

January 28, 2013

Senators and Representatives of the task force,

It is currently popular and politically correct to demonize the NRA and other groups who are defending the second amendment, as well as responsible, law-abiding gun owners. I am one of those who are targeted by much of the additional legislation that has been proposed since the beginning of the new legislative session.

I was raised in a safe environment that was protected by firearms. I was brought up knowing the reality that there is indeed evil in the world we live in and I was also taught to have respect for other people and to respect life itself. My father's 31 years as a police officer, as well as my mother's career in nursing are probably the reason why their three children spent time serving the public in one capacity or another. I served four years of active duty in the Marine Corps, my brother served for a number of years as a volunteer firefighter and is currently an EMT, and my sister is presently a nurses' aide.

My wife and I have two sons, one is in college and the other is a high school junior. Presently and for the past 18 years, I have been an HVAC service technician. I am middle-class America. I have never even attended a public hearing, until today.

Since I turned 18, I have always exercised my rights that are guaranteed in the 2nd amendment of the US Constitution, as well as in Article 1, section 15 of the Connecticut Constitution. Not one of my firearms has ever misbehaved itself and done anything to harm another individual. The type of firearms and amount of ammunition that those firearms contain is nobody's business but my own. If in the event that I ever need to use one in defense of my life or to defend my loved ones, I want an efficient firearm and as many rounds as I can carry to be available. Allowing legislation to decide how many rounds I should be allowed to carry or even possess, is unacceptable!

Rather than turning law-abiding citizens into criminals, the lawmakers should be making it harder on those who commit violent crimes or gun-trafficking crimes.

Punish those who need to be punished! I find it ironic that during the last legislative session, the General Assembly voted in favor of the governor's idea of abolishing the death penalty in Connecticut, and now here we are..... looking to punish law-abiding citizens through taxes, fees, bans and maybe even confiscation.

Our police personnel are necessary to maintain order and they will protect us when they can, but they cannot be expected to protect all of us 24/7! Enough with the idea of gun free zones! A couple of token security guards at Columbine, no opposition present at Ft. Hood, Luby's Restaurant in Killeen TX, VA Tech, the Aurora theater and now Sandy Hook elementary school. The restrictive laws or policies were followed by all of the people involved in these incidents except for the attackers! Allow responsible citizens who have been fingerprinted and background checked by local, state and federal law enforcement to discreetly carry their sidearm in the event of another rampage! All of the focus is presently on schools at this point, but similar massacres could happen anywhere, anytime! Punish the criminal who employs the gun, not the civilian who is dressed for peace, but prepared for trouble!

I am deeply saddened at the atrocity that took place at Sandy Hook. I pray for the families and friends of the loved ones who were so mercilessly taken away. I am also thankful for the first responders who served there and especially to those officers who charged into the active scene, probably saving additional innocents on that horrible day.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ted Kuracz Jr.

Windsor Locks, CT

1/25/2012

Greetings Chairman Scott Jackson and members of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission.

My name is Andrew Woods and I'm the Executive Director of Hartford Communities That Care, located here in Hartford. We've been in existence since 1998, providing youth development, workforce development, afterschool and summer enrichment programs, crisis intervention and mental health supports for those impacted by homicides and other violent crimes in Hartford.

Since 1998, Hartford has experienced an average of one homicide per week, amounting to over 720 homicides and nearly three times as many non-fatal shootings during this 15 year time-frame.

The vast majority of these homicides have been committed by individuals using handguns versus the much debated use of assault rifles and machine guns used in mass killings such as Columbine and most recently Newtown, Connecticut.

Though much has also been discussed about mental health screening of those who seek to purchase or are in current possession of firearms, I would suggest we consider youth in urban areas who don't seem to fit, once again, within the current debates here and nationally.

As it stands, there's a tendency to criminalize first, the behaviors and actions of black and Hispanic youth charged with shooting and or killing others but clinicalizing white suburban youth who shoot and /or kill others. In other words, in our society we tend to believe that when a white youth kills someone, there must have been a psychological reason for their actions and when youth of color kill, the reason must be criminal in nature.

As the point person for the City of Hartford charged with responding to homicides and shooting and making sure families gain knowledge and access to mental health supports. I can tell you first hand that mental health supports for all youth and families are critical.

In conclusion, I would like to make several recommendations for you to consider:

- 1) It should be a Class A felony for anyone convicted of selling firearms illegally in the State of Connecticut.
- 2) It should be a Class C felony for gun owners who didn't report a stolen or missing gun which was eventually used in the commission of a crime.
- 3) Trauma Informed treatment strategies should be standard protocol for children who witness, experience or are environmentally exposed to violence such as in urban centers where violence is common place.
- 4) Capacity building, technical assistance and funding should be made available to grassroots and faith-based organizations currently engaged in youth development work that target at-risk youth in high crime neighborhoods.
- 5) The Youth Promise Act sponsored by Congressman Bobby Scott-VA and co-signed by over 235 members of congress, including Congressman John Larson. Also, supported by over 15 members of the U.S. Senate and over 250 national, state and local organizations. Under the