

To Members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group:

In the wake of the Newtown, CT tragedy, law-abiding gun owners have been targeted by the media, anti-gun lobbies, and anti-gun politicians in a manner reminiscent of hate crimes. What would the media and politicians do if non-white Americans, homosexuals, the mentally challenged, or people with AIDS were verbally attacked? Wait, this has happened before in the USA. The media crucified such actions, classified them as hate crimes, and preached tolerance. Politicians responded by creating HIPAA and anti-discrimination laws to further protect people's rights. Did we ban airplanes after the 9/11 terrorist attacks? Did we enact new laws specifically targeting law-abiding Muslims living in the USA? No, we still fly in airplanes and Muslims living in the USA did not have their rights reduced. What are members of the media, anti-gun lobbies, and anti-gun politicians doing now in the wake of the Newtown, CT tragedy? They are participating in and promoting hatred towards gun owners and the 2nd Amendment with a common theme of "we must do something".

Here is some information for the task force to consider (references are listed below):

- 1) Contrary to the name of this task force, violence cannot be prevented, unless the State possesses the know-how, legal means, and methods to control the minds of all its citizens and visitors. Laws cannot prevent violence anymore than one can do so by wishing it so. Criminals will always be able to get and use whatever weapons/ammunition they want – regardless of what laws may be in place. One only needs to look at how effective the "war on drugs" has been, as further proof that criminals don't care about laws.
- 2) Living in a free society does come with some risk, as there will always be those among us that wish to do us harm. That is why it is critically important that CT law makers do not reduce the ability of its citizens to protect themselves by enacting new gun/ammunition/travel laws that criminals, by definition, do not obey. I oppose any gun/ammunition/travel laws that reduce my right to self-defense.
- 3) All wrongful deaths are tragedies, but it is a fact that mass shootings are rare events. According to the USA government's own crime and death statistics, violent crime and gun-related deaths have been on the decline – at the same time other studies have shown a steady increase in gun ownership and issued gun permits. Studies have also shown that gun permit holders commit less overall crimes than those who do not possess gun permits. If politicians really care about saving lives, then more focus should be placed on other issues such as tobacco/alcohol/drug abuse, gang/alcohol/drug related crime, medical errors, motor vehicle accidents, and poverty (i.e. unemployment/under employment) which kill far more people each year in the USA than gun violence. Unfortunately, it is far easier to blame inanimate guns and law-abiding gun owners than it is to architect and implement real solutions to our State's and Nation's mounting problems.
- 4) As with most of the actions taken by US politicians after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the majority of the anti-gun legislation now being proposed in CT only provides for what security experts call "security theater". According to security expert Bruce Schneier, "Security theater refers to security measures that make people feel more secure without doing anything to actually improve their security." Some examples of existing security theater in CT include the "assault" weapons ban (Connecticut General Statutes 53-202c), gun free zones (e.g. Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990, Governor Rowland's Executive Order No. Sixteen Violence in the Workplace Prevention Policy), and distracted driver/cell phone laws (Connecticut General Statutes 14-296aa). Mr. Schneier also stated, "Politicians naturally want to do something in response to crisis, even if that something doesn't make any sense." I expect more from my politicians. Politicians should be expected to propose and vote on laws that make sense, can be validated to be effective before being passed, that are affordable, and that can be realistically enforced. Politicians should also be expected to repeal laws proven to be ineffective and/or too costly. I do support the enforcement of existing laws to prosecute those who commit gun crimes and the reinstatement of the death penalty.
- 5) Potential victims of violence can only make preparations and/or train in advance, so as to avoid and/or mitigate the effects of violence. Please consider doing away with existing gun free zone laws, which history has shown does nothing to protect the innocent, but do prevent law-abiding citizens who have a pistol permit from protecting themselves.
- 6) As noted in many early writings concerning the 2nd Amendment, Americans viewed it as a God-given right to be used to deter a tyrannical government, repel invasion, and facilitate the right to self-defense. Many in the anti-gun crowd wrongfully claim that since the 2nd Amendment was adopted in 1791 that it only applies to a militia and weapons of that era. Applying similar logic to the 1st Amendment, would mean that modern forms of communication and/or assembly such as radio, TV, movies, email, Web/Internet, social media, and other forms of digital media would not be protected. The fact that this hearing includes emailed testimonies proves that the people and their politicians will not tolerate such senseless interpretations of the 1st Amendment. Congress has defined militias to both organized and unorganized, where unorganized militias refer to everyone eligible for a draft. In order to defend oneself against modern criminals, one needs modern rescue tools. A good reference for current modern rescue tools can be found by looking at what modern law enforcement officers typically carry or have immediately available to them. These rescue tools include revolvers, pump shotguns, semi-automatic handguns/rifles/shotguns, stun-guns, pepper-spray, and body armor.
- 7) It is a fact that law enforcement officers and armed citizens are taught to shoot until the threat is stopped. Most of the time, no shots are fired by police or armed citizens to stop a threat. The mere presentation of a gun to a violent criminal often causes the

perpetrator to temporarily rethink their current situation and stop or flee the scene. However, when shots are fired, often more than one shot is required to stop the threat. And multiple perpetrators may each require multiple shots before the threat is over. Ask your local law enforcement officer if he/she would be comfortable carrying a gun with only one "bullet" or a limited capacity magazine. Since American citizens are violently attacked by the same criminals that our law enforcement officers deal with, American citizens should be allowed to protect themselves with the same emergency rescue tools used by our police forces, including semi-automatic guns with the same standard size magazines.

8) Criminal background checks should be instant, accurate, and not include any form of gun/ammunition registration scheme/database. A gun/ammunition registry serves no useful purpose, other than to support future confiscation. History has shown that gun/ammunition registration leads to eventual confiscation and has allowed for the slaughter of millions of innocent lives. A number of the individuals in the anti-gun crowd have publicly stated that their ultimate goal is the total disarmament of US citizens and repeal of the 2nd Amendment – and that registration is a necessary step towards meeting their end goals. It is unlawful to preemptively target law-abiding gun owners as criminals by confiscating their personal property. In addition, as criminals are protected by the 5th Amendment against self-incrimination, they would be exempt from such registration schemes.

9) Gun owner privacy and travel rights should be protected. It should be unlawful to publish gun permit information, as it puts both permit holders and non-permit holders at risk of theft and/or home invasion. Further gun/ammunition travel restrictions will make it more difficult for responsible gun owners to participate in training and sporting events.

10) I oppose additional gun/ammunition taxes, additional/increased permit fees, a ban on Internet sales of guns/ammunition, limits on gun/ammunition purchases, limits on how much ammunition one may possess, limits on hand-loading, and mandatory gun owner insurance/storage requirements. These types of laws unfairly target law-abiding gun owners who have committed no crimes.

11) A potential unintended consequence of enacting additional gun/ammunition laws would be to further derail the State's already ailing economy. Instead, please fix the mathematically/economically unrealistic State budget by cutting unaffordable, ever increasing, exponential spending. I do support reinstating State confiscated firearms auctions to help improve the State's fiscal situation.

12) I oppose a ban on modern handguns/rifles/shotguns, which have wrongfully been classified by some as being "assault weapons". Modern handguns/rifles/shotguns are semi-automatic (one shot per trigger pull) and are not equivalent to automatic military assault weapons (multiple shots per trigger pull) – even though they can be made to look like military style weapons.

13) Everyday in the USA, tens of millions of gun owners hurt no one.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide my written testimony to the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group.

Respectfully yours,

Peter Santoro
South Windsor, CT

References:

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