

Matthew Malecot - Middletown, CT

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing you this letter today in the wake of the recent atrocities that haven taken place in Newtown. Since then, I have spoken with some who believe that stricter gun control legislation is the answer to our gun violence problem and to help ensure these types of tragedies do not happen again.

While I agree strongly with those well-intentioned goals, the proposals I have read from Senator Bye and others in the state legislature greatly concern me because they seem to be more of a hasty and emotional response to recent events rather than a well thought-out and effective package of reforms that address the real issues at hand. Aside from the Constitutional arguments against further restricting Connecticut's gun owner's rights, which are already some of the strictest in the country, I have many issues with the recently proposed legislation.

For one, I do not see how a 50% tax on ammunition and magazines will do anything except impose an unfair penalty on legal gun owners for the purpose of adding to the state treasury. Criminals do not care how much a box of bullets costs, if their intention is to commit a home invasion or a bank robbery than it is well worth the extra few dollars that a box of ammunition will cost. Such a tax would impose an unfair "sin tax" type of fine on legal gun owners who simply want to exercise their rights and protect their families. Ammunition is expensive already and people often buy in bulk to reduce the cost, as well as be prepared for any emergency. They are not stockpiling weapons and ammo for some malicious purpose, as some would like to imply.

Secondly, restricting the magazine size of all guns to only ten rounds puts very serious restrictions of the ability of legal gun owners to defend themselves in a life or death situation. Criminals will continue to have access not only to automatic and illegal weapons but the banned magazine sizes as well. The proposed magazine size limit will create a situation where only criminals have high capacity magazines, and put law-abiding citizens at a severe disadvantage if they were to need their gun to defend themselves. Reload time is inconsequential for a criminal shooting unarmed civilians, but can be the difference between life and death for a law-abiding person defend themselves against a criminal with a larger magazine or multiple guns. **Most people, like myself, who want to carry a firearm concealed for personal protection in dangerous areas are logistically not going to carry more than one or two additional magazines, at most. The magazine restrictions being proposed put legal gun owners at a serious disadvantage in any self-defense situation.**

Thirdly, I currently own both a 9mm rifle and a pump action shotgun, which I keep at my home in Middletown for self-defense and enjoy target shooting (my pistol application is in processing, which takes several months and costs about \$300, by the way). If a permit were required to purchase ammunition for these weapons you would be effectively banning any gun ownership without a permit, because it would be impossible to buy the ammunition. Long gun owners such as myself were already subject to a waiting period and a background check at the time of purchase, and carrying the firearms loaded is already illegal in the state. Further requiring

a permit for these weapons is a burden to firearms owners and sellers and is an ineffective use of very limited state resources.

I would also like to point out that over 75% of all gun crime in this country is committed by criminals and gangs, already barred from owning firearms, using small caliber handguns which they have obtained through already illegal means. Although a tragedy such as a school shooting is tragic, we should work to come up with reasonable solutions which will have a real impact, statistically, on the most people as possible and make our communities safer.

While gun violence and violence in general is a very serious issue, I implore you to consider the consequences that the legislation proposed by the senate will have for the legal, responsible gun owners in our state. While an "assault weapons" ban may be politically popular, these guns are used in only a tiny percentage of gun violence. Adam Lanza and others like him would have been very capable or doing as much or more damage using a handgun with multiple magazines, or a shotgun, or a homemade bomb. Consider the 168 people, including 19 children, killed by Timothy McVeigh without a single firearm. Or consider the Virginia Tech shooter who fired nearly 200 rounds using handguns and 10 round magazines. The fact is that criminals intending to murder innocent people are not going to be stopped by the law.

Furthermore, the very classification of certain semi-automatic rifles as "assault rifles" falsely implies that they are somehow more dangerous than other firearms, or more capable of murdering innocent children than other guns. The fact of the matter is that all guns be used to kill people if they get into the wrong hands, but are absolutely essential to the preservation of our personal safety and our country.

The weapons which some propose to ban are not the largest, not the most lethal, not the most common, but instead are the scapegoat and starting point for those who would like to enact much stricter or even complete bans on private firearms ownership. The people with such an agenda use emotion and misinformation about gun violence to persuade those who have little experience with the responsible ownership and use of a firearm in order to gain their support and capitalize on an emotional tragedy. **The unfortunate fact is that there are members in the state legislature such as Sen. Bye who support laws which, statistically, have no effect on gun crime and the possession of guns by criminals and have everything to do with discouraging and rendering ineffective the hundreds of thousands responsible, legal gun owners in the state of Connecticut, without regard to their ability and right to defend themselves and their families.**

Instead of the reactionary gun legislation which has been proposed, I would very much like to see a bill made into law to provide easier access to mental health reform, including a way to allow teachers/doctors/etc. to identify students who may need a special focus from a mental health standpoint and a database that can be checked before guns are sold to a mentally unstable person. This could include strengthening of the records being reported to the NICS system.

I also believe that additional school security should be at the forefront of the agenda, including increased physical barriers to make unauthorized entry into the building and individual classrooms more difficult, an alert system to immediately notify the police of an emergency

(perhaps alarms, similar to banks), armed security guards or police officers in schools, an end to “gun free zones” for adults on school grounds, which criminals obviously ignore, and much tougher penalties on those who use illegal firearms to commit crimes.

Although school shootings are unbelievable and tragic they are thankfully very rare, and statistically a lot more good could be done by making efforts to take guns out of the hands of criminals and people who are mentally unstable and make it easier to get them in the hands of responsible adults with the training and common sense to stop violent crime before it occurs.

I very much appreciate you taking the time to read my letter and implore you to take it under consideration when voting on future gun legislation.

Sincerely,

Matt Malecot