

To the members of “The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group”:

I write this testimony as a law-abiding gun owner in the State of Connecticut. As such, it is my belief that the right to bear arms, guaranteed under the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, must be carefully guarded. Although I am a hunter, I recognize that the right to bear arms is not limited to that purpose, and was established for the defense of the citizenry. Frankly, it is frustrating to hear the constant reference to hunting and target practice being the only pertinent reasons for gun ownership. For some reason, it seems incumbent upon the anti-gun-ownership lobby to ignore the fact that guns are a tool, and that tools can be used for good, or for evil. While guns were used in the recent massacres in Newtown and other locations, it is the vile actions of the perpetrators that were the cause of so many senseless deaths, not the guns. Guns are inanimate and do not have the ability to think, plan or move on their own. Invariably, it is the person who pulls the trigger that causes death and injury. If guns were not available, many other weapons could be considered by someone intent on doing harm to others. Are we going to ban or limit sales of ammonium nitrate because it can be used to make explosives, or gasoline because it can be used to make incendiary devices, or cars because they can be run through crowds, or knives, bats, hammers, etc.? Using the logic of the anti-gun crowd in their attack on magazine size, perhaps matchbooks should be limited to less than 20 matches per pack to reduce the incidents of arson. I am very puzzled by the lack of support in some locales for the use of properly trained armed personnel in our schools. The designation of schools as “gun-free zones” sends out a message to those who would do harm that schools are an easy target. While the value of armed guards in protecting our children is being increasingly recognized in school districts scattered throughout the country, its acceptance is far from universal. If armed guards stationed at schools in order to protect our children are a bad idea, why do we need armed police in any situation (e.g.: at ball games, on street patrols, at crowded functions)? Why do you have armed guards at the legislative office building? After all, it is a gun-free zone. Is it because criminals don't really care where such zones are designated? If you legislators deserve such protection, I submit that so do our children.

Recently, I had occasion to hear a radio interview during which a former violent gang member from Los Angeles stated that outlaw gangs would scoff at any laws enacted to limit the number or type of guns one could possess or to limit the size of ammunition magazines. He also said that the gangs obtained most of their guns on the black market, and would welcome more unarmed potential victims that would result from many of the proposed laws and regulations. If criminals are smart enough to deal with “the bottom line”, why are there still those who don't understand that disarming law-abiding citizens will simply not decrease gun violence? Armed citizens regularly protect themselves and their loved ones from intruders – I do not want my options limited if my house is broken into in the middle of the night by persons meaning to do me or members of my family harm!

In closing, I offer the following two statements:

“One loves to possess arms, though they hope never to have occasion for them.” -- *Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1796 (www.hematite.com)*

“Laws that forbid the carrying of arms...disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes...Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the

assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man.” -- *Thomas Jefferson, quoting Cesare Beccaria in “On Crimes and Punishment” (1764) (www.hematite.com)*

At the risk of sounding cliché, but at the same time stating the irrefutable truth, “When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns.” It follows that this statement also applies to any subset of firearms and associated equipment that might be outlawed.

I urge you to look for and address the root causes of the violent and abhorrent behavior exemplified by those who would perform outrageous atrocities, and understand that further limitations of firearms will do absolutely nothing to safeguard our children. As the father of four grown children, I understand that to protect them is to protect our future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Schaefer, Sr.
138 Coomer Hill Road
Dayville, CT 06241