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To: The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am asking you to consider the facts concerning the proposed “gun control” or “gun safety” proposals before your committee.

One of the proposals is to ban “assault rifles.” The current Connecticut law, copied from California, has been proof positive of a feel good law that does not affect its intended market, the criminal. It does affect the private, legal citizen. The proposed ban *does not* affect true assault rifles. That has been the job of the National Firearms Act of 1934, its amendments, and other laws such as the Gun Control Act of 1968, and the Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986.

Rather, this proposal would affect the semiautomatic rifle, first created in the late 1800s, by John Moses Browning. The rifle proposed for further restriction is the most popular rifle sold. The reason is not “its deadly accuracy,” or its “high powered” cartridge. The proposal talks about “military style features,” such as a flash hider, barrel shroud, pistol grip, etcetera. The “high powered” .223/5.56 mm cartridge is illegal for hunting. However, overlooked in this debate is the fact that this cartridge is required for competition. Thousands of Americans compete using these rifles for target shooting. Many have been legally modified to be more accurate for these competition. Target distances can be as far as 600 yards. At that distance, the “X” ring is 6 inches in diameter; accuracy is quite important. Yet, NONE of these rifles have been used in crime. Some of these competitions take place in Connecticut.

Yes, these semiautomatic rifles are used for hunting. The design is modular. The .223 caliber cartridge can be replaced with a cartridge more suitable for hunting, such as one of the many .30 caliber cartridges. This is done by purchasing the rifle in this configuration. Considering that some hunting is done in foul weather, the plastic stock makes more sense than the traditional wood stock. The advantages of durability required in military service also benefit the civilian. The rifles you propose to severely limit and restrict are today's version of the sainted "hunting rifle" that will not be affected. At least, not in this version of legislation.

My main issue with this proposed "feel-good, but accomplishes nothing of substance" proposal lay in the fact that we have a law on the books, and now it is being revisited because the initial law is ineffective. How long will it be before we revisit the issue, again? You are focusing on the wrong end of the problem. It is as silly as the idea that we should ban a vehicle because it was involved in a motor vehicle accident.

My question to this committee is why do we not enforce the laws we already have? Connecticut has the 4th most stringent set of laws in the nation, according to the Brady Center. Why does the judicial branch routinely drop firearm related charges, or plea bargain them from felonies to misdemeanors? IF this problem is as severe as the politicians claim, why would the legislature allow this to happen? YOUR laws are being ignored by those charged to enforce them. Why would you allow this to happen? Criminals are not ignorant of the law; they know what has happened to those who have been arrested. In their world of risk versus reward, such behavior on the part of law enforcement makes the decision that much easier. Do the crime, you won't do the time.

I thank you for your time in considering my letter and ask that you do not allow partisanship or emotion to affect your decision. As a law abiding firearm owner, I am not your problem. Firearms are not the problem. Criminal use of firearms is the problem. Please address the issue of criminals.

Cordially,

Paul Bartomioli

