

Dear Honorable Members of the Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention:

Thank you for your diligent work on this crucial and polarizing issue. Most importantly, thank you for your commitment to making Connecticut a safer place for all citizens.

Gun safety regulations have been an important part of our nation's legislation from the earliest days of colonial America. The founders understood that gun rights had to be balanced with public safety needs, and, at many times, they enforced this balance, the 2nd amendment notwithstanding.

In 1783 a law in Boston prohibited a loaded firearm from being taken into any building and a second provision of the law made it nearly impossible to have a workable firearm available for self-defense inside a residence. The historical account shows no sign of opposition to the 1783 law as infringing on the right to bear arms.

The 1929 Saint Valentine's Day massacre, a Prohibition-era gangster sub-machine gun mass murder, led directly to the National Firearms Act of 1934, which was designed to regulate what were considered "gangster weapons" such as machine guns and short barreled shotguns.

An appropriate balance between public safety and gun possession is a longstanding legislative tenet and does not infringe on the second amendment, although gun lobbyists would rewrite history to have us believe otherwise.

As we consider the history of gun violence in this country, historical precedents and our modern public safety needs, it is important to remember that for many decades after the Revolution there was no organized police force. Armed civilians were expected to respond to emergencies.

How things have changed...as of the 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, which is conducted every four years and covers approximately 18,000 law enforcement agencies nationwide:

- State and local law enforcement agencies employed about 1,133,000 persons on a full-time basis in 2008, including 765,000 sworn personnel.
- From 2004 to 2008, state and local law enforcement agencies added about 9,500 more full-time sworn personnel than during the previous 4-year period.
- Additionally, according to the Government Accountability Office, there were 138,000 federal law enforcement officers in 2006.

So, today, we have roughly one sworn police officer for every 312 Americans. This landscape is vastly different from that encountered by the founders. And the founders regulated flintlocks, pistols and muskets where today police officers across our country confront an ever escalating arsenal of high powered firearms against them. All over the United States, police agencies are purchasing assault rifles for their officers to ensure that they have adequate firepower.

As reported on January 17, 2013 in the *New Haven Independent*, "In 2008, then-Police Chief James Lewis determined the department was under-armed. He ordered Colt M4s for officers on patrol to carry in their cars." "The language that changes is from a force continuum to a threat matrix," said police spokesman Officer Dave Hartman.

The "Threat Matrix" is a report given to the President of the United States each morning on global terrorist threats to the United States. More than three million Americans own an AR-15, making it the most popular rifle in the country, according to CBS. Because so many of these weapons are now in circulation in the United States, some inevitably and more and more frequently end up in the wrong hands, whether by theft, mistake, gun show loophole sale or a large and well-organized black market. As a result, we now face our own internal Threat Matrix. The AR-15, and its variations, is a weapon capable of quickly inflicting mass casualties. Skilled hunters do not need such a weapon, and the weapon far exceeds civilian needs for self-defense in the home.

Gun lobbyists persistently foster fear amongst law abiding gun owners that "the government is coming to take the guns away." And in order to line their pockets at the expense of the lives of our fellow Americans, they insist that more guns are the answer to keeping all of us safe.

Make no mistake, gun lobbyists are not patriots and not people that we can allow to direct the course of this great nation on crucial issues. Their ratings do not make for a sound legislative basis.

As reported in *The Washington Post* on December 14, 2012, the United States has by far the highest per capita gun-related homicide rate of all developed countries. "According to data [compiled](#) by the United Nations, the U.S. gun murder rate is [about 20 times the average](#) for all other [developed] countries ... That means that Americans are 20 times as likely to be killed by a gun than is someone from another developed country."

Where does this all stop? In ten years, as technology advances, does the 2nd amendment permit everyone to have easy access to weapons capable of killing even more efficiently than the by then dated AR-15? Do police officers drive armored vehicles and do schoolchildren wear body armor or just not go to school at all?

Did the Framers intend mass slaughter to be the norm?

We face a choice as a state and a nation. Continue down this troubled path with the puppeteer gun lobbyists at the helm or honor our homeland. Just enforce current laws? The Columbine guns were a gun show straw buy. The purchaser said it would not have been made if she had faced a background check. Would the Columbine shooters have acquired the guns another way? Maybe. Maybe not. Maybe, just maybe, those 12 students and one teacher would still be alive today, enjoying their families and lives. Shame on all of us if we do not all that we can now to save even one innocent life in the future, given all of the innocent blood that has been spilled thus far.

Please honor the Framers and the future of this nation. Be a true patriot:

1. Require background checks for all gun purchases, no exceptions, no loopholes. Anything else is unfair to the millions of law-abiding gun owners who undergo a background check before purchase.
2. Intelligently define assault weapons and impose appropriate restrictions on them and on high capacity magazines.

Again, thank you for your work on this.

Sincerely,

Peter Brodhead