

My name is Richard Collette. I live in Coventry, CT. I am a software developer in Hartford. I have a daughter, a son and a wife each of whom I love dearly. I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about gun violence prevention.

I support efforts to educate the community at large, including children, on firearm safety. I support the requirement that all firearms owners and handlers of all firearms complete reasonable safety education and training prior to being allowed to use or own a firearm. We do the same with motor vehicles so there should be no opposition when operating another device that can have lethal consequences. I support regulations that prevent the transfer to or use of firearms by unlicensed individuals. I support proper defensive posturing and, if necessary, overwhelming force as the best method of insuring the safety of the public both as a preemptive deterrent and in situ response, not unlike the swarming of a hive of bees. I support the development of coping skills in young people which seems to be the underlying factor for violence of any kind. Violence is a mental health issue, not an implement issue.

I reject bans on: weapon types, features, loading device limits, and ammunition types. I also reject efforts to limit access to arms and ammunition, inclusive of but not limited to, by means of taxation. It is already difficult for the average person to obtain firearms and ammunition or achieve proficiency, and therefore safety, in their use due to cost. Further taxation only serves to limit access to firearms to the wealthy rather than “the people” as intended by the second amendment. Each of these restrictions are a clear infringement of my second amendment right, and the rights of the overwhelming majority of law abiding firearm owners, to possess adequate firearms for the purpose of defending ones, self, family, country and freedom. Such bans do not consider that those willing to do violence will seek out alternate means to cause harm, whether that is with firearms or creations like air canon with pipe bombs or incendiaries. Bans on semi-automatic rifles, including AR style rifles, upsets the balance of power between the people and the government that was intended by the second amendment. Such bans do not consider the history of disarmament and ensuing totalitarianism, regardless of the current public perception of the health of the republic. I reject gun free zones as being ignorant of the fact that the criminal and the insane do not adhere to such laws and conversely target those locations. The response time for external interdiction increases the loss of life rather than providing for the safety of those in the midst of a confrontation. Rifles account for approximately 2.5% of firearms murders, which means focusing on them as a primary issue will by nature be ineffective. By contrast, alcohol kills 30 times as many people by way of drunk drivers. When there is talk of public safety trumping personal liberty, banning AR style rifles as a solution is a chicanery.

I had a conflicting view of firearm ownership. I abhor gun violence. I had long questioned the need for personal firearms. I questioned whether owning a firearm in some way contributes to gun violence. My conflict was thoroughly resolved by two events, the Pettit murders and the birth of my son in May 2008. As a former Boy Scout, I live by their motto “Be prepared.” Despite many responsible things I do to insure the success, safety and happiness of my family, I was completely unprepared for the scenario of one, and increasingly more than one, person coming into my home seeking to rob and harm my family.

At the age of 38, after lengthy deliberation, I bought a pistol. I soon realized a pistol requires significantly more skill than I realized. With the time and financial commitments of a family and the cost of ammunition at nearly 50 cents a round, it is not easy to train to a point of mastery. I tried an AR style rifle and was amazed to find that I could shoot a 1 inch group with no training. With an AR rifle, in a dynamic self-defense scenario, I can operate with far more confidence and effectiveness, thus increasing the safety of my family. I hope you will take the opportunity to go to a range, get instruction and see this difference for yourself rather than letting fear alone form the basis of your understanding. The AR style rifle is the modern firearm equivalent of the Model T. It is effective, affordable, reliable, interchangeable, maintainable, is easy to handle and yes it is black. Semi-automatic rifles, including AR style rifles, are not “automatic killing machines” and such statements are a perversion by gun control proponents. Every action requires intent, loading, charging, and firing each round. People are killers, not these rifles. In the hands of millions of law abiding citizens, they are an effective means of defense of family, country and freedom.

323 murders by rifle - <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8>

9,878 alcohol impaired-driving fatalities - <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811699.pdf>