

DATE: January 26, 2013
TO: Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Members
FROM: Richard C. Neal, Jr.
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Putnam, CT 06260
860-928-2643

RE: Proposed Bills, House and Senate with regards to gun violence
Dear Members:

I am unable to attend the hearing on Monday, but wish to make my opinions known to this committee and all Connecticut Legislators with regards to the multitude of proposed bills.

It is my understanding Monday's forum is not necessarily intended to discuss each bill individually and I write to voice my concern.

I strongly disagree with the following proposed bills: HBs 5112, 5168, 5452, 5647; SBs 1, 21, 42, 122, 124, 140, 161, 207, 377, 501, 504, 506. I will call this Group I.

I strongly agree with the following proposed bills: HBs 5165, 5176, 5179, 5269, 5561, 5654, 5656, 5676; SBs 277, 307, 495, 496. I will call this Group II.

It would be a monumental task to enumerate the reasons why I am not in agreement with bills in Group I and in agreement with those in Group II. However, I will make my point using a general scenario.

The horrific carnage that occurred in Newtown was certainly beyond belief and the pangs of grief will certainly linger in that community, this state and the nation for years to come. The huge question is why did it happen? How could it have been prevented?

Many of the ideas in Group I contain proposed laws such as taxation or limiting ammunition, banning high capacity magazines, banning or redefining "assault weapons", registering firearms, background checks for ammunition purchases, background checks for all individual firearms, publicly posting firearm owners names and addresses and as well many other conditions (a few are totally unrealistic, such as SB-122 (single shot firearms on only) and SB-1 (it is so vague and ambiguous it would give the state a "blank check" to do anything it wants to eliminate any type of firearm)). It is a known fact, at least according to the mainstream media; Adam Lanza's mother owned firearms and bought them legally. Most likely she would have meet the conditions of many, if not all laws, if Group I were in effect prior to the terrible act. Would these conditions really have prevented Lanza from what he did? The fact of the matter is more than likely not. The blame lies with his mother. She exercised extremely poor

judgment just having a firearm in the home, let alone not keeping the firearms locked up or perhaps allowing her son access to them. Considering the information about the boy's life long mental instability, nothing probably would have stopped the extreme havoc and heartache he caused except preventing access to the firearms. Again, the issue is access to the firearms and the mother's failure to recognize that fact. Yet, as a result of the mother's blatant recklessness, it cost her, her life, the lives of twenty innocent children and six adults, as well as leave a whole community unbearable grief for years to come.

The evil act also set in motion a nationwide "gun control" movement as never seen since the assassination of JFK. Will all of these "enhanced" or "modified laws", whether created at the state or federal level, really prevent further crimes as this as well as prevent crimes committed in the streets? Will people with ill intent or felons really consider obeying these new laws, let alone existing laws? In my opinion, they will not. (It is unfortunate as this movement could have been concentrated on the illegal drug trade. Think of the children and adults that perish or ruin their lives and family lives as a result of addiction to drugs. No one seems to give it a second thought especially most lawmakers. It is not even an issue at elections anymore, especially the presidential election).

Even some of the proposals contained in Group II more than likely would not have prevented the deadly incident (with the exception perhaps of HB 5654), but at least some target those who cause the crimes in the streets and not those who have done nothing wrong except own a firearm, including the so called "assault type". I am in total agreement with HB 5561 (resurrecting and funding the gun trafficking commission). As I have stated in previous years when more firearm laws are proposed, most only serve to chastise legal firearm owners. Laws need to be passed to punish the individuals that inflict harm, such as drug dealers and looters, instead of making it more difficult for legal firearm owners to obtain firearms and ammunition. More must be done with those who suffer from mental anguish. Educate parents about the potential harm of their children constantly engaging in violent television shows, movies and video gaming. Post convicted drug dealers on a state website as is done with sex offenders. Most of the proposed laws in Group I only serve to punish the good people and not get to the root of the problem. Unless I have missed something, I do not see any proposal(s) addressing the role of violent television programs, movies, and especially violent video games, including online gaming with regards to the violent nation we have become. I am not sure, and it is just my opinion, but strongly believe Lanza's mother allowed

her son to engage in “playing” those violent environments probably to the point he could not distinguish the difference between fantasy and reality. It is an unfortunate fact of life that many parents expose their children to forms of violence from the time the child is able to focus on a television set or video screen. Again, many parents seem to have the inability to recognize the potential harm they may cause to their children later in life by exposing them to constant violence. But I guess it is easier for lawmakers to attack the 2nd Amendment than take on the gaming industry and Hollywood that is protected by the 1st Amendment.

I do not own a semi-automatic AR style rifle, not that I am against them either. But I do own semi-automatic rifles in .22, 30/06 and .308 calibers, some with detachable magazines. I do not hunt very often, but enjoy target shooting and reloading. It is a form of recreation just as those who golf, jog, ride bikes and motorcycles, swim, and so on. Target shooting is primarily what most AR style owners do. Legislation such as taxation, limitation and outright banning of firearms (even only certain types) and ammunition only serves to curtail a passion of many avid firearm enthusiasts as myself. In addition, these forms of ill-conceived proposals contained in Group I hinder the economy. Revenue is generated in the form of taxation (6.35 % CT tax and 11% of all firearm and ammunition sales goes to the federal government) and considering the huge deficits Connecticut now faces will just put the state and its residents more in debt. In addition, remember the “Micro stamping” bill proposed a few years ago? Colt Industries stated they would leave the state if it passed. Will Colt Industries and other firearms manufacturers, such as Stag, Ruger and Mossberg leave the state as well if some or all these bills are passed? Does anyone in the state legislature fully comprehend the economic effects if that came to a reality?

I could continue point by point for and against these proposals, give some ideas of what could be instituted (education not legislation is the key) but I believe I have conveyed my position to this commission. Quite frankly, I am tired of “knee-jerk” legislation such as proposed in Group I that targets honest and decent people as myself and portrays firearms owners as potential and unstable “gun nuts” and does not target the real issues plaguing our society today.

Thank you for time.

Sincerely

Richard C. Neal, Jr