

I am a parent with three children, ages 7, 9 and 11, in the Newtown public schools. I find it hard to understand why it is important to preserve people's right to own weapons designed for the military, and now marketed because they are "fun to shoot." This preservation of rights is especially egregious when it threatens my children's right to live. I felt this in a very profound way on December 14 when I received a call from the school telling me that my children were on lock-down because there had been a shooting at one of the schools, as I watched my neighbors grieving for their lost children, and as I now watch our entire town trying to overcome a mountain of grief.

In addition to being a parent, I also teach a graduate course in environmental health and disease. So, while I have a personal perspective on gun control issues, I also see the issues from a risk assessment standpoint.

The EPA, the FDA, the CDC, the WHO, OSHA and NIOSH all use risk/benefit analysis to understand how important it is to address threats to human health, whether the hazard is a virus, a bacteria, a new drug, radiation exposure or a chemical exposure. Why aren't guns addressed in the same way?

There are almost 31,000 gun deaths every year, about the same number of deaths due to hypertensive heart disease or automobile accidents. There are major campaigns to prevent heart disease and billions are spent each year to make cars, roads and driving safer, yet the gun industry remains relatively untouched by improved safety measures, depending largely on "responsible gun ownership."

Yet another difference is that many of the people who die from gun deaths have very little choice about their risk exposure unlike hypertension and automobiles. The incredibly good news is that the vast contrast between gun deaths in the U.S. and other developed countries should give us excellent clues as to how to curb gun deaths. Cut back on the numbers and types of guns available. This CAN be done while still maintaining the second amendment rights.

Finally, I cannot appreciate the concept that there are "good guys" and "bad guys." We are all human and are each capable of doing things, both good and bad, intelligent and stupid. We have mental health issues that also need to be addressed – I think that is something we all agree on. I don't doubt that most gun owners are responsible, but I also know that there are those who intend to be responsible but make mistakes and bad decisions. From a purely statistical point of view,

the more guns in the hands of people, the more accidents and the more bad decisions will be made.

The cost of allowing unregulated gun sales and use is human lives. Is it not time to regulate these weapons?

Thank you,

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