

1/28/2013

Dear Legislators,

As a father of a young child, and husband to a wife working in a public school system, I was deeply shocked and appalled by the tragedy that occurred in Newton. I feel there is no single law that could have prevented this tragedy. The killer had already broken several before even arriving at the school.

I look to you as my elected officials to take the time to review the situation and develop a sensible strategy to help reduce gun violence in CT. Lately it seems there's a knee jerk reaction to do anything just for the sake of saying something was done. Law abiding firearm owners, myself included, are not the problem here. Neither are the semi-automatic rifles, hand guns, shotguns or magazines that we may own. The true problem is the person behind the firearm and why they decided this was an acceptable solution in their mind to their problems.

To that end I support requiring NICs background checks for all purchases of firearms, including private face to face sales. I would support efforts to further the state's ability to categorize people as mentally ill and get them into facilities that would hopefully help them. However mental health is a lifetime of events and I urge you to help get resources into our schools and communities to identify and treat individuals early on.

I do not support efforts that threaten the activities, possessions, or finances of hundreds of thousands of law-abiding firearm owners in the state of Connecticut. Some of these proposals include:

- Any additional tax on ammunition as it would greatly affect sport shooters and clubs, many who use thousands of rounds of ammunition per year. Any sport shooting events or training companies that close down would also impact local businesses supporting them. This would place an undue financial burden on law abiding gun owners and as mentioned earlier would also impact environmental conservation efforts.
- Any limitation on the sale or possession of magazines regardless of their capacity. The facts show that magazine capacity limits do not change the outcomes of events.
- Any bill which would ban firearms based on cosmetic features. Crime statistics have shown the federal assault weapons ban was ineffective and since it sunset in 2004, violent crime has continued to go down while firearm purchases have increased. We don't ban red fiberglass body cars because we think they go fast. Why should we ban firearms with black paint and plastic stocks?
- Any limitation on Internet ammunition sales. A ban on Internet sales would affect target shooters and many youth groups such as the Boy Scouts or any range or company that offers programs to the public.

To summarize, all of these proposed bills and the many others that are similar to them unduly restrict the activities of law abiding gun owners while doing absolutely nothing to affect crime. We need to take steps to conduct background checks on all firearm purchases. We also need to take into account mental health and finding ways of not only including this information in the purchasing process, but getting the appropriate resources into our schools and communities to address and treat individuals early on in their lives. I urge you to take appropriate time to make your recommendations with all of the facts and carefully consider our rights as well.

Thank you,

Michael Phelps