

Gun Violence Prevention Working Group
Public Hearing Testimony
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Room 2C
Hartford, CT 06106

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January 28, 2013

Committee Members,

I urge you to oppose further restrictions on semi-automatic rifles such as the AR-15 based upon cosmetic appearances. These rifles are no more evil than any other semi-automatic rifles. Specifically the AR-15 is currently one of the most popular style rifles for the American public and has achieved the status of a commonly owned firearm for decades.

Contrary to statements to those who wish to prohibit them, the AR-15 is a modular rifle that with the proper upper half (cartridge/caliber) is used for hunting. The AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle is also the most popular rifle used in center fire high power rifle competition, a valid sporting use. To simply prohibit the possession and sale of this rifle based on outward cosmetic appearances is simply an arbitrary firearm ban that serves no effective means in preventing another tragedy like Newtown. In fact a June 2004 study by The Jerry Lee Center of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania to the United States Department of Justice calls into question the effectiveness of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban 1994-2004. The report stated that the consequences of reinstatement of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: "Should it be renewed, the ban might reduce gunshot victimizations. This effect is likely to be small at best and possibly too small for reliable measurement." Further evidence of the probable ineffectiveness of a semi-automatic "Assault Rifle" ban may be garnered from the FBI statistics of Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States. For murders committed with firearms from 2006 to 2010 (see: <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/tables/10shrtbl08.xls>) : In the 5 year period there were a total of 47,856 murders attributed to firearms of which 1,980 were attributed to rifles (4.1%) of which the semi-automatic "Assault Weapon" is a smaller subset. In fact the FBI Uniform Crime Reports indicate that more murders were committed with blunt objects (3,031) or personal weapons such as hands, fists and feet (4147) over the same time period. I think these statistics clearly demonstrate that increased restriction on rifles would have little effect on the overall problem of gun violence.

When considering such ineffective firearm bans I would you like you to take into consideration the negative impact on the law abiding citizenry right of self protection and the negative economic impact on lawful commerce of gun manufactures and gun retailers. Overall such proposals could be expected to generate a negative return on investment to both lawful citizens and lawful commerce.

Likewise some of the proposals put forth by the Connecticut Legislature such as gun registration schemes, frequent permit renewals, increased permit fees, ammunition regulations, the levying of select taxes related to firearms or ammunition do nothing to address the root cause of gun violence or provide a targeted approach aimed only at individuals who would commit violent acts with firearms. On the contrary, these proposals would have a chilling effect on the ability of the average law abiding citizen to exercise a constitutional right.

Approaches that do seem to have a measurable effect on reducing gun violence are measures like Project Longevity as reported in the Hartford Courant on Jan. 21, 2013. To quote the article "Under the Longevity program, researchers study gangs, their makeup and relationships, focusing on the relatively small number of people who commit the most violent crimes." A similar report by the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) 2012-R-0061 titled "Gun Violence Reduction in Small U.S. Cities" offers other examples of intelligent targeted approaches.

These reports suggest that targeting the problem and individuals related to gun violence rather than the instrument will have a beneficial effect of gun violence reduction. Looking for ways to enforce current firearm laws and providing means of funding these initiatives are what I expect of my government.

Respectfully, Scott Martin