

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Samuel McAdoo, and I am nineteen years old and have been a lifelong resident of the State of Connecticut, and a lifelong enthusiast of the shooting sports. Since I was in the seventh grade, I have participated in competitive target shooting at the state and national level, competing at the National Matches at Camp Perry every year since 2009. I am writing this, my first ever message to officials of the state government, because I am deeply worried about the upcoming hearings regarding gun control and a number of related measures that have been proposed. None of these proposals will have any noticeable effect on crime, and are solely aimed at punishing lawful gun owners for the actions of a deranged minority.

The term 'assault weapon' is not a term rooted in gunsmithing, firearms engineering, or military doctrine, it is simply a frightening-sounding marketing label devised by anti-Second Amendment activists to describe guns which look intimidating to the untrained eye. The term has been chosen, I would think deliberately, to cause confusion in the public with the term 'assault rifle,' which describes a fully-automatic or burst-firing weapon chambered in an intermediate cartridge (one of smaller than .30 caliber but with higher muzzle energy and range than a conventional pistol round). The weapons classified under the term of 'assault weapon' are not 'weapons of war,' as so many individuals, whether ignorant or deceitful, claim. Machine guns and those capable of switching between different rates of fire are already highly regulated under both Connecticut law (requiring them to be registered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and barring their transfer to or the use thereof by an individual under the age of 16) and the 1986 Firearm Owners Protection Act. In Connecticut law, the term 'assault weapon' carries the following meaning set down in 1994:

*(1) any selective-fire firearm capable of fully automatic, semiautomatic, or burst fire at the user's option; (2) any of a list of named firearms; or (3) any unlisted semi-automatic rifle or pistol that can accept a detachable magazine and has at least two of specified features; or (4) a part or combination of parts designed or intended to convert a firearm into an assault weapon"*

The 'specified features' named in the law are specified [here](#), and include such features as *(iii) a bayonet mount*, or *(v) a grenade launcher*, neither of which have been used in a crime in the State of Connecticut, to the best of my research. The menace of drive-by bayonetings on the streets of Hartford or Bridgeport is negligible. Further, all 'assault weapons' classified under the law, and those under review right now, fire in a semiautomatic fashion; that is, one round every time the trigger is pulled, without needing to manually cycle the bolt. The trigger can be pulled for as long or as forcefully as the shooter likes, but only one round will be fired, and the hypothetical conversion of a semi-automatic rifle into a fully automatic or selective-fire weapon is an essentially impossible scenario which occurs only in the imaginations of anti-Second Amendment activists. Those features, and those named on the above-linked list in addition to them, do not affect the operation of the weapon in any way. They do not enhance the accuracy of the weapon in any way, nor the power of the projectiles leaving the muzzle, nor the rate at which cartridges are cycled through the chamber and fired. These features are simply cosmetic enhancements that give the weapon a more menacing

look to the untrained eye. As someone with significant experience with firearms, and a distinct fascination with military history (which I am currently studying in college), I can say that anyone who thinks an off-the-shelf AR-15 or Mini-14/30 is a 'weapon of war' or an 'assault rifle' is deluded. If one were to attempt to take a house in Fallujah in 2003-2004 with an AR-15, they would be massacred. There is a reason our brave brothers and sisters in uniform do not use a civilian rifle like the AR-15 in combat - a semiautomatic weapon chambered in .223 is woefully unsuited. Instead, the United States military primarily uses the M4A1 carbine, which is fully automatic, and the M16A1, which fires a three-round burst, and is in the process of finding replacements for both. While the two aforementioned service rifles may look similar at first glance to the AR-15, the only thing they really have in common is the .223 round each fires, a matte black coat of paint, and a carry handle on top.

However, one need not resort to hypotheticals and examinations of military gear to decide the effectiveness of 'assault weapons' bans and strict gun control measures on crime. Fortunately for us, there is a good experiment on record to provide such data, and it is the 1994-2004 Federal assault weapons ban. In 2004, upon the ban's expiration, the National Research Council penned a report, which [concluded](#) that "*due to the fact that the relative rarity with which the banned guns were used in crime before the ban ... the maximum potential effect of the ban on gun violence outcomes would be very small....*" In addition, research done by the Department of Justice and National Institute of Justice [found](#) that "*should the ban be renewed, its effects on gun violence would likely be small, and perhaps too small for reliable measurement, because rifles in general, including rifles referred to as "assault rifles" or "assault weapons", are rarely used in gun crimes.*" In addition, [statistics](#) from before and after the period for which the law was in effect show that less than 2% of guns used in crimes fell under the "assault weapon" umbrella. After the expiration of the ban, statistics from the office of Diane Feinstein, the author of the 1994 AWB and proponent of one proposed in the US House of Representatives, estimated that 'assault weapons' were used in 385 murders nationwide since 2004 or roughly 48 per year, 0.6% of the time, [less than](#) other deadly weapons such as knives, clubs, fists, fire, strangulation, and asphyxiation.

So, we've established that 'assault weapon' is an empty, meaningless political term, that 'assault weapons' are a vanishingly small minority of guns used in crimes, and that the 1994 national ban was wholly ineffective in lowering crime rates, which had been and continue to be falling. What now? Now, it seems, numerous proposals are being made to make laws even more pointlessly punitive and restrictive in the wake of the senseless tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary. Some of the measures include:

- *Arbitrary restrictions on magazine size to ten rounds and the confiscation of those above that limit in the State of Connecticut.* While it may seem attractive at first glance, this proposal would not change the events that occurred at Sandy Hook. At Columbine High School in 1999, shooter Eric Harris complied with the proposed law, by bringing thirteen ten-round magazines with him and, with the aid of Dylan Klebold, killed thirteen people. At Virginia Tech in 2007, shooter Seung-Hui Cho killed thirty-two people and wounded seventeen more, while carrying nineteen ten- and fifteen-round magazines. Limiting magazine size will not stop a deranged individual.
- *Statewide registration of all firearms and re-registration every two years with increasing fees* While well-meaning, such an endeavor would likely do little to trace guns used in crimes, as many are unregistered and acquired illegally anyway. Additionally, the existence of such a registry of gun owners raises

questions of civil liberties and the limits of government monitoring of its citizens. Measures like these serve only to make life more difficult for law-abiding gun owners, and make guns too much of a procedural and financial burden to own and use. By their nature, criminals would be largely unaffected by measures such as these.

- *Requirement of a permit for any rifle with a pistol grip.* Again, this falls under the above-mentioned traits. The law goes after a scary-looking weapon that is no deadlier than any other, and serves only to be a hassle to law-abiding shooters.
- *Limiting how much ammo one can purchase and possess.* More punitive measures circumvented by illegal purchasing. Limiting ammunition is like limiting gasoline to stop drunk driving. It doesn't address the issue at hand, and only punishes those who are innocent. This concept appears to be a running theme among the proposed legislation. One week of one person competing at Camp Perry for the National Matches can use over 2,000 rounds of ammunition, depending on the events participated in.
- *Registration of all ammunition purchases.* More unnecessary red tape to vex lawful gun owners.
- *Banning Internet sales of ammunition to Connecticut.* See above.
- *Mandatory gun storage laws.* Laws like these were struck down by the United States Supreme Court in the [District of Columbia vs. Heller](#) case in 2008.

In short, none of the proposed 'solutions' to gun violence in our great state would be effective in lowering crime, and would only serve to punish lawful gun owners for crimes they did not commit. However, all of this talk so far avoids the elephant in the room, the tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary a month ago. The events that transpired that morning, when Adam Lanza walked into an elementary school and gunned down 26 people, including 20 children aged five to ten, are immeasurable in their heinousness, and no amount of legislation or anything else can bring those children back. However, when attempting to react in the wake of a tragedy such as this, it is important to ask if the measures being considered would have stopped that tragedy from occurring. In this case, that answer is an obvious 'no.' In the car used by him, Adam Lanza left two pistols and one shotgun, weapons like those used at Columbine and Virginia Tech. Lack of access to the AR-15-style rifle used in the attack would not have been an impediment. Looking into the past, the same is true. As mentioned above, the weapons used at Columbine and Virginia Tech were fully compliant with laws in place and those proposed now. The weapon used in the assassination attempt on President Reagan in 1981 was a .22 caliber revolver pistol, far outside the scope of any proposed law. In 1966, the shooter at the University of Texas Austin bell tower used a bolt-action rifle with an internal five-round box magazine (a design unchanged since the 1890s) to kill fourteen people and wound thirty-two more. None of these incidents would have been affected in the slightest by an 'assault weapons' ban or any of the proposed measures since the Sandy Hook tragedy.

Having done nothing but shoot down (no pun intended) the existing and proposed measures regarding gun control as ineffective and pointless political abstractions, the next logical step is to say "now what?" In this case, 'what' is to greatly improve our

utterly broken mental health system. One common factor among all the above shootings is the universal trait of severe mental illness among the perpetrators. While Eric, Dylan, Seung-Hui, the bell-tower shooter, and Adam all committed suicide as law enforcement closed in, examination, both post-mortem and through interviews with associates, shows they all suffered from severe emotional and mental illness, and did not receive the necessary help. Charles Whitman, the bell-tower sniper, was found on autopsy to have a highly aggressive brain tumor which likely contributed to his behavior. The would-be Reagan assassin still resides in a mental hospital to this day. The Columbine shooters both exhibited signs of sociopathy and were victims of bullying prior to the incident. The two boys wrote down and discussed in great detail their plans for the massacre prior to carrying it out, and their wishes to 'outdo' the siege at Waco, and the bombing at Oklahoma City, seemingly wishing to go out in a blaze of glory, leaving their lasting impression on society. If nonstop saturation coverage of the incident following it is any indication, they appear to have succeeded. Adam Lanza may have suffered from Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism-spectrum disorder, and was homeschooled by his mother. These incidents all show how the state and society as a whole have failed those with mental illness. People who carry out spree killings like these do not suddenly decide one day to go gun down a class full of first-graders. These killings are premeditated events, and the perpetrators can spend months planning out their attacks, during which time they receive no help. If these troubled individuals could have received some form of help, then maybe these tragedies could have been avoided.

In addition, I should clarify that I do not ascribe to the absolutist no-compromise policies suggested by groups like the National Rifle Association, who represent the largest voice for gun owners in this country. I believe that preventing guns from falling into the hands of people like Adam Lanza is the most important step we can take to reducing gun violence. Adam did not walk into a gun store and buy the weapons used in his rampage, he stole them from his mother, who did not securely store them, knowing that there was a disturbed individual living in her house who had access to them. I believe efficient and instant background checks, including at gun shows and for certain private sales, are a good measure to prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands. Blocking convicted felons and those with severe mental illnesses or a history of psychiatric treatment from purchasing firearms is also a good measure to help prevent gun violence. Two- to five-day waiting periods for the purchase of handguns, to allow potentially suicidal individuals a chance to 'cool off' and get help is a reasonable step to take. Simply rigorously enforcing the hundreds of gun laws already on the books at the Federal and State level would do much to curb gun violence in this country. Most of all, however, we as a culture need to take responsibility for those with mental illness, and take firearms responsibly and seriously as well.

In the coming weeks, you will likely hear many highly emotional proposals from tearful individuals that the only way to stop future killings is to wantonly trample all over the Second Amendment rights of the law-abiding citizens of the State of Connecticut. I urge you, the good people of the Task Force, to look beyond the hyperbole and the obfuscating emotion and examine the proposals with reason, as I have attempted here. They do not work, will not work, and will not prevent another massacre. Any proposal

that attempts to ban certain types of firearms does not address the problem, and neither will arming teachers and turning elementary schools into police fortresses. To Senator Kevin Witkos, who represents my hometown of Simsbury, know that should you vote for any measures restricting the freedoms of lawful gun owners, you will not have my vote next election. In closing, I leave this statement. It was culled not from some militia-survivalist manifesto, nor some Tea Party placard, but Article I, Section 15 of the Connecticut State Constitution of 1965. It states, simply:

*Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state.*

With respect and hope for the future,  
Samuel McAdoo