

For the Governor's Bi-Partisan Taskforce of Gun Violence and Children's Safety, Gun Violence Working Group

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I apologize for not providing you testimony at Monday's hearing on Gun Violence. However, I am still deeply upset about what happened at Sandy Hook School and how, if what I read was right, that there were over 8,000 fire arm related deaths in 2011, then at least 20 other families are reliving the nightmare of December 14, 2012 every day.

Had I been able to make my remarks Monday night, I know they would not have been what many people in the audience would have wanted to be said. I am not a gun owner, nor due to my personal situation will ever be one. I live with depression and have been treated for suicidal ideation. However, as I have not been in "treatment" for a number of years, I am sure if I walked into Walmart or some other retail establishment today or if I went to a gun show, or if I asked a family member who owns a number of guns and does not know I was treated for depression, I am sure I could purchase any number of weapons, as is my right.

During my 55 years on this earth, I have had some experience with weapons. Many years ago, and long before I was diagnosed, I thought about taking up hunting as I love venison and the same family member I have just mentioned took me target practicing in the woods near his home at the time. We used a rifle which I assume is commonly used for hunting deer, with a .30-06 caliber. In writing these remarks, I looked up some information about the 30.06 and learned it was originally developed for military use over 100 years ago as the "06" refers to when it was adopted (thank heavens for Wikipedia). I was quickly shown a demonstration of the "stopping power" of this weapon when my teacher fired several rounds through a discarded concrete culvert pipe. I don't know the caliber of the weapon used on December 12. But, I can no longer think about the damage those bullets did to solid concrete without thinking about what they could do to a person, let alone a six year old child.

My other memorable experience with a firearm also occurred years ago when I was hiking alone on a summer day on trail that ran close to a suburban development. Suddenly I heard a metallic whine that reminded of a bee in my ear. This was soon followed by a rifle's loud crack.

Dropping to the ground and screaming I heard at least two more bullets whiz by me. Then after several interminable minutes crawling on my stomach I emerged from woods seeing no one.

Even now when I hike near my home in Plymouth, there are times when I hear the sounds of someone ripping off a clip.

Tuesday night while I was at the hearing for mental health services I had a conversation with a self-described who showed using an index finger how quickly I could shoot a semi-automatic rifle. If I could have sat in front of you Monday night, I would have flexed my finger and counted in measured voice: 1 pause 2 pause, 3 pause 4 pause 5 pause... The family member once showed me his semi-automatic rifle and remarked how easy it would to convert it clandestinely to an automatic rifle. I don't know if anyone mentioned during the hearings. But, as the "Bushmaster" rifle is advertised as a "combat weapons system" I would not be surprised that by a few modifications I could be a more deadlier weapon.

So, I make my remarks based on my personal experience and strong belief we do not have the luxury of ignoring gun violence. I have several suggestions I would like to make:

- I believe Connecticut should be on the forefront of changing Second Amendment: While not digressing extensively, I firmly believe that like "emancipation" and "universal suffrage" we can make changes to our constitution. At the very least, a dialog regarding changing an amendment written at a time of black powder and musket balls will help us continue working on what is a national problem
- I believe Connecticut should ban further sale of weapons that have been identified as semi-automatic assault rifles as well as handguns which have a similar capacity.
- I believe current rules regarding background checks and registration should be applied to all firearms and at all points of sale including gun shows and personal transfers. While we don't have the right to own a car, there is some similarity in the responsibility of own a gun and a motor vehicle.
- I would like to see the size of ammunition clips regulated and "High capacity magazines" banned.
- Current gun laws must be vigorously enforced and penalties enhanced. Perhaps a further penalty for a criminal convicted of committing a crime with a firearm should be inclusion on a public "Megan's Law" type of listing for at least the time the person is on parole or probation.
- Connecticut should consider requiring gun owners to have liability insurance. If insurance companies were to cover gun ownership, then they would be able to require are safely stored, owners and family members are responsible and if necessary require proof. I

understand a principle of liability insurance is coverage can be limited to accidental deaths or injury and not purposeful acts. This would limit the insurance company's exposure to risk.

- If there was liability insurance, then insurance companies could require regular mental health evaluations of owners and family. The cost these evaluations would be borne by the "responsible gun owner" and not the community.
- Connecticut should consider a separate taxation structure for ammunition and weapons. If ammunition was taxed like cigarettes, then the additional revenue could be used to help communities pay for other supports which can minimize violence. Laws could be passed to allow towns to tax weapons like they do cars.

I know some of my suggestions are not possible. There are many who will defend their right to "bear arms" with rhetoric. I recently saw a flag which showed the image of an assault style rifle with the motto: "Just try and take it". I do not find it shocking to hear a self-described NRA instructor say on the radio (WTIC 1080, 3:00 news) "we vote with our guns". While people have the right to express their opinion, I shudder thinking of the serious implications of these threats. But, fifty years ago the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King and civil rights leaders throughout the country braved threats, violence and a society that supported "Segregation Now, Segregation Forever". If they could stand up for the better good, then we too can overcome to make our communities safer for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration