



CT Against Gun Violence
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Testimony to the Gun Safety Task Force

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CT Against Gun Violence (CAGV) Supports Measures That Will Improve the Public Safety

1) Strengthen our assault weapons ban. One Military Feature Instead of two. Ban possession and sale and remove existing assault weapons from state (no grandfathering). Ban large capacity ammunition magazines of more than seven rounds (no grandfathering).

Military style weapons outfitted with large capacity magazines have become a chilling part of the narrative of the increasingly frequent mass shootings we are experiencing in our country. (See attached table from the Violence Policy Center, *Mass shootings in the United States*).

An illustration of some of the military features that add to the lethality of these weapons is attached.

Many experts from the military and law enforcement have spoken out that these weapons are not appropriate for civilian use. In the attached article, *Notes From A Savvy Hunter*, it is stated that

“There is no good argument for the use of assault type weaponry from a sport shooter’s perspective Those who use and enjoy firearms for hunting and target shooting, do not choose assault-style, semi-automatic weapons, due to their inherent inaccuracy.”

Our existing assault weapons statutes are simply not strong enough. The unthinkable Newtown tragedy has brought us to the tipping point. Assault weapons must not only be banned prospectively, but those currently owned and in circulation must be removed from the state.

According to research commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice to analyze the effect of the 1994 federal ban on assault weapons and LCAM's, "attacks with semiautomatics including AW's and other semiautomatics equipped with LCM's result in more shots fired, more persons hit, and more wounds inflicted per victim than do attacks with other firearms."¹

Large capacity magazines are extremely dangerous because they add to the lethality of already dangerous weapons. Hunting regulations in New York limit semi-automatics to six rounds and this has not diminished the sport for the hunter. As with assault weapons generally, many experts have acknowledged that the safety of the public is far more important than the availability of this level of firepower to civilians. This is not a Second Amendment issue. Justice Scalia stated clearly in joining the majority opinion on the recent Supreme Court cases affirming the individual right to bear arms, "it is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever, in any manner whatsoever, and for whatever purpose."²

This bold and forceful proposal is the least we can do in response to the enormity of the Sandy Hook tragedy.

2) Require Universal Background Checks on All sales and transfers, including long guns.

Currently in Connecticut, although we have closed the "gun show loophole," private sales of long guns, including guns like the Bushmaster .223 used in the Sandy Hook shooting, can be sold in a private transfer with no background check and no record.

We support a proposal that would require background checks and records of all transactions, even on private sales.

3). Require registration of handguns with annual renewal.

Most gun homicides occur in our urban centers and affect primarily minorities. Of the 102 firearm homicides in Connecticut in 2011, 75, 73.5%, occurred in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport. 84.3% of the victims were black or Hispanic. See attached chart of CT Firearm Homicides and Firearm Death Data by Race.

The overwhelming majority of gun homicides are committed by persons who are prohibited from owning guns. So it is clearly evident that legally purchased firearms are being diverted into the illegal market. Most of these crimes are committed with handguns. There are essentially four sources of illegal guns:

¹ Christopher S. Koper, *An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003*, Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice 3 (June 2004).

² Over 70% favor the ban on large-capacity magazines and assault weapons. The Harris Poll, Sept. 9-13, 2004.

1. Straw purchase sales (Someone who is not prohibited from buying firearms makes the purchase and transfers the gun to some one who is prohibited).
2. Legally licensed but corrupt at-home and commercial gun dealers (FFLs - Federal Firearms Licensees). It is presumed that this is a huge source of crime guns. Like bank robbers, who are interested in banks because that's where the money is, gun traffickers are interested in FFLs because that's where the guns are.
3. Unlicensed street dealers.
4. Stolen guns.

In our opinion, the best way to begin to understand how this diversion is working is to start keeping better records of the whereabouts of the legally purchased guns. If we require guns to be registered, with annual renewal, we will begin to have a sense of how many guns, legally purchased, are still in the possession of the legal purchasers. Registrants would have to stipulate that all of the guns registered to them are in their possession. If any are not, they would have to explain what happened to the gun. From there we can begin to "connect the dots" as to how many guns are potentially being diverted and why.

The conventional wisdom has been that the guns coming into the possession of prohibited users are coming from "down south." The evidence indicates otherwise. The attached illustration, *Source States for Firearms with a Connecticut Recovery*; showing the source of guns recovered in Connecticut shows that of the 832 guns recovered in Connecticut and traced back to the original purchase by the ATF in 2011, 544 of those, 65.4%, were purchased here in Connecticut. Only 92, 11.1%, came from "down South." So if we can have a better sense of the whereabouts of the guns purchased, and therefore registered, in Connecticut, we can begin to get a better handle on the diversion.

4) Safe Storage.

Current Connecticut law states that if a minor (defined as a person under sixteen years of age) gains access to a firearm and causes death or injury to himself or others, the owner of the gun has strict liability and is guilty of a Class D Felony unless the firearm was properly stored. The new proposal would expand the liability and penalty if any person who is not the owner gains access to the firearm with the same result.

5) Permit required for all guns and ammunition.

This proposal is sensible, especially in light of the fact that universal background checks are under strong consideration for all sales and transfers including long guns.

Connecticut has not previously had restrictions on ammunition purchases and the time to do it is now as these other changes are under consideration. Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey currently require licenses to purchase ammunition. Massachusetts also requires a license to sell ammunition.

6) Restrict handgun sales to one per month.

Gun traffickers, often with the aid of "straw buyers," profit from buying guns in quantity for illegal resale. They profit from quantity discounts and from reducing the number of transactions necessary, and thus reducing the risk of getting caught. Restricting sales to one per month increases the risk of being caught, reduces the profit margin due to lack of quantity discounts, and therefore reduces the incentive to profit from trafficking.

7) Prohibit Internet sales.

Online sales of firearms or ammunition would be prohibited to Connecticut residents unless the purchase were delivered to a Connecticut licensed dealer. The buyer would then complete the purchase with the dealer, upon display of a permit and completion of other required paperwork and background checks.