

To the attention of Committee Chairs Senator Looney, Representative Miner, and members of the “Gun Violence” Committee:

I would like to submit this testimony digitally to ensure that it is read by my legislators in the event that I cannot attend the hearing scheduled for January 28th.

Key points:

- Laws and Frameworks of Government
- The Modern Vernacular and the term “Assault Rifle”
- A Government Of The People – Equal Application of Regulation
- Irresponsible Parenting
- Pharmacology Society
- Gun Regulation and the Safety of Society

### **Laws and Frameworks of Government:**

The law can only exist within the bounds of a defined framework. That framework can only be changed by amendment and not by merely bending the interpretation of law to fit the desired legislative objective of the day. This process was designed to be slow and wrought with stalemate in order for ideas to be properly vetted and deliberated and to give proper time for the will of the people to be enacted. Inaction, in many cases, is better than a rush to action with undesired results and consequences. In this great Republic that we live in, it is the rule of law, and not the emotional rush and desire to act quickly that must win the day.

### **The Modern Vernacular and the term “Assault Rifle”:**

What is assault?

Merriam Webster defines assault as “a threat or attempt to inflict offensive physical contact or bodily harm on a person (as by lifting a fist in a threatening manner) that puts the person in immediate danger or in apprehension of such harm or contact.

Until such a time when a rifle is used in a violent manor, it cannot be classified as an assault weapon. The term that has been popularized to demonize a rifle is applicable or accurate, according to the definition of the term.

The “Assault-Rifle”

An Army intelligence document – FCTC-CW-07-03-70, dated November 1970 includes a definition that was subsequently reprinted in the “Small Arms Identification and Operations Guide – Eurasian Communist Countries,” written by Harold E. Johnson, and prepared for the U.S Army Foreign Science and Technology Center of the Army Material Command. Page 67, Section III, part A, paragraph 68a reads as follows:

*“Assault rifles are short, compact, selective-fire weapons that fire a cartridge intermediate in power between submachine gun and rifle cartridges.”*

The paragraph concludes by adding:

*“Assault rifles have mild recoil characteristics and, because of this, are capable of delivering effective full-automatic fire at ranges up to 300 meters.”*

This is an “official” US Army definition. The rifle must be select-fire, full-automatic, and an intermediate cartridge.

The AR-15 rifle, the most popular poster child in the current debate is not a select-fire weapon, nor is it a full-automatic weapon. The AR-15 is a semi-automatic rifle. It isn’t select fire since **it has been illegal since 1986 to manufacture automatic weapons for a civilian market.** While

this terminology has been made popular by the media and politicians in an attempt to disarm a law abiding populace who are empowered and protected by the governing documents of State and Country, it has not been possible for a civilian in this country to get a Military Style rifle since the passing of FOPA (Firearms Owners Protection Action) in 1986. The inclusion of House Amendment 777 to H.R 4332 banned a civilian from ownership or transfer rights of a fully automatic weapon which was not registered as of May 19th, 1986.

The terminology that is most often used by the government today in reference to the same rifle is PDW or **Personal Defense Weapon**. The Department of Homeland Security has stated that a rifle chambered in 5.56 NATO with a 30 round magazine is “suitable for personal defense use in close quarters...”

Isn't this quite the contrary argument to the one that is being made to take restrict modern sporting rifles?

### **A Government Of The People – Equal Application of Regulation**

The General Services Administration (GSA) posted a request for proposal for “Personal Defense Weapons” for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS.) The contract that they're seeking is for 7,000 5.56mm NATO Personal Defense Weapons. The terms “**suitable for personal defense**” can be found multiple times in this RFP, but the term “Assault Rifle” is never used. Interestingly, another requirement for this rifle is that it should accept the “**STANDARD**” **30 round magazine**.

It is very unfortunate that in the heat of this debate there has been a new vernacular that has been created and applied to the citizens of this country when it isn't applied equally to the officials that are employed within this country.

**For a citizen, why is it an assault rifle, when it's a Personal Defense Weapon to the government?**

**For a citizen, why is more than 10 rounds in a magazine considered “High Capacity,” but 30 is considered standard by the government?**

This is the foundation for a slippery slope argument that can be designed to accomplish nothing more than disarming the law abiding.

### **Irresponsible Parenting:**

As a society, we have large issues that need to be tackled to stem the tide of violence. Violence has been pervasive and action does need to be taken to see what we've done wrong and how we can move again in a positive direction.

Over the course of my life, I've seen a decline in community. I've seen a decline in self-responsibility. There is always the overwhelming notion that anything that occurs in one's life is the result of an action taken by someone else, and blame can be assigned elsewhere. We've taught our children that they are special in every way and are never wrong.

We've advanced these concepts to the point where society looks to punish teachers for the failings of students and parents. This has had a damaging result on society, which was clearly not intended. As these children grew up, they lived in a world without failure. There were no consequences to their actions, and life was good. As they grew, they had parents that came to their defense in all situations, perhaps through high school, or beyond. But at some point in everyone's life there is a situation where you are responsible, and the fault may lie with you and there isn't any other direction to turn in.

The children who have grown up in this world are completely unprepared for the difficulty of life in society. These are the people who turn guns on innocent people – soft targets – schools, and

movie theaters. They've never been prepared for the reality of life, and that kind of pressure brought down on someone who has never needed to deal with consequence has negative results. As a society, we need to start teaching responsibility again and injecting civics into the lives of our children. They are not isolated spheres in the world. They need to interact and be a part of a healthy society.

### **Pharmacology Society:**

Our society has is a love affair with anti-anxiety and anti-depression medication that has potentially dangerous side effects. According to the Citizens Commission On Human Rights International, between 2004 and 2011 there were over 11,000 reports to the FDA MedWatch system of psychiatric drug side effects related to violence. This includes 300 cases of homicide, almost 3,000 cases of mania and over 7,000 cases of aggression. Additionally, by the FDA's own admission only 1-10% of side effects are ever reported. Naturally this means that the numbers reported are substantially lower than those that exist in reality.

**At least 31 school shootings and/or school-related acts of violence were committed by those taking or withdrawing from psychiatric drugs. It is important to note the following lists cases where the information about the shooters psychiatric drug use was made public. To give an example, although it is known that James Holmes, suspected perpetrator of the Aurora, Colorado movie theater shooting, was seeing psychiatrist Lynne Fenton, there has been no mention of what psychiatric drugs he may have been taking—though it is highly probably he was taking psychiatric drugs considering he was under a psychiatrist's "care". Also note that all these mass shootings didn't just occur in the United States.**

Of these 31, ten were seeing either a psychiatrist (8 of them) or psychologist (2 of them). It is not known whether or not the others were seeing a psychiatrist, as it has not been published.

1. St. Louis, Missouri – January 15, 2013: 34-year-old Sean Johnson walked onto the Stevens Institute of Business & Arts campus and shot the school's financial aid director once in the chest, then shot himself in the torso. Johnson had been taking prescribed drugs for an undisclosed mental illness.
2. Snohomish County, Washington – October 24, 2011: A 15-year-old girl went to Snohomish High School where police alleged that she stabbed a girl as many as 25 times just before the start of school, and then stabbed another girl who tried to help her injured friend. Prior to the attack the girl had been taking "medication" and seeing a psychiatrist. Court documents said the girl was being treated for depression.
3. Planoise, France – December 13, 2010: A 17-year-old youth held twenty pre-school children and their teacher hostage for hours at Charles Fourier preschool. The teen was reported to be on "medication for depression". He took a classroom hostage with two swords. Eventually, all the children and the teacher were released safely.
4. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina – September 21, 2011: 14-year-old Christian Helms had two pipe bombs in his backpack, when he shot and wounded Socastee High School's "resource" (police) officer. However the officer was able to stop the student before he could do anything further. Helms had been taking drugs for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and depression.

5. Huntsville, Alabama – February 5, 2010: 15-year-old Hammad Memon shot and killed another Discover Middle School student Todd Brown. Memon had a history for being treated for ADHD and depression. He was taking the antidepressant Zoloft and “other drugs for the conditions.” He had been seeing a psychiatrist and psychologist.
6. Kauhajoki, Finland – September 23, 2008: 22-year-old culinary student Matti Saari shot and killed 9 students and a teacher, and wounded another student, before killing himself. Saari was taking an SSRI and a benzodiazepine. He was also seeing a psychologist.
7. Fresno, California – April 24, 2008: 17-year-old Jesus “Jesse” Carrizales attacked the Fresno high school’s officer, hitting him in the head with a baseball bat. After knocking the officer down, the officer shot Carrizales in self-defense, killing him. Carrizales had been prescribed Lexapro and Geodon, and his autopsy showed that he had a high dose of the antidepressant Lexapro in his blood that could have caused him to be paranoid, according to the coroner.
8. Dekalb, Illinois – February 14, 2008: 27-year-old Steven Kazmierczak shot and killed five people and wounded 21 others before killing himself in a Northern Illinois University auditorium. According to his girlfriend, he had recently been taking Prozac, Xanax and Ambien. Toxicology results showed that he still had trace amount of Xanax in his system. He had been seeing a psychiatrist.
9. Jokela, Finland – November 7, 2007: 18-year-old Finnish gunman Pekka-Eric Auvinen had been taking antidepressants before he killed eight people and wounded a dozen more at Jokela High School in southern Finland, then committed suicide.
10. Texas – November 7, 2007: 17-year-old Felicia McMillan returned to her former Robert E. Lee High School campus and stabbed a male student and wounded the principle with a knife. McMillan had been on drugs for depression, and had just taken them the night before the incident.
11. Cleveland, Ohio – October 10, 2007: 14-year-old Asa Coon stormed through his school with a gun in each hand, shooting and wounding four before taking his own life. Court records show Coon had been placed on the antidepressant Trazodone.
12. Sudbury, Massachusetts – January 19, 2007: 16-year-old John Odogren stabbed another student with a large kitchen knife in a boy’s bathroom at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. In court his father testified that Odogren was prescribed the drug Ritalin.
13. North Vernon, Indiana – December 4, 2006: 16-year-old Travis Roberson stabbed another Jennings County High School student in the neck, nearly severing an artery. Roberson was in withdrawal from Wellbutrin, which he had stopped taking days before the attack.

14. Hillsborough, North Carolina – August 30, 2006: 19-year-old Alvaro Rafael Castillo shot and killed his father, then drove to Orange High School where he opened fire. Two students were injured in the shooting, which ended when school personnel tackled him. His mother said he was on drugs for depression.
15. Chapel Hill, North Carolina – April 2006: 17-year-old William Barrett Foster took a shotgun to school and took a teacher and a fellow student hostage at East Chapel Hill High School. After being talked out of shooting the hostages, Foster fired two shots through a classroom window before fleeing the school on foot. Foster's father testified that his son had stopped taking his antidepressants and antipsychotic drugs without telling him.
16. Red Lake, Minnesota – March 21, 2005: 16-year-old Jeff Weise, on Prozac, shot and killed his grandparents, then went to his school on the Red Lake Indian Reservation where he shot dead 5 students, a security guard, and a teacher, and wounded 7 before killing himself.
17. Greenbush, New York – February 2004: 16-year-old Jon Romano strolled into his high school in east Greenbush and opened fire with a shotgun. Special education teacher Michael Bennett was hit in the leg. Romano had been taking "medication for depression". He had previously seen a psychiatrist.
18. Red Lion, Pennsylvania – February 2, 2001: 56-year-old William Michael Stankewicz entered North Hopewell-Winterstown Elementary School with a machete, leaving three adults and 11 children injured. Stankewicz was taking four different drugs for depression and anxiety weeks before the attacks.
19. Ikeda, Japan – June 8, 2001: 37-year-old Mamoru Takuma, wielding a 6-inch knife, slipped into an elementary school and stabbed eight first- and second-graders to death while wounding at least 15 other pupils and teachers. He then turned the knife on himself but suffered only superficial wounds. He later told interrogators that before the attack he had taken 10 times his normal dose of antidepressants.
20. Wahluke, Washington – April 10, 2001: Sixteen-year-old Cory Baadsgaard took a rifle to his high school and held 23 classmates and a teacher hostage. He had been taking the antidepressant Effexor.
21. El Cajon, California – March 22, 2001: 18-year-old Jason Hoffman, on the antidepressants Celexa and Effexor, opened fire on his classmates, wounding three students and two teachers at Granite Hills High School. He had been seeing a psychiatrist before the shooting.

22. Williamsport, Pennsylvania – March 7, 2001: 14-year-old Elizabeth Bush was taking the antidepressant Prozac when she shot at fellow students, wounding one.
23. Oxnard, California – January 2001: 17-year-old Richard Lopez went to Hueneme High School with a gun and shot twice at a car in the school's parking lot before taking a female student hostage. Lopez was eventually killed by a SWAT officer. He had been prescribed Prozac, Paxil and "drugs that helped him go to sleep."
24. Conyers, Georgia – May 20, 1999: 15-year-old T.J. Solomon was being treated with the stimulant Ritalin when he opened fire on and wounded six of his classmates.
25. Columbine, Colorado – April 20, 1999: 18-year-old Eric Harris and his accomplice, Dylan Klebold, killed 12 students and a teacher and wounded 26 others before killing themselves. Harris was on the antidepressant Luvox. Klebold's medical records remain sealed. Both shooters had been in anger-management classes and had undergone counseling. Harris had been seeing a psychiatrist before the shooting.
26. Notus, Idaho – April 16, 1999: 15-year-old Shawn Cooper fired two shotgun rounds in his school, narrowly missing students. He was taking a prescribed antidepressant and Ritalin.
27. Springfield, Oregon – May 21, 1998: 15-year-old Kip Kinkel murdered his parents and then proceeded to school where he opened fire on students in the cafeteria, killing two and wounding 25. Kinkel had been taking the antidepressant Prozac. Kinkel had been attending "anger control classes" and was under the care of a psychologist.
28. Blackville, South Carolina – October 12, 1995: 15-year-old Toby R. Sincino slipped into the Blackville-Hilda High School's rear entrance, where he shot two Blackville-Hilda High School teachers, killing one. Then Toby killed himself moments later. His aunt, Carolyn McCreary, said he had been undergoing counseling with the Department of Mental Health and was taking Zoloft for emotional problems.
29. Chelsea, Michigan – December 17, 1993: 39-year-old chemistry teacher Stephen Leith, facing a disciplinary matter at Chelsea High School, shot Superintendent Joseph Piasecki to death, shot Principal Ron Mead in the leg, and slightly wounded journalism teacher Phil Jones. Leith was taking Prozac and had been seeing a psychiatrist.
30. Houston, Texas – September 18, 1992: 44-year-old Calvin Charles Bell, reportedly upset about his second-grader's progress report, appeared in the principal's office of Piney Point Elementary School. Bell fired a gun in the school, and eventually wounded two officers before surrendering. Relatives told police on Friday that Bell was an unemployed Vietnam veteran and had been taking anti-depressants.

31. Winnetka, Illinois – 20 May 1988: 30-year-old Laurie Wasserman Dann walked into a second grade classroom at Hubbard Woods School in Winnetka, Illinois carrying three pistols and began shooting children, killing an eight-year-old boy, and wounding five others before fleeing. She entered a nearby house where she shot and wounded a 20-year-old man before killing herself. Dann had been seeing a psychiatrist and subsequent blood tests revealed that at the time of the killings, she was taking the antidepressant Anafranil.

This is a problem in our society that must be addressed immediately. We believe that these drugs achieve a goal, but they only mask a danger that is brewing directly under the surface.

**Gun Regulation and the Safety of Society:**

The city in the United States that has the toughest gun-control measures in place is Chicago. If gun control made us safer, why isn't Chicago the safest city in America?

It must be understood by the legislators that the only persons impacted by gun-control legislation are those law abiding citizens who would refuse to become criminals as a result in the change to the law. Criminals, who are willing to work outside the bounds of the law, are in no way impacted by such measures since they had no respect for the rule of law in the first place.

This applies to restrictions on types of weapons, size of ammunition magazines, etc. Criminals have no interest in compliance, so these rules are being adopted to impact a segment of the population who have committed no crime.

**Conclusion:**

I urge this body to understand that the laws that are currently on the books in the State of Connecticut are strict enough on measures relating to restriction on arms. Money can be better spent to ensure that those laws are enforced and that action is taken to improve the mental health care available within the state.

I don't believe that a solution to our problems as a society can be legislated away with the stroke of a pen. There are problems that have become endemic in our society that we need to address. If we address the quality of our citizens and their respect for the rule of law, the value of human life, and the rights of others, the rate of violence in our society will decline. Laws that restrict the rights of the law abiding do nothing to increase the public safety. They do, however, make people who were never criminals into criminals.

Thank you for taking time to consider my perspective.

Sincerely,  
Michael Habif  
Norwalk, CT