

RE: Testimony for CT Gun Violence Task Force Hearing

Good afternoon Chairperson and members of the committee. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to voice our opinions and express our concerns about this very important matter of violence.

My name is Tom Parker. I am a resident of Tolland, CT and would like to state that I oppose many of the proposed measures that seek to limit firearms, magazine capacity, or firearm availability. I support many of the measures that seek to strengthen background checks, enhance punishment of convicted criminals, and measures that seek to address the issues surrounding mental illness.

I have a personal story of a home invasion narrowly averted which illustrates the most basic need that we have to be able to defend ourselves – a home invasion in my house. In September of 2003, Hurricane Isabella struck the Mid-Atlantic States. At the time, I was a resident of Fairfax County in Northern Virginia, and lived directly in the path of that storm. Not surprisingly, our power was knocked out as was our phone line and internet connection. With nothing to do, my wife and I were sitting in our basement, riding out the storm while reading by flashlight.

As we were there reading, the air conditioner in my basement window started moving in a very unnatural way. This window was small. I could not see around the AC unit. But the movements were very deliberate: up, down, left, right, in, out. Someone was trying to force their way into our house by removing that air conditioning unit and crawling in through the basement. My wife and I were quite startled and scared. My options at this point were very limited. I had no ability to call the police, no internet to get out a message, and, with the power out, whatever security system I might have had would have been rendered useless. I realized, instantly, that I was alone and at a severe disadvantage. I'm sure the people on the other side of that air conditioner also knew this.

I immediately & quietly told my wife to hide in the boiler room. I ran into a basement closet to find the only thing I had for defense. I grabbed ahold of my aluminum softball bat and ran back toward the air conditioner. Not knowing what to do, I held the bat in one hand, and with my other smacked the face of the air conditioner. The movement immediately stopped and for a few moments, I heard the rustle of footsteps outside that unit. Then it went completely silent. Now I had no idea what was going on. As quickly as I could, I ran upstairs to get a view of what was going on. Looking at that basement window from above, I couldn't see anything. However, at the corner of my yard, on the sidewalk, were two full grown adult figures walking away from my house.

Still unable to call for help, I did what I could to secure the house. I removed that air conditioner from the window, walked around the perimeter of the house, locked all windows and doors, closed the blinds, and waited. An hour or so later, I went to bed with my wife and my aluminum bat. I stayed awake the whole night and waited.

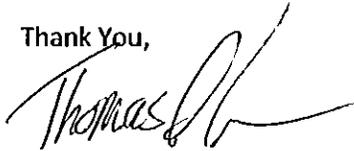
Those guys I saw could have been no one. Or they could have been the ones and only intended a small burglary. They might have been armed and intended more. I will never know. But I did know that the

neighborhood a few streets over was well-known for gang activity and I also knew there was one of me and two of them. When I read about cases like the doctor in Cheshire, CT who lost his wife and two daughters in one of the most heinous home invasions on record, I realize that I was incredibly lucky. I also now fully realize the importance of being able to defend myself. I cannot, I will not let that be taken away from me. It's been nearly 10 years since that hurricane and the stakes for me are much higher. Instead of just me and my wife, I now have two small children and aging parents to consider. My defense needs have increased since then. A bat wasn't sufficient then. It definitely is not sufficient now.

The proposed laws that try to eliminate guns through bans, reduce their capacity, or make them prohibitively expensive to own will only disarm me and others like me. They will not disarm those two who tried to break into my house. They didn't disarm those two who murdered the Petit family in Cheshire. They won't achieve the desired effect they're looking for.

I ask you, as members of this committee, to please consider addressing the real problem we face: violence people, mental illness, and weak criminal punishment. Allow us law-abiding citizens the basic human dignity of being able to defend ourselves with whatever means possible.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Parker", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Parker

Tolland CT.