another neighborhood.

My personal experience and past complaints have occurred pre-Sandy Hook massacre. Since Sandy Hook, my concerns have understandably elevated. My heart aches for the parents and children who are no longer free to run and play in their yards, make forts, walk on trails through the woods off their back yards. What I consider a privilege of owning property, a rite of childhood.

I am also deeply concerned about their state of mental health. What have they been going through since 20 of their fellow schoolmates were gunned down at school, not to mention the teachers and school leader. How deeply traumatized and fearful these children must be. And, to top it off, we have gun owners who continue to shoot in their back yards, terrorizing neighbor's children with seemingly no concern for their feelings or what the town has collectively been through since this horrific tragedy.

One of the mothers on my street told me that her kids are so scared that they literally RUN inside the house upon return. They do not go outside to play. How sad is this? How cruel that our legislation is not protecting our children and their parents in lieu of protecting the rights of gun owners to continue what I consider BAD behavior with little concern for others.

It would be my hope that the upshot of all of this controversy would be to change the laws in the State and in Newtown to be more protective of its children, parents, adults to feel safe in their own back yards, free from interminable rapid fire shooting.