

Senate Bill-613, An Act Concerning Gun Violence and House Bill 5950, An Act Reducing the Incidence of Gun Violence

My name is Thomas Clark, I live in Fairfield, CT and I oppose Senate Bill-613, An Act Concerning Gun Violence and House Bill 5950, An Act Reducing the Incidence of Gun Violence

Every death is a tragedy – irrespective of the circumstances. For the family, friends and community of the deceased, the impact of the loss is life altering and immeasurable.

I preface my remarks with this acknowledgement because laws must be debated with cool heads, divorced from the emotion legitimately evoked by tragedy, but to ignore this element diminishes our humanity.

To formulate an appropriate response to an issue, the impact of the problem and the solution must be quantified and placed into context.

Mark Twain made famous a line researchers love to quote; “there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics”. To help quantify and contextualize the problem, I’m going to share some numbers which I promise, are limited to statistics, citations are available if requested.

These numbers exclude suicides and justifiable homicides.

In 2011, the last year the FBI has complete data published, in all of the US, 8,583 people were murdered with firearms. That represents 0.003%, or three thousandths of 1 percent of the population. Of all firearm murders in the US, 323, or 4% were committed with a rifle. \*

The same year, in Connecticut, 128 murders were committed with firearms. That represents 0.003%, or three thousandths of 1 percent of Connecticut’s 3.5 million residents. Of those 128 CT murders, 1, or 0.8% was committed with a rifle. \*\*

These numbers reveal two points of interest

1. Murders by firearm, while generating sensational headlines and attention, are extremely rare occurrences.
2. Murders by any type of rifle, assault weapon or not, account for only 4% of all firearm homicides nationally and only 0.8% in CT

When looking at mass murders, the numbers shrink even further. The mass murders in Newtown, Aurora, Tucson, Virginia Tech and Columbine were monumental, unforgettable horrors, the victims’ friends, families and communities will forever be defined by the killings.

They are also, thankfully, extremely rare. It is because they are so rare that in a nation of more than 310 million, the deaths of 100 victims over the past 12 years are universally known and mourned.

To provide context, in the US, 60-70 people are killed by lightening, every single year. \*\*\*

Whether from lightening, firearm or automobile, every death is a tragedy and tragedies motivate good people to search for preventative measures. Following the Columbine murders in 1999, the Clinton administration tasked the CDC with studying gun control laws and identifying the impact of different initiatives.

From 2000-2002, the CDC task force reviewed 51 published studies about the effectiveness of eight types of gun-control laws, including the 1994 Federal Omnibus Crime Bill which included the assault weapon ban and related ban on magazines holding more than 10 rounds.

The CDC released their report titled First Reports Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies for Preventing Violence: Firearms Laws on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003; I'm quoting from the summary on page 1:

"The Task Force found insufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of any of the firearms laws or combinations of laws reviewed on violent outcomes."

I work in market research, every once in a while I have occasion to remind my clients that just because the data from a study doesn't indicate something they expect to find, it doesn't necessarily mean it's been disproven. But if data from 51 studies fails to provide conclusive evidence of an assumption, they're probably barking up the wrong tree.

In a free society, government is charged with an obligation to demonstrate a substantial justification for any restrictions imposed on its citizens. The solution proposed by this bill does not pass that test.

I oppose SB-613 and HB-5950 because there is zero evidence they will prevent the extraordinarily rare tragedies which inspired their drafting. To the contrary, the CDC study indicates they would have no impact. I humbly propose that even its authors likely agree: given the anticipated exemptions granted to Connecticut's gunsmiths, manufacturers and distributors from any prohibitions which would impede their production, repair and delivery of the banned magazines for unrestricted use by all the good people who reside outside our state.

In closing, SB-613 and HB-5950 will not prevent tragedies; rather they will restrict the freedom of the law abiding citizens of Connecticut, forcing our 500,000 licensed gun owners to choose between surrendering their lawfully obtained personal property and becoming felons. I fear the Bills' inevitable ineffectuality will eventually serve as justification for further restrictions.

\* <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8>

\*\* <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/table-20>

\*\*\* [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/medical.htm](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/medical.htm)