

January 28, 2013

I am submit this testimony to oppose any further restrictions on the types of firearms or magazine capacity available to Connecticut citizens. We have some of the strictest laws in the nation and an AWB in place today. Today you will hear many facts about gun control, crime, and gun ownership. However, I'd like to explore a slightly different angle on the topic; that of the so often used term , "need".

I fear that too many of us, on either side of the debate, feel that we know what the threats are, and what we need to assure our safety. The term "need" has framed a discussion of who "needs" firearms, what type they "need", how many rounds of ammunition they "need".

For over 221 years we have had the 2nd Amendment. In that time, the words have never changed, and yet obviously as a society, we have changed around it. One constant has remained; the desire for individuals to feel safe. The gun debate often boils down to who we, as individuals, perceive as a threat and who we feel can best provide our safety.

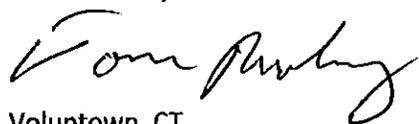
The 2nd Amendment is as simple in its language as it is in its lack of specifics. The authors realized that not all situations could be envisioned. And yet its foundation was that of a single principle, that all citizens had the right, if they chose, to provide for their own security, against all threats.

In the mid 1950s Martin Luther King rose to lead the burgeoning civil rights movement. It might surprise you; it did me, to learn that Dr. King kept firearms for protection. Glen Smiley, an advisor to King, once described the King home as "an arsenal". The "need" of course should be obvious. In 1956, after Dr. King's house was bombed, he applied for a concealed carry permit in Alabama, feeling the need to be armed outside the house. In the interest of public safety, the laws gave the local police discretion to determine who was suitable. Not surprisingly Dr. King was denied. Dr. King, a clergyman whose life was threatened daily was denied yet another right, his 2nd Amendment rights to protect himself and his family. Why? In 1950s Alabama, Dr. King WAS the threat. Not to worry; he had the police to protect him; he had no "need" to provide for his own defense.

The laws of 1950 Alabama were put in place, and executed with bureaucratic discretion because of fear. Fear of threats such as Dr. King and his supporters. Would anyone today challenge how many rounds Dr. King, in defense of his family, "needed" in a magazine, or what type of firearm he felt he needed? Why then, like the police of 1950s Alabama, would you declare you can know who needs to defend themselves, and what threats they might face? Why then would you be strip citizens of ANY constitutional right by and limit the tools and the choices people make to provide for their own security? The erosion of any right is an erosion of all of our rights.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this topic.

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