

Dear Committee Members:

The focus of this particular group is to solicit suggestions on how to specifically reduce gun violence. The recent tragedy at Sandy Hook has sparked massive media attention and political agendas focusing on the specific type of firearm, the so called "assault weapon" used by this completely criminally insane individual. If Adam Lanza had used the shotgun he left in his trunk or the handguns he possessed would we still be calling for more regulations on "assault weapons" or "high capacity magazines"? Rather than focusing on the type of firearm used by a madman in a single event shouldn't the real question be addressed on how to reduce gun violence overall? Here in CT. we have some of the strictest gun laws in the country, including an existing "assault weapons ban", however we have shootings almost daily. And virtually none of these frequent shootings are done with AR-15 "assault style" rifles or "high capacity" magazines. To further restrict what is not the problem makes no real sense at all, but is merely a feel good gesture providing a false remedy to a very real problem of chronic gun crime.

I believe real enforcement of existing laws and aggressive interrogation of criminals that use firearms would do much more to significantly reduce gun crime in this state. The majority of firearm offenses including mere illegal possession carry a five year sentence or more yet how many criminals really serve the full 5 years? Is there any real deterrent for the criminal use of firearms if the charges are continually plea bargained down and sentences routinely reduced? In every case of an illegal shooting is the source of the weapon used determined and eliminated? The majority of shootings are by criminals with prior records or kids in the inner city. How did they get the guns??? Would gang bangers and drug dealers who are mostly under 21 be so brazen in their use of guns if they were fully prosecuted as adults when using guns in drive by's and turf wars? Providing funding in the budget to the court system to aggressively prosecute versus plea bargain gun crime, corrections facilities and personnel to house these criminals, and police departments to fully investigate the illegal source of guns used in violent crimes will do far more to reduce gun violence than feel good bans or even more restrictions on law abiding gun owners. As citizens of this state we have all endured the "shared sacrifice" of the largest tax increase in the history of our state yet budgets are severely cut for the courts, police and corrections. Perhaps we need to look at what priorities we use to spend our money to keep our people safe. We have the laws, we just need to have the will and the funding to enforce them.

Thank you all for providing this opportunity to be heard, in summation I believe we do not need to further legislate gun laws but strictly enforce the ones we already have.

Sincerely,

Victor E. Camilleri

Farmington, CT.