

I consider myself to be an average American. I've worked a full time job since my early teens. I got good grades in school. I pay my taxes. I own a house. I love my family. I'm the guy who holds the door for you when you're entering or leaving a store and who says thank you if you do the same for me. I'm the guy that says "Bless you" when you sneeze in public. I'm the guy who says "excuse me" when I pass in front of you while your browsing the grocery aisles. I've helped perfect strangers change their tire when they have a flat. You've probably passed by me in the department store or gas station. You probably never noticed I carry a gun. Would you think of me any differently if you knew? I would hope not, but unfortunately in the wake of recent events, it seems like myself and millions of other responsible, law abiding gun owners are being labeled as the bad guys, and I would like you to realize that is not the case.

My handgun carries 17 bullets in its magazine. That is not "high capacity" as some would like to label it, that is standard capacity. I bring this to your attention because there is proposed legislation to ban "high capacity magazines" that hold more than 10 rounds. A common question is why would I need more than 10 rounds? I would like to use a police officer's explanation; after all, it seems they would have more real world experience on the issue. It's rather lengthy, but I think it is necessary to fully answer the question.

"It's pretty simple. In any situation where your life is in danger you have certain things that happen to your body. Most people especially if they don't have some form of stress inoculation will have a massive adrenaline dump. This causes a bunch of different things to happen. The loss of fine motor skills, tunnel vision, and auditory exclusion, to name a few. Your heart rate is definitely going to be up and your breathing will likely be accelerated.

Now these situations are rarely going to be static. This means they are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving. You and the assailant are likely to be moving.

With all these things going on, shooting with laser like precision is unlikely among all but the luckiest and most trained individuals. In the best of situations one round stopping an assailant is unlikely. A determined and amped up aggressor can soak up a lot of damage. Now if you throw drugs, alcohol and some mental illnesses you may have someone that can be a serious danger while soaking up some severe damage. There is also the likely hood of multiple assailants. Thugs like to run in packs. Criminals don't like to commit crimes when they don't absolutely believe they will come out unscathed.

People seem to believe the myth that Hollywood portrays. The person getting shot once and flying across the room and all the fight is taken out of them. That's not a likely scenario. Especially with a determined attacker.

In a nutshell for the very same reasons when I work, I have 15 rounds in a magazine and more if I need it. The fact is the same criminals I face are the same ones the public faces before I get there. Why shouldn't honest law abiding citizens have the same opportunity for defense?"

I would like to highlight the fact that more and more violent encounters today occur with multiple assailants. The horrendous home invasion in Cheshire, CT involved 2 assailants. More recently in Mansfield, CT, a home invasion involved 5 assailants. A woman in Georgia recently

hid in her attic with her 2 young children when a criminal forcibly entered her home. When he came after her, she shot the man 5 times, and the man still managed to get away (only to be apprehended later by police). What if there was more than one attacker in that house? Real life is not like the movies. Studies have shown that an adult male can still fight for an average of 120 seconds after receiving a fatal gunshot wound. I, like most other gun owners truly hope I never have to use my firearm in self defense, but if I must I want to know that I have the ability to defend against multiple attackers. I am really not sure where the magic number 10 comes from (or 7, now in New York) but I think it's a mistake to limit the amount of protection a law abiding citizen can have. I don't believe any police officer or lawful citizen has complained about having too many bullets when involved in a violent attack. In short, putting a restriction on magazine size will not slow down a criminal (who most likely will ignore these laws) and will only put law abiding citizens at a disadvantage when defending their lives.

There is also a lot of effort put into an "assault weapons" ban. So called "assault weapons" are no different than other guns except for certain cosmetic features that have been labeled as evil. Banning a rifle because of its looks would be similar to banning a car because of its color or because it had a spoiler on it. In fact the most common cartridge used in these popular sporting rifles are the 5.56, which can hardly be considered a "high powered" round, as some people have labeled them. In fact the 5.56 is not legal for deer hunting in CT because it is not considered a large enough round to humanely harvest a deer. These so called "assault rifles" have been the scapegoat for gun violence just because a few deranged individuals have used these weapons in their massacres. If you look at the facts, these rifles account for a very, very small percentage of firearm related crimes and deaths. A previous assault weapons ban has been proven to be ineffective in preventing gun violence. In fact, I would argue that CT should drop its current assault weapons ban since it is based solely on physical appearances and has done nothing to prevent crime.

I also see a lot of bills introduced concerning many other things such as gun registration, higher taxes on ammo, ammo limitations, and insurance requirements. All of the proposed legislation is targeting the law-abiding gun owners and not focusing on the true problem. I do not want knee jerk legislation that is rushed through so our lawmakers can feel like they did something! I want the true issues addressed.

Like you, I don't have all the answers. I do think that we need to look into our attitude and commitment to mental health issues. I am sure you saw what happened in Norwich where a police officer was shot during a standoff and the gunman took his own life. The gunman's name was Jason Razzino and in a widely ignored article in the Hartford Courant (also reported on NBC CT's website); Jason's girlfriend explained that Jason was battling with depression and alcoholism. Quoted from the article "He was given medicine to help with the symptoms, but when the medicine would run out, she said, he would have a difficult time getting a refill.

She also said that he was seeking mental health care, but was getting the "runaround."

"He would try to make an appointment, but they would tell him that he needed a referral," she said. "Or if they said they would see him, it was four or five weeks out. He was really upset about the mental health system."

This one story is a perfect example of the current state of mental health care. The state of CT has continually cut funding towards mental health care. It's time to start looking into this issue and seeing if we can help people like Jason before a tragedy occurs.

We can't ignore the fact that the entertainment industry promotes and desensitizes violence and makes it easy for children to ignore the value of human life. The media attention these mass killers receive turns them into instant celebrities and creates "copycat" killers. We need to limit the attention and air time given to the criminals and stop turning them into instant celebrities!

I am not opposed to background checks, but I think the number of guns sold or transferred without them is much less than the 40% being reported. None the less, if that is a direction the state wants to take, we need to be sure the infrastructure and policies are in place that makes them both efficient and effective.

I think removing the gun free zones is worth looking into, the majority of mass shootings have happened in gun free zones, where killers know they will not meet anyone who can fight back.

I am for safe storage of firearms. The state of CT already waives sales tax for the gun safe purchases, which is a great way to encourage safe storage. Why can't we expand this and possibly offer rebates or tax credits?

We also should increase efforts enforcing the current laws we have, and make stiffer penalties for criminals who illegally possess a firearm.

We can all agree that the most recent tragedy right here in our home state was horrific and is cause for concern. I feel that our elected officials are over reacting and looking for something to blame, and will follow with kneejerk solutions' which will not prevent any future tragedies. I think State Rep. Pamela Sawyer said it best "Good legislation doesn't come from immediate emotions".

We need to focus on punishing the criminal, and not the law abiding citizen, who seems to be the target of most of the proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time.

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