

To The Members of The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group of The Connecticut Bipartisan Task Force:

I am writing as a Connecticut resident to urge you to take swift and significant action to address gun violence in our state by limiting the types of guns and ammunition that private citizens are allowed to own. The arguments that have been put forward by the NRA and other elements of the gun lobby over the past few weeks as to why no action should be taken on gun control are fallacious and do not stand up to examination.

In my submission, I have taken the liberty of assessing some of the most common statements put forth by these organizations (see below). I hope that you will take the time to read this submission and the courage to enact the type of legislation that can actually make a difference on this issue.

Sincerely,

Rob Hunt

1. It's not guns that kill people. It's people that kill people.

That is entirely true, but completely irrelevant. Guns are products specifically designed to kill living beings. Automatic weapons and handguns are specifically designed to be used by people to kill people. When someone uses a semi-automatic gun to kill lots of people quickly, they are using it for its intended purpose. Guns are designed to kill.

Without a gun, the murderer at Sandy Hook school could not have killed 26 people, the murderer at Fort Hood army base could not have killed 13 people, the murderer at the Aurora movie theater could not have killed 12 people, the murderer at Virginia Tech could not have killed 32 people (and so on...).

2. It is my constitutional right to own a gun. You can't mess with the constitution.

The constitution has been amended on 27 occasions, the last time being in 1992. Just because the constitution says something, does not mean that it cannot be amended for the good of the nation.

There is also, of course, enormous debate about what the 2nd amendment actually means. What it does not say, is "*People have a right to own weapons to protect themselves from crime and for fun.*" What it actually says is "*A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.*"

It is important to consider the entire statement when considering this amendment. In the 1780's and 1790's the US had virtually no standing, peacetime army. In part this was because of the expense associated with this, and in part because people worried that a large federal army would be used to coerce individual states and infringe upon their rights. The solution to this was to ensure that in times of need, it would be relatively simple to raise a large army by having a well-armed civilian militia. Thus, the 2nd amendment was born. This is no longer the case, and has not been the case for a hundred years or more.

If you still do not believe that this is what the 2nd Amendment means, think about it this way. If this amendment did not exist, and someone proposed an amendment to the constitution to allow

people to own guns today, they would not mention a “*well regulated militia.*” There is only one reason that this phrase is in the amendment – because the right to own guns was directly related to the need for the state to raise an army in times of war.

3. Criminals will still have access to illegal guns – I need a gun to protect myself and my family.

Guns do not protect you from crime. If they did, all those countries where almost no one has a gun would have much higher crime rates, but they do not. Most industrialized nations with stricter gun control laws - the UK, Japan, Australia, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, etc. - have a similar overall violent crime rate to the US.

Furthermore, if guns protected people from crime, those states in the US with the highest private gun ownership would have the lowest rates of violent crime, but they don't (16 of the 20 states with the highest rate of violent crime are also the states with the highest percentage of loaded weapons kept in the home).

And if you do own a gun with the intention of protecting yourself, consider this. In reality, about 80% of homicides are committed by someone the victim knows, rather than a stranger.

Approximately one-quarter are committed by a family member and one-half are committed by a friend or other acquaintance. Unless you keep your gun loaded and pointed at your friends, family and coworkers at all times, it will not be much help.

Finally, if you are truly concerned about criminals having access to illegal weapons, then the first thing you would do is ban the private ownership of guns. About 600,000 legal guns are lost or stolen from private homes each year. That's 6 million illegal weapons in just 10 years. If there were no legal guns in people's homes, then these 6 million illegal weapons would not be in circulation.

4. There's no point controlling guns – if criminals want to get one, they will.

There's no point having an alarm on your house – if criminals want to break in to your house they will. There's no point in having security at airports – if criminals want to blow up a plane they will. There's no point in making heroin and meth illegal – if criminals want to get these drugs they will. There's no point in locking your car – if criminals want to break into it, they will. There's no point in having metal detectors at the House of Representatives – if criminals want to smuggle a gun in and kill members of congress they will. There's no point in teaching your kids about stranger danger – if criminals want to kidnap your child, they will. There's no point in doing anything that makes criminal activity more difficult, right?

5. If there were no guns, people would just use other weapons

A 20 round magazine in a semi-automatic handgun can be fully discharged in about 4 seconds. That is five shots a second. According to the FBI, even a novice gun user can shoot three rounds a second. That means (assuming you miss some of the time) that you can kill a couple of people per second using one of these guns. A fully automatic weapon is much faster.

Now think about someone attacking a crowd of people with a knife. How many people will they be able to kill per second? On the same day that 26 people were killed in an elementary by a single man using semi-automatic guns, a man in china attacked an elementary school with a knife, killing no one. This is still a tragic incident, but the scope of loss is just not comparable.

6. The US is just more violent than other industrialized nations.

That is simply not true. The rate of assaults in the US (250.9 per 100,000 in 2010) is right in the middle of other similar countries. The US rate is lower than Ireland, Sweden, the UK, Belgium, Germany and Australia. It is higher than Japan, Denmark, Norway and France. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the US is a more violent nation than others, except the much higher gun homicide rate.

7. I need a gun to defend myself from the government

If you are actively planning an armed rebellion against the government, you are the last person I want owning a gun. I don't want terrorists of any type stockpiling weapons with the intent to use them against the United States.

If, however, you are genuinely concerned about citizens' ability to defend themselves in case of a dictator coming to power and abolishing all of the freedoms that your country stands for, let me put your mind at rest – guns don't matter. In Morocco, where there are just 5 guns per 100 people (94% lower than in the US), the people were able to overturn a system of government, limiting the powers of King Mohammed VI and expanding the powers of the prime minister, parliament and judicial system, as well as the role of political parties.

In Libya, where the people launched an all-out armed revolution against a military dictator, the gun ownership rate was just 15.9 per 100 people (85% lower than in the US).

In Syria, where there is an ongoing civil war launched by the civilian population, the gun ownership per 100 people was just 3.9 (96% lower than in the US).

In the former USSR, where the entire system of government was overthrown by the civilian population, there was extremely strict gun control, in order to prevent a revolution.... same in Poland, same in East Germany, same in Czechoslovakia, same in Hungary...

8. It would be impossible to enact truly effective gun control laws in the US

The history of the US shows that if the country puts its mind to a task, no matter how difficult, it achieves it. Just consider a few examples: landing a man on the moon; mapping the first genes; The Marshall Plan; The Emancipation Proclamation; controlling measles / rubella / tetanus / diphtheria / Haemophilus influenza type b; the 1964 Civil Rights Act; winning the Cold War; The Hoover Dam; The Internet; the eradication of smallpox; and (of course) the Declaration of Independence.

These were all achievements considered impossible by a large proportion of the American public at one time. Just because something seems impossible does not mean that it should not be attempted.