

Dear Mr. Maynard,

As I am unable to attend to meetings on 1/25, 1/28 and 1/30, I hereby submit my comments as a CT and US citizen concerning the above 3 topics, in the wake of recent mass shootings, including Sandy Hook School in Newtown, CT, the death of 2 firefighters in upstate NY, the seriously wounding of a Norwich Police Officer, and the killing of a family in New Mexico. All of these involved the use of semiautomatic assault style .223 Hi-velocity rifles. Three apparently involved AR-15 designs and one was a Ruger M 14. All are designed to use large cartridge capacity magazines, among others.

A) My background....

I come from a firearms manufacturing family. My father, Melvin M. Johnson Jr., designed the recoil-operated Johnson Semi-auto rifle which competed against the Garand M1 design for adoption by the US military during WWII. The rifle was ultimately not selected by the Army but was utilized by the Marines in some Pacific campaigns, along with a similarly designed Johnson Light Machine Gun, used by both the Marines and Special Forces in WWII.

Both weapons were used for "assault" or attack purposes....whether they were full or semi-automatic. Anyone trying to state that a semi-automatic rifle (like AR-15) cannot be used as an assault weapon....that only a fully automatic machine gun (like M-16) is an assault weapon...is wrong. And an "assault" is defined as a violent attack of some type....verbal or physical. Certainly, the Newtown massacre was an assault.

In the 1950's, my father served as consultant on several projects, including the Colt AR-15/M-16 rifle itself, which utilized my father's WWII rotary bolt design. Later, in the 1960's, I joined my father in business after serving in the USAF, where I qualified as an expert marksman in both the M2-Carbine and M-16 Rifle, which operate on both full and semi-auto configurations. In my father's business, we converted existing .30 caliber M1 carbines to use a high-velocity 5.7 mm cartridge, with similar performance characteristics to the Remington .223 cartridge used in the AR-15/M-16 rifles. We sold to police departments in semi-auto versions only, with 15 round magazines, such as New Haven, and marketed the same to varmint hunters in nearby states with 5 round magazines. However, the conversion process never really caught on with the public, and we closed the business 2 years later.

My subsequent career included 20 years in security, surveillance and armed guard response, plus an additional 20 years in the mental health industry involving security, monitoring and transportation of school children. I still have a CT carry permit and am a Life Member of the NRA. In any case, the preceding info above is by way of introducing who I am and what I know.

B) Mental Health.....

Years ago, Governor Rowland made the decision to close Norwich Hospital, which was housing a large volume of people, many with dangerous mental health issues. One of the comments given at that time was that the existing CT mental health outpatient program would be able to absorb that population. It didn't. One result was a highly publicized murder of an outpatient program employee (Millette-Fridge) in New London by a knife-wielding former program client (Isham) who was then shot by police. Basically, he had turned on a person who had tried to help him.

Based on what I have personally seen, we've still got some angry people out there...some of them are kids...walking among us....and they have rights. If they seek psychiatric help, the outpatient/ inpatient treatment programs, individual therapists and psychiatrists are all required to follow the laws regarding confidentiality. Only in pretty extreme cases can that confidentiality be broken. If it is, there is always the future danger that the client may have improved enough so that everyone relaxes a bit...and then the client comes back to the person who broke his/her confidentiality and takes revenge.

That revenge can take many forms....stalking, threatening, harassing and even physical harm. Or, like the shooter in upper NY State, he murdered his grandmother, was locked up for a while, stayed quiet, waited to take his revenge on society, was released, set fire to his own dwelling with his sister inside, and then shot 4 firemen, killing 2, when they arrived to do their job. And....he obtained the guns illegally....he wasn't supposed to have them.

Other than changing the confidentiality laws to be more pro-active in terms of weeding out potential threats, I submit that we are in the computer and data age and that this data be put to far better, more efficient use. Anybody who has:

threatened and/or hurt and/or killed other people with any weapon, for any reason...or...

shown to have an indication of violent, uncontrollable temper....resulting in assault..or...

shown to not be in control of themselves in public....yelling, misbehaving, nudity, etc.

which results in a police report, arrest and conviction, should be denied any access or permit for firearms permanently....in CT and preferably nationally as well. This should go, ideally, on national computer data.....certainly a CT state computer data.

If such a person, as above, is referred by the courts for psych treatment for any reason, they should ALREADY be on the police data sheet. In this manner, the people treating this client are NOT "the bad guys" who are breaking his/her confidentiality....the problem is already known.

And this method is not going to catch all the problems...but it will catch many....and should be initiated as soon as possible. The rest should be resolved between the lawmakers and the professionals in mental health. I am not a Doctor or clinician....I cannot recommend something from that perspective. Frankly, they are also the ones, as noted above, who are taking risks even now.

C) Conclusion....

Our world population is growing....and we do have computers....so it is only sensible that we create the proper data program to watch this firearms issue more directly and carefully than we have. We already used technology to go to the moon....we are now even looking at Mars....so we surely have the technology to do a better job of protecting our citizens and especially our children. And a ban on the civilian use of certain types of firearms with high capacity magazines does NOT leave us standing naked and helpless in the wilderness with no protection.

Thank you for your time.

Ed Johnson

Edward R. Johnson, 100 Plaza Court #981, Groton, CT 06340 860 705 9160