January 28, 2013

Dear Senators and Representatives of the Gun Violence Working Group

My name is Steve Bartholomew. I am a product development manager for a defense contractor and a licensed professional engineer in Connecticut. More importantly, I am a father of 3 wonderful children, all of whom I have taught to shoot. Specifically, I've taught them to shoot safely and how to be a responsible firearm owner and user.

I am very concerned with many of the anti firearms bills currently proposed and I fear for the future of my kids in Connecticut. These bills will have little real impact on gun violence, but the way they are written they will turn thousands of law abiding citizens into felons. What options will I have - if suddenly the things that I have owned and used for 40 years are made illegal? I can't tell my kids it is OK to ignore the law. The only option will be to move out of state. Thousand of fellow citizens will be in the same predicament.

The combination of some of these bills, while not outright confiscating our firearms immediately - with do so in effect by making it impossible to use the firearms, or to pass them down to our children or grandchildren.

I ask that you please learn about products before you ban them. A good example of misguided intentions are the "assault weapon" bans. I believe the term Assault Weapon was invented to cause confusion about the true functioning of a firearm. There is a legitimate term: "Assault Rifle". This refers to a military rifle that fires an intermediate sized cartridge and is capable of full automatic fire (a machine gun). These are already heavily restricted and regulated by federal law. An AR-15, that some wish to ban, is not an assault rifle. The letters "AR" in AR-15 came from the name of the company that developed it almost 60 years ago, the Armalite Company. The proposed "assault weapon" bills seek to ban some semi automatic rifles just because of cosmetic features that the rifles have - with no concern that the rifles operate just like any other semi-automatic rifle.

Take the proposed magazine bans. The so called "large capacity" magazines are really standard capacity magazines. There are no alternatives for many firearms, especially pistols. For many pistols there are no 10 round magazines in existence. Banning certain types of magazines is only a feel good measure anyway. When shooting, it only takes about a second to change magazines. For me personally - the proposed magazine restriction would pose a physical hardship. I have arthritis in both thumbs caused by a joint misalignment and it therefore it is difficult for me to load most magazines. I frequently shoot in competitive matches and train for these matches. I'm able to participate in the matches by having a family member load the magazines for me ahead of time. Restricted capacity magazines would make this less effective.

Please focus on the actual measures that will reduce gun violence – such as increasing the enforcement of existing laws, increasing the penalty for criminal use of weapons, and keeping weapons from criminals and those who are mentally unstable. These solutions may be harder to devise and implement than just instituting a blanket ban. But as you assess these bills coming before you, please consider the negative impact the proposed blanket bans will have on the hundreds of thousands of responsible firearm owning, law abiding, citizens in your state.

Thank you.

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