

To the Honorable Men and Women of the Gun Violence prevention working group,

Unfortunately I will be unable to attend the January 28th hearing and provide verbal testimony. However please consider the following as my written testimony:

I would like to share with you my thoughts on gun laws that intend only to restrict the rights of law-abiding citizens.

Please allow me, if you will, to put a human identity to this name that you see before you today. My name is Mark Adams and I am a proud American Citizen that believes in upholding the rights and privileges of all Americans regardless of their background or beliefs. When I was in school I was taught in our Social Studies courses the basis of the US constitution and its meaning including why and how it came into existence. I believe that one of the most important things to any democracy is an involved citizen who is willing to speak and act against any injustice.

I am also an Electrical Engineer that works productively to help serve the citizens of Connecticut by providing valuable engineering insight in my selected profession as a Protection and Control Engineer for power systems.

I am also a decorated Veteran of the Connecticut Army National Guard. In 2004 I became Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) of the year for my Battalion and I have received numerous other awards and commendations through my service to this great nation. I have been called to serve both my Country and the State several times during my previous military career. I responsibly carried my service rifle, an M16 A2 select fire semi-automatic / burst fire rifle, both overseas and in country. I was also a trained combat life-saver. One year, after I had just recently returned from an overseas tour, our unit was tasked with guarding the Millstone Nuclear Power Plant during Christmas and New Years and during that time I did in fact carry my rifle while performing my duty as a soldier.

I feel hurt by the actions of the mentally ill person that illegally stole a gun and harmed and killed all of those poor innocents at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Those children were surely, both physically and emotionally, incapable of performing, or even conceiving of such an evil act. I pray for both them and their families.

I am a concealed carry permit holder and I wish I had been there in the school on that fateful day so I could have stopped that sick boy from performing such a despicable act. Unfortunately, I was not and worse yet, every day I feel that I see more and more people that are lost and alone. Yet they really have no way to receive the care that they undoubtedly desperately need.

I have been doing a lot of soul searching and researching these past several weeks and I have decided several things regarding the recently proposed gun laws and alternative solutions to preventing tragedies like this in the future.

1) I implore you to allow police officers into our schools to protect our kids. I have read and heard some people state that if police officers are put in schools it would intimidate children. When I was in high school we had a police officer that would occasionally patrol our halls. Personally I was not disturbed by it. When I was growing up police officers were respected members of the community and I knew that the police officer was in the school to protect us. Others have stated that having police officers in schools would make the "ordinary activity of

students a crime." This is completely false because crime by definition cannot and should not be an ordinary activity.

Several states already have police officers in their schools called a School Resource Officer. This is a full time police officer that spends part time teaching or providing counseling services and part time patrolling the school and making sure there are no safety related hazards. I believe that this would be an excellent model to follow.

There is no monetary price that is too high to protect the life of a child. Money should not be an excuse to deny proper armed protection to the schools. Yes, I understand that the state has budgetary constraints, but in my opinion this is a literal cop out.

2) Every second counts. Something I learned when I was in the Army is that when faced with a hostile fire situation having one or two first responders mere seconds away means saving lives. A police officer or a concealed carry holder already on site could have saved lives.

Police officers mere moments away could have saved lives or prevented tragedy entirely. According to the reports I have read: In the case of Sandy Hook, the shooter had to shoot a gun in order to gain entry to the building. For any law enforcement officer or a concealed carry holder such as myself, a gunshot like this, especially in a gun free zone, is a red flag; law abiding citizens do not discharge a firearm unless there is a good reason.

In the case of Sandy Hook the police department was approximately 7 minutes away by driving. This is an eternity during a life-threatening crisis. There was no chance for them to effectively prevent the tragic loss of life that occurred although I am sure in my heart they wish that they could have done something..... anything.

Teachers must be allowed the ability to lawfully exercise the right to bear arms as written in both the Connecticut and US constitutions. "Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state" (Connecticut Constitution, Article I Section 15). Every law abiding teacher that wishes to do so should be able to protect their precious students by hunkering down and defending each individual classroom. In both combat and active shooter events, numbers count. The more opposition a criminal faces, the less likely they are to succeed. Criminals are stupid; however I firmly believe that most are not stupid enough to hit a hardened target. They always go for what they feel are the softest targets and easiest prey. Interviews with criminals have proven this fact.

Having both police officers and armed law-abiding citizens embedded in schools would help prevent horrible events like Sandy Hook in the future.

3.) You cannot punish those that obey the law in an attempt to prevent future tragedies. Unfortunately, there are far too many tools of destruction available. Terrible crimes have been committed using so many means and methods, and those who typically carry out these heinous acts, the criminals and the criminally insane, will always find a way to do harm. There has been too much legislation and talk of legislation about restricting the rights of citizens in the hope of

somehow preventing a crime that they have never committed. It flies in the face of the rule of law and goes against the ideals of freedom and liberty this country is supposed to stand for.

Punishing one group of citizens for an act that they had no involvement in is by its definition a form of collective punishment. This is simply not a political practice that the honorable people of Congress can be allowed to continue. Throughout our world's history, this general line of thinking led to terrible atrocities all committed in the name of safety and security, the economy, and religion that are meant to fix inherent societal problems when in fact they achieve nothing but the loss of rights to it's citizens.

Mental health is a huge issue in this country. People need to have the help and support available to help them overcome issues that may cause them to commit horrible acts. I am not a psychiatrist however it seems that prescription drugs alone are not good enough in all cases. It seems that this is especially true in the case of the disturbed individual that ended the lives of so many at Sandy Hook. Those that are not mentally fit and are a danger to themselves and others need to have a place to go in order to prevent them from causing harm to the rest of society. We need to improve the number and quality of the mental health facilities in the state of Connecticut so people such as this can get the help that they desperately need.

Legislative acts cannot stop evil. You need to create programs that teach proper behavior, citizenship, personal responsibility, and empower people to improve themselves. At the same time, there should be a focus on deterring crime through stricter adherence to existing laws and greater repercussions for repeat offenders.

4) Everything comes down to personal responsibility. If you see someone talking about, planning, or initiating an illegal act, you have a responsibility and duty as a citizen to do something about it. If all you are capable of doing is calling the police then that is what you do. If you have to hold back an armed madman trying to shoot people in a hallway then that is what you do.

When I got my pistol permit I had to make the tough choice and carefully consider whether I could handle this responsibility. After extensive introspection and talking with several friends and family members, the answer was yes. I have the right and duty to protect myself and the ones I love. The military always taught me that "you need to square yourself away before you square others away." This means that if you cannot take care of yourself, you cannot effectively take care of others.

Summary of actions:

In closing I leave you with this. In America gun ownership is a right. Legislation that impacts only law abiding citizens cannot stop the violence of criminals. By removing the rights of citizens you reduce both their liberty and independence - two of the very pillars this country was founded upon.

I implore you to implement better protection in schools. This terrible tragedy could have been prevented if the proper protection was in place to defend these poor children. We are in a different world now and more than ever it is absolutely critical that we do not diminish the rights of our citizens in order to try and stop a singular madman. We must protect our children's future at all costs. Too many tools can be deadly in the wrong hands and criminals, as has been proven

many times through history. Criminals will defy the law to obtain the goods they desire; whether it is drugs, guns, or even human trafficking victims. Only law-abiding citizens and law enforcement can help prevent these events in the future.

We need more effective mental health programs for those that are ill and in desperate need of such services.

We need better rehabilitation programs for both minors and first time violators of the law and stricter penalties for repeat offenders. It is simply unacceptable that a criminal can make repeat violations for the same offense or multiple different offenses.

Finally, while it may seem that certain gun laws should be passed with the auspices of preventing crime, it is not justified to take away the rights of a law abiding citizen. If a semi-automatic firearms ban, for example, is passed it will impact the millions of Americans of law abiding gun owners. Historically it has proven nearly impossible to stop illegal drugs and the same will be true of guns. Criminals will have them while law abiding citizens will be defenseless and at their mercy. There are too many historical instances to name where this has been the case.

Please take these insights into careful consideration when crafting any new legislation.

Thank you all for your time,

Mark Adams