



Violence Policy Center

1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Suite 1014
Washington, DC 20036

202.822.8200 voice
202.822.8205 fax
www.vpc.org web

Statement of Kristen Rand, Legislative Director, Violence Policy Center

Before the Senate Judiciary Committee

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national non-profit organization that conducts research, policy analysis, and advocacy to reduce gun violence in America. The VPC has particular expertise on matters involving the gun industry. We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony on this critically important topic. Our comments will focus on the extreme hazards associated with assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines.

S. 150 introduced by Senator Feinstein would effectively regulate assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. First and foremost, the bill accurately defines “assault weapon” in a way that gun manufacturers will be unable to exploit by making minor cosmetic changes and putting the guns back on the civilian market. The bill would also deal with existing guns by requiring background checks for all future transfers and prohibiting the future transfer of existing high-capacity ammunition magazines. The most important thing is to turn off the spigot and prevent gun manufacturers from relentlessly innovating to increase the lethality of their weapons.

Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Ammunition Magazines Are Products of a Highly Militarized Civilian Gun Industry and Pose a Direct Threat to Public Safety

Generally, the American gun industry is in long-term decline despite occasional peaks in sales such as that which occurred in the wake of the mass shooting on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut. Household gun ownership in America has steadily declined over the past few decades according to the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Household gun ownership hit its peak in 1977, when more than half (54 percent) of American households reported having any guns. By 2010, this number had dropped more than 20 percentage points to a low during this period of 32.3 percent. Personal gun ownership hit its peak in 1985, when 30.7 percent of

Americans reported personally owning a gun. By 2010, this number had dropped nearly 10 percentage points to a low during this period of 20.8 percent. At the same time, gun ownership has become more concentrated. According to a Harvard University survey published in 2007, an estimated 20 percent of gun owners possess 65 percent of the nation's guns.

In order to continue to sell firearms to a dwindling customer base, the gun industry is increasingly focused on manufacturing and marketing military-style firearms because, to be blunt, that is what sells. Freedom Group, a conglomerate of gun manufacturers which claims an almost 50 percent market share in the assault weapons category, summed up the current market conditions in its most recent quarterly report:

Net sales for the nine months ended September 30, 2012 were \$403.5 million, an increase of \$94.4 million, or 30.5%, as compared to the nine months ended September 30, 2011. Centerfire rifle sales increased \$67.6 million, while handgun sales increased \$15.3 million. In addition, shotgun sales increased \$11.2 million and rimfire rifle sales increased \$3.6 million. **These increases were primarily the result of strong market demand for modern sporting products**, as well as volumes associated with our handgun introductions and our new shotgun offerings. These increases were partially offset by decreased sales of other firearms and firearm products of \$3.3 million. [Emphasis added—“modern sporting products” is the gun industry’s euphemism for assault weapons.]

A marketing technique central to the gun industry’s militarization campaign is appealing to potential buyers who are drawn for emotional—or more sinister practical—reasons to military weaponry.



FN Herstal USA's 2010 catalog touts the SCAR 16S, "the semi-auto only version of the U.S. Special Operations Command's newest service rifle"

A key step in the militarization of the civilian gun industry was the switchover in the mid-1980s from revolvers to semiautomatic pistols that use high-capacity ammunition magazines. Boosted by gun companies’ sophisticated marketing strategies, and an adulatory gun press, high-capacity 9mm semiautomatic pistols reinvigorated the industry in the 1980s. Known as “Wonder Nines,” 9mm semiautomatic pistols drove the formerly dominant revolvers out of the

handgun market and created a lucrative boom for the industry. Military-style semiautomatic pistols proliferated. The switch from revolvers to high-capacity pistols dramatically enhanced handgun lethality. As *Jane's Infantry Weapons* observed in the early 1980s, revolvers are “bulky,” “generally limited to six rounds,” take a “long time to reload,” and produce low muzzle velocity. Pistols “can be made flat and unobtrusive,” “take up to 13 rounds or more,” feature a “simple to replace magazine,” and have high muzzle velocity. This in turn helped fuel the market for high-capacity ammunition magazines.

A recent ad for pistol magazines from *Shotgun News*

Also in the mid-1980s, the industry found another niche market—semiautomatic assault weapons. Gun magazines in the 1980s began to relentlessly promote these new product lines, often citing the military pedigree of these “assault” weapons.

This trend continues to this day in some publications, as seen from the August 2012 issue of *Gun World*:



What Is a Semiautomatic Assault Weapon?

Semiautomatic assault weapons are civilian versions of automatic military assault rifles (like the AK-47 and the M-16) and automatic military assault pistols (like the UZI). These guns look the same because they are virtually identical, save for one feature: military assault rifles are machine guns. A machine gun fires continuously as long as its trigger is held back—until it runs out of ammunition. Civilian assault rifles are *semi*-automatic weapons. The trigger of a semiautomatic weapon must be pulled back separately for each round fired. Because federal law has banned the sale of new machine guns to civilians since 1986 and heavily regulates sales to civilians of older model machine guns, there is virtually no civilian market for true military assault weapons. The gun industry introduced semiautomatic versions of military assault weapons in order to create and exploit new civilian markets for these deadly weapons.

Why are Semiautomatic Assault Weapons More Lethal than Sporting Firearms?

Assault weapons did not “just happen.” They were developed to meet specific combat needs and contrary to assertions from pro-gun advocates, they differ significantly from traditional sporting firearms. All assault weapons—military and civilian alike—incorporate easily identified features designed to provide a specific military combat function. That military function is laying down a high volume of fire over a wide killing zone, also known as “hosing down” an area. Civilian assault weapons maintain the specific design features that make this deadly spray-firing

so easy. These features also distinguish assault weapons from traditional sporting firearms. The distinctive “look” of assault weapons is not merely “cosmetic,” as the gun lobby often argues—the assault weapon’s appearance is the result of the design of the gun following its function. A brief summary of how assault weapons came into being makes clear the reason for, and the nature of, their distinctive design features.

The roots of military assault weapons lie in the trench fighting of the First World War. The standard infantry weapon of that conflict was the long-range battle rifle. “Infantrymen in most armies were equipped with high-powered rifles: long, unwieldy, but accurate to ranges of 1,000 m (3,280 ft.) or more. But a long weapon was a definite handicap in the close-quarter fighting of the trenches, and long-range capability was wasted when combat usually took place at ranges of tens of metres or less,” writes Chris Bishop in the 1998 book *Guns in Combat*.

Submachine guns were the intermediate step. When armies bogged down in the World War I trenches, weapons designers looked for ways to break the bloody stalemate. Among them was the submachine gun, designed to be a compact, fast-firing, short-range weapon for use in the trenches and by highly mobile storm troops in new tactical formations. According to the *Illustrated Book of Guns*, “A submachine gun (SMG) is a close-range, automatic weapon, firing pistol cartridges (e.g., 9mm Parabellum), and is compact, easy to carry, and light enough to be fired from either the shoulder or the hip.”

The final step was the first assault rifle, which came during the Second World War and grew out of the German military’s pre-war interest in “obtaining a relatively high-power intermediate or mid-range cartridge and corresponding weapon for infantry application,” according to Peter R. Senich in the 1987 book *The German Assault Rifle, 1935-1945*. According to Senich, German military thinkers realized, “Since most infantry action took place at ranges under 400 meters, the long-range potential of the standard cartridge and service rifle were actually wasted.” There were also logistical problems in supplying armies in the field with different kinds of rounds of ammunition—the larger rifle cartridges for the battle rifle and the smaller pistol cartridges for the submachine guns. According to Chuck Taylor in the 1984 book *The Fighting Rifle: A Complete Study of the Rifle in Combat*, “During their Operation Barbarossa (Russian) campaign and elsewhere, the Germans were continually reminded of the ever-increasing need for a rapid fire arm that was small enough to be convenient to hand carry, but at the same time possessed sufficient range and power to be adequate out to about 200 meters.” The result of German research and development was the STG-44 (Sturmgewehr or “storm gun”), the “father of all assault rifles....After the war it was examined and dissected by almost every major gunmaking nation and led, in one way and another, to the present-day 5.56mm assault rifles,” writes Ian Hogg in the 2000 book *Jane’s Guns Recognition Guide*.



One thing leaps out from the pictures above: the remarkable similarity of the first assault rifle (left photo) to the AR-15 (right photo) and other assault rifles currently flooding America's streets. This family resemblance is not a coincidence. From the STG-44 "storm gun" to the AR-15, assault weapons have incorporated into their design specific features that enable shooters to spray ("hose down") a large number of bullets over a broad killing zone, without having to aim at each individual target. These features not only give assault weapons a distinctive appearance, they make it easy to simply point the gun while rapidly pulling the trigger—including firing from the hip, a procedure seldom used in hunting anything but human beings. The most important of these design features are:

- **High-capacity detachable ammunition magazines** (often erroneously called "clips") that hold as many as 100 rounds of ammunition. This allows the high volume of fire critical to the "storm gun" concept.
- **A rear pistol grip** (handle), including so-called "thumb-hole stocks" and ammunition magazines that function as pistol grips.
- **A forward grip or barrel shroud** located under the barrel or the forward stock that give a shooter greater control over a weapon during recoil. Forward grips and barrel shrouds also make it possible to hold the gun with the non-trigger hand, even though the barrel gets extremely hot from firing multiple rounds.
- **A folding or telescoping stock** that allows the shooter to make the gun more portable and concealable by reducing the overall length of the gun.

These design features create the ability to quickly lay down a high volume of fire, making semiautomatic assault weapons a particularly dangerous addition to the civilian gun market. They explain why assault weapons are favored by terrorists, mass killers, and violent criminals, and they distinguish such weapons from true hunting and target guns. Deliberate, aimed fire from the shoulder may be more accurate than the "hosing down" of an area for which assault weapons were designed. But mass murderers and other violent criminals drawn to assault

weapons are not after marksmanship medals. They want to kill or maim as many people as possible in as short a time as possible—the exact job for which the semiautomatic assault weapon was designed. A gun industry observer summed up the design in September 2009 in *Shooting Wire*:

From the minute you get your first modern, AR-style rifle, the first thing that you notice is the fact that it truly is one of the most ergonomic long guns you'll ever put to your shoulder. Makes sense, it was designed to take young men, many of whom had never fired a gun of any sort before, and quickly make them capable of running the rifle—effectively—in the most extreme duress, armed combat.

Together, high-capacity ammunition magazines and semiautomatic assault weapons fuel the endless litany of mass shootings in public spaces that really began in 1984 when James Huberty told his wife that he was going “hunting humans,” and armed with a semiautomatic UZI Carbine equipped with 25-round magazines, opened fire in a San Ysidro McDonald’s killing 22 (including several children) and wounding 19 before a police SWAT team sniper killed him. Before the McDonald’s massacre such public mass shootings were virtually unheard of. But since McDonald’s, America’s history is littered with mass shootings involving semiautomatic firearms capable of accepting high-capacity ammunition magazines made infamous by the names of the places at which they occurred: Stockton’s Cleveland Elementary School; Luby’s Cafeteria; Pettit & Martin law firm; the Long Island Railroad; Washington, DC’s Metropolitan Police Headquarters; Caltrans Maintenance Yard; Connecticut State Lottery Headquarters; Jonesboro Middle School; Springfield, Oregon; Columbine High School; Wedgewood Baptist Church; Xerox; Virginia Tech; Northern Illinois University; Fort Hood; Hartford Beer Distributors; Aurora; and now, Newtown. Attached is a fact sheet that contains the casualty count, weapons, and magazines used in each of these shootings.

It is simply impossible to separate the widespread availability of high-capacity ammunition magazines (the common thread that runs through virtually every mass shooting whether used in standard semiautomatic pistols or assault weapons) and highly militarized assault weapons from these horrific mass shootings that seem to be occurring with increasing frequency.

In addition, assault weapons are a weapon of choice of cop killers. The Violence Policy Center analyzed FBI information on the makes and models of firearms used to feloniously kill law enforcement officers and found that from 1998 through 2001, one of five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty was killed with an assault weapon. More recently:

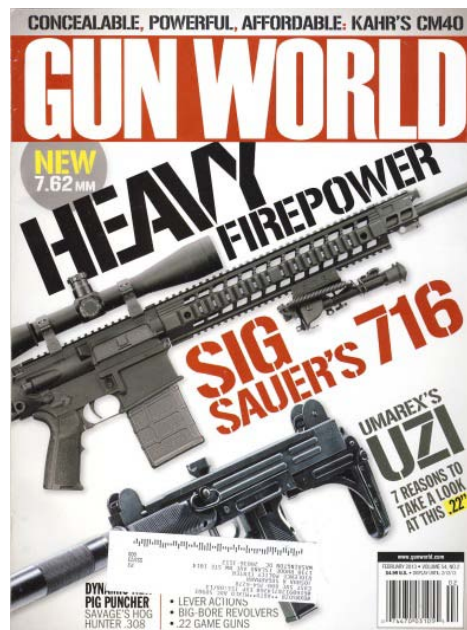
- On March 13, 2011, in Vansant, Virginia, Randy Gilbert Newberry, 52, killed Virginia Sheriff’s Deputies William Stiltner, 46, of Maxie, Virginia, and Cameron Neil Justus, 41, of Hurley, Virginia. Two other deputies were wounded in the attack. According to law enforcement sources, Newberry used a Bushmaster .223 assault rifle, the same type of assault rifle used at Newtown, equipped with a 30-round magazine. He fired approximately 50 rounds in the assault.

- On May 28, 2011, in San Antonio, Texas, Mark Anthony Gonzales, 41, allegedly killed Bexar County Sheriff's Deputy Sergeant Kenneth Gary Vann, 48, of Spring Branch, Texas. According to law enforcement sources, Gonzales used a .223 Smith & Wesson M&P15 assault rifle, the same type of assault rifle used in the July 20, 2012, movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, with a 90-round "snail drum" magazine. Consistent with evidence from the crime scene, the magazine was approximately three-quarters full when found at Gonzales' home.

These weapons are marketed using military and survivalist images with slogans that at least hint at nefarious uses and boast about the firepower they offer.



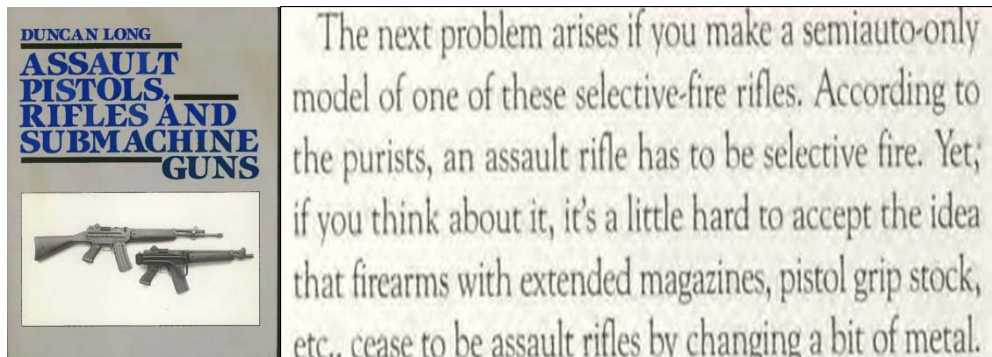
Bushmaster markets the AR-type assault rifle used in the Newtown shooting with the slogan, "Justice for All"



Gun World magazine touts the "heavy firepower" of a new Sig Sauer assault rifle

Pro-Gun Advocates Make False and Misleading Claims in Opposition to Proposals to Regulate Assault Weapons

In its efforts to stop restrictions on the production and sale of semiautomatic assault rifles, assault pistols, and assault shotguns, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has worked with members of America's gun industry to deceive the American public as to the unique and lethal threat posed by these weapons. One prominent line of argument that is thoroughly addressed above is that assault weapons are no different from sporting firearms. Another common claim is that there is no such thing as a civilian assault weapon and that a "true" assault weapon is a selective-fire military weapon, capable of full-auto fire. Yet before the debate over the ready availability of assault weapons erupted in the late 1980s, gun experts acknowledged there is no significant difference between military assault weapons capable of fully automatic fire and the semiautomatic civilian versions that are subject of this hearing. In 1986, noted firearm expert Duncan Long authored *Assault Pistols, Rifles and Submachine Guns* in which he noted, "The next problem arises if you make a semiauto-only model of one of these selective-fire rifles. According to the purists, an assault rifle has to be selective fire. Yet, if you think about it, it's a little hard to accept the idea that firearms with extended magazines, pistol grip stock, etc., cease to be assault rifles by changing a bit of metal."



Furthermore, as noted earlier, gun publications frequently referred to military bred semiautomatic guns as "assault pistols" and "assault rifles." For example, in 1982, *Guns & Ammo* published a book titled *Assault Rifles*, advertising "Complete Data On The Best Semi-Automatics."

Another argument has emerged based on the false idea that all assault weapons are by definition rifles. Assault rifles, it is argued, aren't worth regulating since "not that many" people are killed by rifles of any type each year. In fact, assault weapons come in pistol, rifle, and shotgun configurations. Moreover, assault *pistols* constituted the bulk of the assault weapons problem in the 1990s. Research in 1992 for an association of police chiefs of large American cities showed that the TEC-9 assault pistol was "far and away" the leading assault

weapon seized by law enforcement agencies in such cities in 1990 and 1991, “accounting for 24% of all assault weapons seized, and 42% of all assault pistols seized.” An analysis of ATF trace data in 1988 and 1989 conducted by Cox Newspapers reported that due to its unsurpassed firepower, concealability, and low price (then about \$380), the TEC-9 assault pistol was the most favored weapon of the most dangerous criminals, particularly violence-prone drug gangs in large metropolitan areas.¹ In addition, the Cox report concluded, among other findings, that assault weapons were 20 times more likely to be used for criminal purposes than conventional weapons, and in certain cities, such as Los Angeles, the frequency of assault weapon use in crime was twice the national average. While assault weapons represented merely 0.5 percent of the 200 million privately owned firearms in the United States during the period of the study, they constituted 10 percent of all weapons traced to crime during that time. The Cox study was based on crime gun trace data that is unavailable for public analysis today because of restrictions imposed on release of the data by the “Tiahrt amendment.” [Cox Newspapers, *Firepower: Assault Weapons in America*, Cox Enterprises, Washington, DC, 1989]

There is currently a resurgence in the number of assault pistols available on the civilian market. The Violence Policy Center has documented this trend in a 2013 study, *Assault Pistols: The Next Wave* (<http://www.vpc.org/studies/awpistols.pdf>). The study notes that assault pistols are already popular with gun traffickers who acquire firearms in U.S. border states with the intent of smuggling them to drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. The guns are identified by make and model in federal charging documents. In one Texas case filed in 2011, *United States v. Zuniga*, among the illegally obtained guns named in the indictment were 13 assault pistols, six of which were Century International Arms Draco AK-47 assault pistols (the remainder were Kel-Tec PLR 16 assault pistols). Here is how one Texas gun store described the Draco on its website:

[T]he Draco isn't an NFA firearm [full-auto machine gun] or a restricted military weapon. This beauty happens to be a civilian legal AK 47 in pistol form. It goes by the name Draco, is manufactured in Romania and imported by Century Arms. This pistol is chambered in the popular AK rifle caliber 7.62x39, takes standard AK-47 magazines/drums and shoots like a dream. If you're interested in high capacity + firepower on a reliable, time tested platform—then this pistol is for you.

Because very limited data is available on how often particular makes and models of firearms are used in crime, it is impossible to know how many Americans have been killed by AK-47 pistols or other assault pistols. One horrific incident with an AK-47 pistol occurred in Philadelphia in 2007:

¹ According to San Francisco Police Inspector Earl Sanders who investigated the California 101 shooting that left nine dead and six wounded from a TEC-9 assault pistol, the “extended magazines” of the TEC-DC9, which held up to 50 rounds, “gave [the shooter, Gian Luigi Ferri] an opportunity to fire a much longer period of time [and] many more shots than he would have been capable of with . . . what might be determined to be a standard semiautomatic pistol.” These extended magazines enabled Ferri “to lay down a blanket of fire rather than fire one individual shot, recover and then fire another individual shot, with the TEC-DC9. He was able to lay down what, in essence, would be a blanket of fire which would cover a large area, thus cutting the chances of intended targets to escape.” [Declaration in *Merrill v. Navegar*, San Francisco County Super. Ct. No. 959-316 (1999)]

Police say Vincent J. Dortch was so enraged over a nest egg he believed had turned rotten in a \$1.3 million real estate investment that he plotted a lethal trap for those he felt had scammed him. Dortch, of Newark, Del., called a meeting of investors in Watson International Inc. in February 2007. When the meeting commenced around a conference table, Dortch pulled out an AK-47 assault pistol and told everyone to "say your prayers." Minutes later, three key investors lay dead, shot through the head. A fourth man who was gravely wounded managed to summon police. After trading fire with an officer, Dortch shot himself through the head, ending a brief but terrifying siege and the life of an outwardly mild man who exuded a veneer of prosperity. ["Investor rage, lethal trap," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 14, 2007]

Another new assault weapon trend is a new breed of assault shotgun that incorporates high-capacity detachable ammunition magazines. Some are patterned after the popular AK- and AR-type assault rifles:

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SAIGA-12 SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN, 12 GA.
 Built on the famous AK-47 action. Features a smooth bore barrel that accepts shot, slugs and "magnum" shells. 22.9" and 21" Black synthetic barrels. Fixed bead sight, sight mount rail for mounting optics, one 3 rd. mag. Comes with cleaning kit, brush, wrench, oil bottle and cleaning rod. Barrel: 18.0". Overall: 41". Weight: 7.5 lb. Magazine: 2.0".
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SAIGA-12 SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN, 12 GA.
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Again, because of a lack of good data it is impossible to know how these new assault shotguns are being used. We do know, however, that, according to the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection, Newtown shooter Adam Lanza had one of the AK-type shotguns in his car the day he committed the massacre. This gun was initially erroneously reported to be the Bushmaster XM-15 assault rifle he used to kill 20 schoolchildren and six educators.

Regulation of Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Ammunition Magazines Can Work to Reduce the Carnage

Despite the well-documented limitations of the federal ban that was in place from 1994 until 2004, evidence regarding the effect of the expired federal assault weapons ban suggests that an effective ban on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines will work.

A Justice Department study of the assault weapons ban suggested that the ban was responsible for a 6.7 percent decrease in total gun murders, holding all other factors equal [Jeffrey A. Roth

& Christopher S. Koper, "Impact Evaluation of the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act of 1994," The Urban Institute, March 1997] The same study also found, "Assault weapons are disproportionately involved in murders with multiple victims, multiple wounds per victim, and police officers as victims."

An analysis by David S. Fallis and James V. Grimaldi of the *Washington Post* found that the percentage of firearms seized by police in Virginia that had high-capacity ammunition magazines dropped significantly during the ban. That figure has doubled since the ban expired.

Thirty-seven percent of police departments reported seeing a noticeable increase in criminals' use of assault weapons since the ban expired according to the May 2010 Police Executive Research Forum *Guns and Crime: Breaking New Ground by Focusing on the Local Impact*.

Moreover, research supports the fact that states with assault weapons bans are less attractive source states for gun traffickers. Analyses of federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) trace data by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research indicate that the border states with the highest per capita exporting of crime guns to Mexico (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas) had export rates four times that of California. The researchers attribute this to California having much more stringent laws regarding gun sales than the other border states. California would make a relatively unattractive environment for traffickers to acquire their guns because the state banned the assault weapons that they clearly wanted, gun purchasers can more readily be held accountable for illegally transferring their guns, and California's law prohibits the bulk gun sales common in gun trafficking rings operating in Texas and Arizona. A separate study, "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico," published in December 2012, found that "the reach of U.S. gun laws extends beyond its borders. Our analysis shows that the expiration of the U.S. FAWB [federal assault weapons ban] led to immediate violence increases within areas of Mexico located close to American states where sales of assault weapons became legal. The estimated effects are sizable, and unrelated to the idiosyncratic influence of specific border states, trends in socioeconomic conditions, legal enforcement patterns and drug-trafficking along the border."

In conclusion, many lives will be saved if an effective ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines and semiautomatic assault weapons is enacted.

The era of deadly public mass shootings with assault weapons and high-capacity magazines that began at a McDonald's in San Ysidro, California, in 1984 should end with the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

TESTIMONY OF JOSHUA HORWITZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COALITION TO STOP GUN VIOLENCE
SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
“HEARING ON THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN OF 2013”
FEBRUARY 27, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josh Horwitz, and I am the executive director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV). I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of my organization, a coalition of more than 47 national organizations dedicated to reducing gun death and injury in the United States. We seek to secure freedom from gun violence through research, strategic engagement, and effective policy advocacy.

As this committee considers the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013, Members should understand that assault weapons such as the AR-15 are the weapons of choice for violent insurrectionists in this country. Members should also recognize that—contrary to the assertions of the gun lobby—the taking up of arms against our government by individuals (or armed mobs) has always been considered treason.

An individual right to armed rebellion against the United States Government has never existed in our constitutional republic. Such a right would make each man a king unto himself; allowing him to make an individualized assessment that democratically-elected lawmakers have become despots and to fashion an arbitrary, violent remedy. From the drafting of our Constitution to our bloody Civil War to present day, our nation has categorically rejected such individual violence as a means to achieve political goals.

While the revolution of the American colonies established the right to self-governance, the breakdown of law and emergence of civil disorder—most notably Shays’ Rebellion—cemented the Founders’ belief in the need for a strong federal government to work in tandem with the states.¹ For this reason, the Framers included in the Constitution a series of clauses to address domestic insurrection. Specifically Article I, Section 8, Clause 15, which states that one of the primary purposes of the [state] Militia is to “suppress Insurrections”;² and Article IV, Section 4, which provides, “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.”³ Furthermore, in Article III, Section 3, the Framers defined the crime of treason, stating that, “Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.”⁴

It is important to note that our Founders rejected the legitimacy of insurrectionism and responded

¹ Paul Finkelman, *A Well Regulated Militia: The Second Amendment in Historical Perspective*, 76 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 195, note 293, at 211. (2000).

² U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 15.

³ U.S. Const. art. IV, § 4.

⁴ U.S. Const. art. III, § 3.

to it forcefully time and time again: during Shays' Rebellion; the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794; the Civil War, etc. The Second Amendment was meant to address the balance of military power between the federal and state governments, and the amendment's author, James Madison, made it clear that resistance to such tyranny would come from a Militia "officered by men chosen from among themselves, fighting for their common liberties, and united and conducted by [state] governments possessing their affections and confidence,"⁵ *not* by lone wolf-type domestic terrorists.

Contemporary arguments for the constitutionality of insurrectionist ideology stem largely from the 2008 Supreme Court case of *District of Columbia v. Heller*. In that ruling, however, the Court held only that the Second Amendment conferred an individual right to keep a handgun in the home for self-defense. Justice Scalia *did* muse about why the right was not limited to participation in an organized militia in *Heller*, stating, "If ... the Second Amendment right is no more than the right to keep and use weapons as a member of an organized militia—if, that is, the *organized* militia is the sole institutional beneficiary of the Second Amendment's guarantee—it does not assure the existence of a 'citizens' militia' as a safeguard against tyranny."⁶ But the Court stressed in its findings that the individual right to keep and bear arms protects only *lawful* conduct.⁷

Certainly, proponents of insurrectionism have stretched Justice Scalia's words well beyond their intended meaning if they take them to mean that there is an *individual* right to use political violence to avoid following democratically-enacted laws. On January 30th, Members of this committee witnessed this type of dangerous rhetoric firsthand during the following exchange between Senator Durbin and witness Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice president of the National Rifle Association (NRA):

DURBIN: Mr. LaPierre, I run into some of your members in Illinois and here's what they tell me, "Senator, you don't get the Second Amendment." Your NRA members say, "You just don't get it. It's not just about hunting. It's not just about sports. It's not just about shooting targets. It's not just about defending ourselves from criminals," as Ms. Trotter testified. "We need the firepower and the ability to protect ourselves from our government—from our government, from the police—if they knock on our doors and we need to fight back." Do you agree with that point of view?

LAPIERRE: Senator, I think without any doubt, if you look at why our founding fathers put it there, they had lived under the tyranny of King George and they wanted to make sure that these free people in this new country would never be subjugated again and have to live under tyranny.⁸

⁵ James Madison, "The Federalist No. 46: The Influence of the State and Federal Governments Compared," New York Packet, January 29, 1778. (Constitution Society: 2011). <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa46.htm>

⁶ *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570, 600, 128 S.Ct. 2783, 171 L.Ed.2d 637 (2008).

⁷ *Id* at 620.

⁸ Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on gun violence on Jan. 30, 2013 (Transcript), *available at* http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/senate-judiciary-committee-hearing-on-gun-violence-on-jan-30-2013-transcript/2013/01/30/1f172222-6af5-11e2-af53-7b2b2a7510a8_story.html

Other NRA leaders have followed Mr. LaPierre's example. For example, NRA board member Ted Nugent regularly invokes the threat of political violence. Consider these remarks in a recent interview he gave to Guns.com on January 22, 2013:

I'm part of a very great experiment in self-government where we the people determine our own pursuit of happiness and our own individual freedom and liberty not to be confused with the Barack Obama gang who believes in We the Sheeple and actually is attempting to re-implement the tyranny of King George that we escaped from in 1776. And if you want another Concord Bridge, I got some buddies.⁹

Recently, the pro-gun movement has been promoting the idea that our government cannot ban military-grade firearms and high-capacity ammunition magazines because this equipment is particularly useful in defending individual freedoms against government tyranny. Members of this committee will be familiar with academic David Kopel, an associate professor at Denver University and policy analyst at Cato Institute. Like Wayne LaPierre, Kopel testified before the committee on January 30th. In a prior presentation before the Second Amendment Foundation entitled "The 'Assault Weapon' Panic," Kopel affirmed that since "resistance to tyranny or invasion would be a guerrilla war... 'assault weapons' would be useful and citizen resistance might well prove successful."¹⁰

This idea is also prominent in far-right wing news sources and blog articles. The website *American Thinker* recently published a piece by Mark Almonte entitled "Why Do Civilians Need Assault Weapons?" in which he declared, "Assault weapons are necessary for defense against tyranny because they are the weapons of the common soldier ... [In order] to repel a standing army, the citizens must possess the weapon of the common soldier."¹¹ The idea of civilians needing parity in firepower with the U.S. military was reinforced in another recent editorial in *The News Star* entitled "Amendment is About Tyranny":

During [the Revolutionary] war the "assault rifle" [was] actually a musket. The most prevalent was called "Brown Bess," which fired a .75 caliber (3/4 inch) round or bullet capable of inflicting tremendous wounds. Brown Bess was perhaps, the best assault weapon of its day and was used for hunting ... The Founding Fathers approved the populace having an assault rifle to fight tyranny. Today's Brown Bess is the AR16/15.¹²

⁹ Timothy Johnson, "Nugent At Gun Industry Trade Show: 'If You Want Another Concord Bridge, I've Got Some Buddies,'" *Media Matters for America*, January 22, 2013. <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/01/22/nugent-at-gun-industry-trade-show-if-you-want-a/192340>

¹⁰ David Kopel, "The 'Assault Weapons' Panic," *Second Amendment Foundation*, June 19, 2009, http://www.saf.org/journal/5/5_kopel.pdf

¹¹ Mark Almonte, "Why Do Civilians Need Assault Weapons," *American Thinker*, February 12, 2013, http://www.americanthinker.com/2013/02/why_do_civilians_need_assault_weapons.html.

¹² Mitchell Young, "Amendment is about Tyranny," *The News Star*, February 14, 2013 <http://www.thenewsstar.com/article/20130215/OPINION03/302150328/Amendment-about-tyranny>

Pittsburgh gun shop owner Eric Lowry echoed that sentiment this month, stating, “Citizens should be armed well enough to defend themselves against a tyrannical government in which case they should be able to own the same kind of firearms that any military soldier should be able to own.”¹³ To reinforce this idea, Lowry’s shop gave away an AR-15, 1,000 rounds of ammunition, and 30 high-capacity ammunition magazines through a Facebook page promotion.

Gun manufacturer III Arms has gone even further in using insurrectionist rhetoric to promote the sale of AR-15s:

America is in trouble. One day soon, America will need her heroes to stand up and be counted, as did John Parker and the men who took to the Green at his shoulder in Lexington in defense of Liberty. When you are called upon to defend Liberty, when it is your turn to be John Parker and dare to stride into harm's way, the Fighting Arms branded with our III will do their job and tell the world who you are: Patriot.¹⁴

Other insurrectionist commentators have been meticulous about the hardware required for rebellion. Roy Kubicek, the primary author of the blog *Days of our Trailers: Consider This the Old North Bridge* (and a credentialed blogger at past NRA conventions) published a series of posts entitled “The Modern Militia,” in which he asserted:

The standard US Infantry field weapon is the ubiquitous M-16/M-4 series rifle... Obviously then, since the M-16 was based off of it, the ideal firearm for Militia compatibility would be the [sic] the AR-15 (or its many clones) chambered in 5.56 NATO.¹⁵

Finally, our staff received the following email from a pro-gun activist in New York on Thursday:

The 2nd amendment is not about hunting deer or ducks. I would like to make that clear. Our Governor is confused and he wants to spread the confusion. Let me be the first to clear the room of that misconception. The 2nd amendment is for hunting tyrants. For hunting rouge [sic] governments ... The second amendment guaranteed's [sic] law abiding citizens the right to keep and bear arms, the patriots of 1776 used the most advanced rifle at their disposal. the AR Musket, to defeat the British Government and their Muskets . Today Americans can no longer depend on a single shot Musket. We must have the best possible rifle to guard against tyranny by our own government or a foreign government ... I ask you which rifle if not the AR-15, will defeat tyranny today?¹⁶

Sometimes, such insurrectionist rhetoric leads to real-world violence. Since the *Heller* decision in 2008, my organization has been documenting anti-government threats and incidents of

¹³ Nick Kratsas, “Gun Shop Responds to Gun Control Debate by Giving Away Assault Rifle,” *News Radio 1020 KDKA*, February 6, 2013, <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2013/02/06/gun-shop-responds-to-gun-control-debate-by-giving-away-assault-rifle/>

¹⁴ “III Arms: About Us,” accessed February 21, 2013. <http://www.iiiarmscompany.com/about.html>

¹⁵ Roy Kubicek (AKA Thirdpower), “The Modern Militia: Firearms,” *Days of our Trailers*, February 13, 2008 <http://daysofourtrailers.blogspot.com/2008/02/modern-militia-firearms.html>

¹⁶ Chris Stehling, email message to csgv.org, February 21, 2013

violence through our online “Insurrectionism Timeline.”¹⁷ During that time, insurrectionists armed with assault weapons have murdered law enforcement officers, engaged in conspiracies to assassinate government officials, and attempted to effect civilian’s arrests on judges and jury members, among other crimes. Just days ago, Everett Basham was arrested for threatening to kill California state Senator Leland Yee, who had introduced gun reform legislation.¹⁸ Three assault weapons and homemade bombs were found in Basham’s home.¹⁹

The insurrectionist argument that assault weapons are needed to protect against “tyranny” has no place in our current debate. Taking up arms against our government is treason, and neither patriotic nor an expression of liberty. Meanwhile, Americans have a basic, inalienable right to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” They should be able to live, work, play and pray without fear of facing military-style firepower in the hands of deranged individuals. Senator Feinstein’s Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 would be a meaningful first step to ending the tragic levels of gun violence in our communities.

¹⁷ “Insurrectionism Timeline,” Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, last modified February 16, 2013.

<http://www.csgv.org/issues-and-campaigns/guns-democracy-and-freedom/insurrection-timeline>

¹⁸ “More Explosives Found; Yee Confirms Death Threat,” *KGO-TV/DT*, February 14, 2013.

http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/local/south_bay&id=8993149

¹⁹ “Man in Court for Threatening State Sen. Lee,” *KGO-TV/DT*, February 21, 2013.

http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/local/south_bay&id=9001276

A RESOLUTION OF THE VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Resolution No. _____

**SUPERVISORS CALLING FOR A FEDERAL ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN AND
A BAN ON AMMUNITION MAGAZINES IN EXCESS OF TEN ROUNDS**

WHEREAS, in 1994, Congress enacted an assault weapons ban that prohibited the sale of certain semi-automatic and automatic weapons in order to reduce the levels of street violence in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, the assault weapons ban expired by operation of law and, to this date, the assault weapons ban has not been renewed by Congress and assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines are allowed to be sold by many states, and Senator Dianne Feinstein has recently proposed reenactment in the 113th Congress; and

WHEREAS, since 1999, the incidents of mass shootings in schools and public places have increased at the same time that the overall national crime rate has been falling; and

WHEREAS, in the last several years, the amount of mass gun violence involving high capacity weapons has accelerated and communities such as Tucson, Arizona; Aurora, Colorado; Newtown, Connecticut; Clackamas, Oregon; and Virginia Tech have become synonymous with large-scale loss of life and crippling injuries; and

WHEREAS, the use of semi-automatic with large ammunition capacity allows persons intent on mass murder to cause far more deaths than would be possible if such weapons were not available; and

WHEREAS, assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines are not necessary for sportsmen nor home protection and constitute a demonstrated threat to the general public and law enforcement personnel.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors calls for enactment of federal legislation banning assault weapons and ammunition magazines larger than ten rounds capacity, including, but not limited to, the weapons ban legislation proposed for adoption by Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Upon motion of Supervisor _____, seconded by Supervisor _____, and duly carried, the foregoing resolution was adopted on January 8, 2013.

Chair of the Board of Supervisors

ATTEST: MICHAEL B. POWERS
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors,
County of Ventura, State of California

By _____
Deputy Clerk of the Board

January 10, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
SH-331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On January 8, 2013, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved the enclosed resolution, calling for enactment of a federal ban on assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines in excess of ten rounds.

The Board greatly appreciates your longstanding leadership on this issue. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in acts of violence using semi-automatic weapons with high capacity magazines to slaughter multiple victims, often with velocity and at random. During this same time period, the overall crime rate has dropped throughout the United States. The availability of semi-automatic weapons with ammunition clips as large as thirty bullets allows a single perpetrator to kill multiple people in a short period of time. These weapons also pose a grave danger to law enforcement officers. Furthermore, these tragedies including those at Newtown, Connecticut and Aurora, Colorado this past year, have put a spotlight on inadequacies of our mental health system, and the need to strengthen that system to ensure the availability of adequate mental health resources available in the nation.

While California leads the nation in gun control, surrounding states have some of the least restrictive gun laws, and the Board recognizes that Federal regulations offer the best nationwide protection to the public. Please work with President Obama, Vice President Biden, and your colleagues in Congress to enact legislation banning assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines in excess of ten rounds.

I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas P. Walters
Washington Representative

TPW:jaw

Enclosure



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
TDD (202) 293-9445
URL: www.usmayors.org/uscm

January 28, 2013

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONGRESS FROM THE NATION'S MAYORS

Dear Mr. President and Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate:

Again and again and again, Americans are stunned by senseless acts of violence involving guns. Friday's tragedy targeting young children in Newtown is incomprehensible. Too many times this year, mayors have expressed shock at a mass shooting. Even more frequently, many of us must cope with the gun violence that occurs on the streets of our cities.

Through The U.S. Conference of Mayors we have sent our condolences to the victims, their families, and their community. We know that Newtown First Selectman Patricia Llodra and Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy continue to do everything possible to help the families of those killed and the entire community cope with so much loss and pain.

The Conference has been calling for sensible gun laws to protect the public for more than 40 years. Mayors and police chiefs from cities of all sizes have worked together in this effort over the years.

We urge you to take immediate action: the President to exercise his powers through Executive Order and Congress to introduce and pass legislation to make reasonable changes in our gun laws and regulations. Specifically we call on you to:

- Enact legislation to ban assault weapons and other high-capacity magazines being prepared by Senator Dianne Feinstein and others;
- Strengthen the national background check system and eliminate loopholes in it; and
- Strengthen the penalties for straw purchases of guns.

We know that preventing gun violence – whether it is a mass shooting in a school or a murder on a street corner – will take much more than strengthening our gun laws. We need to reverse the culture of violence in our nation so that a violent act isn't the first response to settling a difference or compensating for a wrong. We support the idea of establishing a bi-partisan Commission that looks at the broader issues of violence in our country. We need to strengthen and more adequately fund our mental health system so that we can identify troubled individuals earlier and get them the help they need. But strengthening our gun laws should not have to wait for these other actions to occur. The time for action is now!

We believe that with this latest national tragedy and the high incidence of gun violence that continues to plague our streets, we have reached a tipping point. The nation's mayors pledge to work with you to build a safer America for our children and all of our citizens.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Nutter
Mayor of Philadelphia
President

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor of New York City

Antonio R. Villaraigosa
Mayor of Los Angeles
Past President

Rahm Emanuel
Mayor of Chicago

Kevin Johnson
Mayor of Sacramento
Second Vice President

Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor of Charleston
Past President

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston
Past President

Donald L. Plusquellic
Mayor of Akron
Past President

Gerald Jennings
Mayor of Albany, NY

Lee Leffingwell
Mayor of Austin, TX

Dave Golonski
Mayor of Burbank, CA

William Euille
Mayor of Alexandria, VA

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor of Baltimore, MD

Miro Weinberger
Mayor of Burlington, VT

Ed Pawlowski
Mayor of Allentown, PA

Denny Doyle
Mayor of Beaverton, OR

Henrietta Davis
Mayor of Cambridge, MA

Joshua J. Cohen
Mayor of Annapolis, MD

Conrad Lee
Mayor of Bellevue, WA

Evan Low
Mayor of Campbell, CA

Wade Harper
Mayor of Antioch, CA

John B. Callahan
Mayor of Bethlehem, PA

Edwin Garcia
Mayor of Camuy, PR

Arlene Mulder
Mayor of Arlington Heights, IL

William Brien, M.D.
Mayor of Beverly Hills, CA

Harold Weinbrecht
Mayor of Cary, NC

Terry Bellamy
Mayor of Asheville, NC

Matthew Ryan
Mayor of Binghamton, NY

Kathleen DeRosa
Mayor of Cathedral City, CA

Nancy Denson
Mayor of Athens, GA

Joseph Sullivan
Mayor of Braintree, MA

Mark Kleinschmidt
Mayor of Chapel Hill, NC

Kasim Reed
Mayor of Atlanta, GA

Bill Finch
Mayor of Bridgeport, CT

Anthony Foxx
Mayor of Charlotte, NC

Kevin Dumas
Mayor of Attleboro, MA

William Moehle
Mayor of Brighton, NY

Ron Littlefield
Mayor of Chattanooga, TN

Pete Lewis
Mayor of Auburn, WA

Arthur Ward
Mayor of Bristol, CT

John A. Linder
Mayor of Chester, PA

Deke Copenhaver
Mayor of Augusta, GA

Linda Balzotti
Mayor of Brockton, MA

Mary Goloff
Mayor of Chico, CA

Michael Bissonnette
Mayor of Chicopee, MA

Cheryl Cox
Mayor of Chula Vista, CA

David Hartzell
Mayor of Clarence, NY

George N. Cretekos
Mayor of Clearwater, FL

Edward Kelley
Mayor of Cleveland Heights, OH

Jim Anzaldi
Mayor of Clifton, NJ

Stephen Benjamin
Mayor of Columbia, SC

Michael Coleman
Mayor of Columbus, OH

Daniel Helix
Mayor of Concord, CA

Andrew Weissman
Mayor of Culver City, CA

Edward MacDougall
Mayor of Cutler Bay, FL

Bill Gluba
Mayor of Davenport, IA

Judy Paul
Mayor of Davie, FL

Joe Krovoza
Mayor of Davis, CA

John O'Reilly
Mayor of Dearborn, MI

Jack Tanaka
Mayor of Diamond Bar, CA

Tim Sbranti
Mayor of Dublin, CA

Roy Buol
Mayor of Dubuque, IA

William Bell
Mayor of Durham, NC

Marcia Leclerc
Mayor of East Hartford, CT

Sal Panto
Mayor of Easton, PA

Nancy Tyra-Lukens
Mayor of Eden Prairie, MN

Richard H. Garcia
Mayor of Edinburg, TX

Antonia Ricigliano
Mayor of Edison, NJ

Dave Earling
Mayor of Edmonds, WA

John Cook
Mayor of El Paso, TX

Gary Davis
Mayor of Elk Grove, CA

Dick Moore
Mayor of Elkhart, IN

Randy Penn
Mayor of Englewood, CO

Kitty Piercy
Mayor of Eugene, OR

Michael Tetreau
Mayor of Fairfield, CT

Randy McClement
Mayor of Frederick, MD

Andrew Hardwick
Freeport, NY

Bill Harrison
Mayor of Fremont, CA

Craig Lowe
Mayor of Gainesville, FL

Sidney Katz
Mayor of Gaithersburg, MD

Karen Freeman-Wilson
Mayor of Gary, IN

John Bridgeman
Mayor of Gastonia, NC

George Heartwell
Mayor of Grand Rapids, MI

Joy Cooper
Mayor of Hallandale Beach, FL

Rodney Craig
Mayor of Hanover Park, IL

Pedro Segarra
Mayor of Hartford, CT

Michael Sweeney
Mayor of Hayward, CA

Billy Kenoi
Mayor of Hilo, HI

Timothy McDonough
Mayor of Hope, NJ

Annise Parker
Mayor of Houston, TX

Ron Fisher
Mayor of Huber Heights, OH

Jill Swain
Mayor of Huntersville, NC

Connie Boardman
Mayor of Huntington Beach, CA

Carolyn Goodman
Mayor of Las Vegas, NV

Matti Bower
Mayor of Miami Beach, FL

Michael Alvarez
Mayor of Indian Trail, NC

Richard Kaplan
Mayor of Lauderdale, FL

Lori Moseley
Mayor of Miramar, FL

Ava Frisinger
Mayor of Issaquah, WA

Bernard Carvalho
Mayor of Lihue, HI

Mary Ann Lutz
Mayor of Monrovia, CA

Harvey Johnson
Mayor of Jackson, MS

David Berger
Mayor of Lima, OH

Steve Tate
Mayor of Morgan Hill, CA

Samuel Teresi
Mayor of Jamestown, NY

Patricia Krause
Mayor of Lincoln Park, MI

Jill Techel
Mayor of Napa, CA

Bobby Hopewell
Mayor of Kalamazoo, MI

Richard Gerbounka
Mayor of Linden, NJ

Robert Mezzo
Mayor of Naugatuck, CT

Sylvester "Sly" James, Jr.
Mayor of Kansas City, MO

Randy Watts
Mayor of Logan, UT

Jonathan Mitchell
Mayor of New Bedford, MA

Richard Clanton
Mayor of Kentwood, MI

Bob Foster
Mayor of Long Beach, CA

John DeStefano
Mayor of New Haven, CT

Lucy Johnson
Mayor of Kyle, TX

Chase Ritenauer
Mayor of Lorain, OH

Mitch Landrieu
Mayor of New Orleans, LA

Art Madrid
Mayor of La Mesa, CA

Paul Soglin
Mayor of Madison, WI

Noam Bramson
Mayor of New Rochelle, NY

Jack Hoffman
Mayor of Lake Oswego, OR

Wayne Powell
Mayor of Manhattan Beach, CA

Alan Nagy
Mayor of Newark, CA

J. Richard Gray
Mayor of Lancaster, PA
Virg Bernero
Mayor of Lansing, MI

Frank Talerico
Mayor of Margate, FL
Jonathan Hornik
Mayor of Marlboro, NJ

Setti Warren
Mayor of Newton, MA
Paul Dyster
Mayor of Niagara Falls, NY

Raul G. Salinas
Mayor of Laredo, TX

Kathy Catazaro-Perry
Mayor of Massillon, OH

Paul Fraim
Mayor of Norfolk, VA

Patricia Gerard
Mayor of Largo, FL

Alan Arakawa
Mayor of Maui, HI

Keith Summey
Mayor of North Charleston, SC

Ken Miyagishima
Mayor of Las Cruces, NM

A C Wharton
Mayor of Memphis, TN

Andre Pierre
Mayor of North Miami, FL

Stephen Scaffidi
Mayor of Oak Creek, WI

David Pope
Mayor of Oak Park, IL

Jean Quan
Mayor of Oakland, CA

Anne E. Sallee
Mayor of Oakland Park, FL

Owen Henry
Mayor of Old Bridge, NJ

Stephen Buxbaum
Mayor of Olympia, WA

Satish Hiremath
Mayor of Oro Valley, AZ

William Capote
Mayor of Palm Bay, FL

Bill Bogaard
Mayor of Pasadena, CA

Shawn Connors
Mayor of Pecatonica, IL

Frank Ortis
Mayor of Pembroke Pines, FL

Sandra Bradbury
Mayor of Pinellas Park, FL

Brian Wahler
Mayor of Piscataway, NJ

Nancy Parent
Mayor of Pittsburg, CA

Luke Ravenstahl
Mayor of Pittsburgh, PA

Michael Collins
Mayor of Plainfield, IL

Michael Brennan
Mayor of Portland, ME

Charlie Hales
Mayor of Portland, OR

Angel Taveras
Mayor of Providence, RI

Nancy, McFarlane
Mayor of Raleigh, NC

Vaughn Spencer
Mayor of Reading, PA

Denis Law
Mayor of Renton, WA

Daniel Rizzo
Mayor of Revere, MA

Sally Hutton
Mayor of Richmond, IN

Ardell Brede
Mayor of Rochester, MN

Phyllis Marcuccio
Mayor of Rockville, MD

Jim Ellison
Mayor of Royal Oak, MI

Christopher B. Coleman
Mayor of Saint Paul, MN

Ralph Becker
Mayor of Salt Lake City, UT

Thomas Odell
Mayor of Sammamish, WA

Edwin Lee
Mayor of San Francisco, CA

Mark Bartel
Mayor of San Jacinto, CA

Jan Marx
Mayor of San Luis Obispo, CA

David Lim
Mayor of San Mateo, CA

Miguel Pulido
Mayor of Santa Ana, CA

Helene Schneider
Mayor of Santa Barbara, CA

David Coss
Mayor of Santa Fe, NM

Pam O'Connor
Mayor of Santa Monica, CA

Gary McCarthy
Mayor of Schenectady, NY

Michael McGinn
Mayor of Seattle, WA

Barbara Wallace
Mayor of Sewell, NJ

Keith McGlashan
Mayor of Shoreline, WA

Joseph Curtatone
Mayor of Somerville, MA

Frank Gambatese
Mayor of South Brunswick, NJ

Brenda Lawrence
Mayor of Southfield, MI

Noramie Jasmin
Mayor of Spring Valley, NY

Christine Lundberg
Mayor of Springfield, OR

Francis Slay
Mayor of St. Louis, MO

Ann Johnston
Mayor of Stockton, CA

Joe McElveen
Mayor of Sumter, SC

Anthony Spitaleri
Mayor of Sunnyvale, CA

Sharon Wolcott
Mayor of Surprise, AZ

John Marks
Mayor of Tallahassee, FL

Beth Talabisco
Mayor of Tamarac, FL

Bob Buckhorn
Mayor of Tampa, FL

Jeffrey Lamarand
Mayor of Taylor, MI

Mohammed Hameeduddin
Mayor of Teaneck, NJ

Patrick Dunlavy
Mayor of Tooele, UT

Joyce Cameron
Mayor of Trotwood, OH

Jonathan Rothschild
Mayor of Tucson, AZ

Carol Vernaci
Mayor of Union City, CA

Shelley Welsch
Mayor of University City, MO

Laurel Prussing
Mayor of Urbana, IL

Vincent Gray
Mayor of Washington, DC

Jeffrey Prang
Mayor of West Hollywood, CA

Jeri Muoio
Mayor of West Palm Beach, FL

Christopher Cabaldon
Mayor of West Sacramento, CA

Kathy Cocuzzi
Mayor of Westerville, OH

Thomas Leighton
Mayor of Wilkes-Barre, PA

James Baker
Mayor of Wilmington, DE

Barry Wright
Mayor of Winslow Township, NJ

C. Kim Bracey
Mayor of York, PA



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
TDD (202) 293-9445
URL: www.usmayors.org/uscm

SANDY HOOK PRINCIPLES

THE CONTEXT

In solemn remembrance of the 20 children and 6 adults whose lives were taken during the tragic shooting massacre of December 14, 2012, at Sandy Hook Elementary School, and in remembrance of too many others who have lost their lives to gun violence before and since, the Sandy Hook Principles are hereby established as one idea that can help make America safer. These Principles are a call to action for corporations to heed the basic core values of American citizens in promoting the health, safety and well-being of our communities.

THE PREAMBLE

The objective of the Sandy Hook Principles is to encourage positive corporate behavior by gun and ammunition manufacturers, distributors and retailers by establishing a baseline standard for responsible conduct and business practices to help ensure maximum safety for our citizens. Accordingly, the Principles promote progressive actions by these companies towards eliminating the substantial and unjustified risk to human health and life associated with inadequately regulated firearm use. The Principles address five specific categories of reform in terms of procedures, coordination, management, safety and technology.

These Principles are created in an effort to work proactively with the gun industry to seek commonsense solutions in response to the proliferation of gun violence in America that has caused immeasurable harm to our citizens. Implicit in these Principles lies the belief that adjustments and changes in certain business practices, policies or conduct by the gun industry can improve the health, safety and well-being of our communities. In these Principles, the gun industry is being called upon to be part of the solution to the public safety and public health challenges we face in cities and towns across the nation and presents an opportunity for significant progress towards the imperative objectives of keeping firearms out of the wrong hands, and making guns and ammunition safer for authorized users.

It is hereby affirmed that the overwhelming majority of gun owners in America are responsible, law abiding and safety-conscious citizens. Through the widespread adoption of these Principles, an appropriate balance is sought between protecting the rights of gun ownership and the rights of our citizens to be safe and secure. These rights must complement each other.

The Principles apply to gun and ammunition manufacturers, distributors and retailers, with an exception for the production and sale of guns or ammunition to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and all U.S. military forces for use in conducting their official duties. Local and state governments, colleges and universities, hedge funds, pension funds, venture capital funds and all other organizations that have a financial relationship with private corporations may request that companies affiliated with the gun industry review and adopt the Sandy Hook Principles. In the event an affiliated company does not adopt the Principles, organizations may choose to reexamine that financial relationship.

THE PRINCIPLES

As a company which endorses the Sandy Hook Principles we will respect the law, and as a responsible corporate member of society we will apply these Principles with integrity consistent with the legitimate role of business. We will develop and implement company policies, procedures, training and internal reporting structures to ensure commitment to these Principles throughout our organization. We believe the application of these Principles will improve the health, safety and well-being of communities across America.

Accordingly, we will:

- Support and promote restrictions on firearm and ammunition sales, transfers and possession to keep guns out of the hands of children (unless authorized), persons with mental illness or mental health challenges (unless authorized), criminals, domestic or international terrorists and anyone else prohibited from possessing them under federal law.
- Conduct background checks on all gun and ammunition sales or transfers and support the establishment of a federal universal background check system for every such transaction.
- Reevaluate policies regarding the sale, production, design or conversion of military style assault weapons for use by civilians, including the distribution of any materials/information that may be used to assist in such conversion.
- Ensure that all business clients, including gun show operators or gun dealers, conduct background checks for every sale or transfer of guns or ammunition.
- Make a commitment to develop, share and implement technology-enhanced safety measures for guns and ammunition.
- Support and promote the creation of a federal gun trafficking statute to ensure strict punishment for individuals engaging in the trade of selling firearms to anyone prohibited from possessing them under federal law.
- Support and promote sharing of background check and gun sale data for law enforcement purposes.
- Support and promote gun safety education at the point of sale and in the communities in which we conduct business operations.

We will be transparent in our implementation of these principles and provide information which demonstrates publicly our commitment to them.

The Sandy Hook Principles are modeled after the Global Sullivan Principles – a human rights and equal opportunity code of conduct for companies which was originally developed by the legendary Reverend Dr. Leon H. Sullivan of Philadelphia's Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC) of America, in order to promote desegregation and equal rights during the apartheid regime in South Africa.



U.S. Affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY®

1111 Fourteenth Street, Northwest Suite 700
Washington DC 20005
telephone (202) 667-4260
email: cthomasson@psr.org

March 4, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

We are writing this letter to express our full support for your Assault Weapons Regulatory Act of 2013. Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) is the U.S. affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. We have over 35,000 members and activists, including health care providers who treat victims of gun violence on a daily basis.

Since 1982, there have been at least 62 mass shootings in the United States, including the recent Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. Most of these mass shootings have been committed with assault weapons fed by high capacity magazines. These weapons and magazines are designed to kill the maximum number of enemy combatants in the shortest period of time. PSR believes that there is no legitimate civilian use for such weapons systems.

We appreciate your leadership in introducing the Assault Weapons Regulatory Act, which will reduce the number of innocent people killed in mass shootings. As you are aware, though, while mass shootings are a serious public health problem, they account for small percentage of the total number of innocent civilians killed by guns in the United States. On an average day, 86 people, including five youth age 18 and under, are killed by guns in our country. The Assault Weapons Regulatory Act is just one step toward stopping our national epidemic of firearm related deaths and injuries. We look forward to working with you to foster additional sensible firearm legislation similar to the laws in other democratic, industrialized countries that have much lower rates of gun related deaths while still allowing legitimate hunters and target shooters to practice their sports.

Yours truly

Catherine Thomasson, MD
Executive Director

Bill Durston, MD
Emergency Physician and Board Member

PATHWAYS FAITH COMMUNITY

2013 FEB -6 AM 10: 26

The Rev. John W. Bennison, Rel.D

A GATHERING PLACE FOR SPIRITUAL SEEKERS

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January 29, 2013

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

I fully support and encourage your efforts for new sane and sensible gun control legislation. I referred to your renewed efforts with regard to the assault weapons ban in this recent commentary.

"We love our guns, and what they represent. We love the cheap, readily available and disproportionate amount of personal power guns offer in the hands of everyone and anyone who wants it, for whatever reason. If one doubts that, just consider: The anticipated uphill battle to ban assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines that might simply pose a reloading inconvenience to the next mass shooter and merely reduce – not eliminate – the casualty count is ludicrous in and of itself."

To the usual rebuttal stricter gun controls will not stop the crazed among us from obtaining their Bushmaster, their bullet-proof vests and ammunition stockpiles, I say it is a hollow, fallacious argument. But furthermore, I don't care. We have erred so long on the side of doing nothing, might it not be time to err instead on the side of doing something; regardless of its possible ineffectiveness?"

I encourage you to stand firm in your convictions of what is necessary for the common good. Do not let the haunting memory of Sandy Hook fade with the cool detachment of legislative expediency by your colleagues.

If I can help your efforts from California, let me know.

Best regards,


The Rev. Dr. John W. Bennison
Executive Director



Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence

SEP 6 PM 2:53

January 25, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

This letter is to express my support of your legislation S. 150, the Assault Weapons Ban, to reinstate the ban military-style assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition feeding devices.

In recent years incidents of mass gun violence, including the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, have served as terrible reminders of the senseless loss of life and extreme harm these weapons are capable of. Semi-automatic and high-capacity assault weapons have no place on our streets, in our shopping malls and theaters, and most of all, in our schools. S. 150 offers a sensible solution that will take these weapons out of our cities and neighborhoods.

I support this common-sense gun safety measure to protect our communities and reduce violence. Please add my name/organization to the list of those endorsing S. 150.

Sincerely,

Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence
Toby Hoover, Executive Director



**Written Testimony on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 (S. 150)
submitted by the National Physicians Alliance
to Senator Dianne Feinstein and the Senate Judiciary Committee,
March 4, 2013**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 on behalf of the National Physicians Alliance. A non-profit organization representing 15,000 physicians across medical specialties, the NPA works to improve health and well-being, and to ensure equitable, affordable, high quality health care for all. The NPA views gun violence as a public health crisis and the assault weapons ban as a vital component of a broad, comprehensive response.

Patients have long trusted physicians to advise them on more than short-term clinical needs and many look to the medical profession to guide policy-makers on national, health-related threats. Patients expect physicians to work within the science and evidence base to support policies that protect public health.

Gun violence is a public health issue that has reached epidemic proportions in this country, affecting our patients, our neighbors, our communities—indeed all Americans. The Newtown tragedy is galvanizing a national understanding of the pervasive danger that guns pose and of the toll they take every day.

Improving access to mental health care services and establishing true mental health parity are important and necessary aims in response to our gun violence epidemic, but policy-makers should not confuse or substitute proposals in this area for additional evidence-based and urgently needed gun violence prevention measures.

Gun violence is indisputably an issue of health, where science and evidence must guide policy. A guiding principle of the National Physicians Alliance is that health is determined by a wide variety of influences beyond biology, including familial, social, psychological, environmental, economic, political, legal, cultural and spiritual factors. Understanding and addressing these complex connections is a duty of our profession.

Given the facts, science, and existing evidence-base surrounding gun violence, the NPA strongly endorses the following preventive measures, achievable through policy:

1. Establish a universal system that requires a background check for all persons buying or transferring a firearm or purchasing ammunition, with a requirement to report all lost or stolen firearms.

2. Prohibit high-risk individuals from purchasing firearms by focusing on the evidence which demonstrates that people with a history of violence, threats of violence, or alcohol/substance abuse have an increased risk of violence. Those individuals who have a history of stalking, a restraining order, or drug-trafficking also should be prohibited from buying firearms.
3. Federal restrictions on gun purchases with regard to mental health should focus on the dangerousness of the individual, and states should be encouraged to provide information to the federal background check system about disqualifying conditions/episodes.
4. Enact comprehensive state and federal bans on assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines.
5. Financial incentives should be provided to gun manufacturers to develop childproof and personalized guns.
6. Expand the jurisdiction of the Consumer Product Safety Commission or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to regulate guns as consumer products and establish regulations requiring product safety features, such as childproof and personalized guns.
7. Protect the patient-physician relationship by removing all gag rules that apply to clinical encounters. The patient and physician must be free to discuss any issue, including gun safety.
8. Build an evidence-based approach to gun violence prevention, which includes restoration of robust funding and training for epidemiological research in this area (e.g. through the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and gathering data that tracks gun-related deaths and injuries, safety interventions, and the impact of measures to reduce the incidence of gun violence over time.
9. Ensure that violence prevention including gun safety is a core part of the training and continuing professional education of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, teachers, and other professionals.
10. Help communities examine and take action on the multiple factors that shape their health and safety by providing funding for research at local, state, and national levels that addresses prevention of gun violence and the root causes contributing to trauma, injury, and death by guns.

We can no longer sit back while thousands of children and adults die each year as a result of gun violence. The Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 begins to address the factors that contribute to more than 30,000 gun-related deaths each year in our country. The NPA strongly supports this important piece of legislation and urges Congress to approve it.

Contacts:

Cheryl Bettigole, MD, MPH
President
National Physicians Alliance
Cheryl.bettigole@npalliance.net

Jeff Huebner, MD
Vice President of Policy
National Physicians Alliance
Jeff.Huebner@npalliance.net

MomsRising.org

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright or Molly Tomlinson
202/371-1999

Testimony of Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner **Co-Founder, Executive Director, MomsRising**

Hearing on Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 (S. 150)

Hearing before the Senate Committee
on the Judiciary
February 27, 2013

Good morning. I am Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, co-founder and Executive Director of MomsRising. MomsRising is a 1.1-million strong, online and on-the-ground grassroots organization working to improve the lives and the health of American families.

We have advocated for paid family leave, flexible work options, environmental and product safety, affordable childcare, and many other policies that families need. We also support common sense gun laws to better protect our families from gun violence. MomsRising has a diverse national membership. And we believe, as do our members, that we can wait no longer to stop the senseless killings that have plagued our nation for too long.

In the wake of so many recent gun violence tragedies -- from Sandy Hook Elementary to Aurora, Colorado -- it's difficult to see how anyone would argue against the need for greater gun safety.

Allow me for a moment to cite a few statistics. Nationally, 30 people are killed each day by guns. About one in five Americans know a recent victim of gun violence and twice as many worry about becoming a victim, according to a recent Kaiser Health Tracking Poll. Of the 20 percent of Americans who reported knowing a victim of gun violence in the past three years, 62 percent said the victim was a friend, family member or even themselves.

According to a recent New England Journal of Medicine article, guns are the second leading cause of death in young people aged 1 to 24 years old. These include children like the 20 young kids gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Teenagers like Hadiya Pendleton, who, just days after she participated in the presidential inauguration, was murdered in Chicago, one of the many cities burdened by killings that don't usually make the news.

We should be outraged by these statistics, by these day-in-and-day-out tragedies.

That's why we wanted to lend our voices in support of the Assault Weapons Ban of 201 (S. 150). This bill will prohibit the sale, manufacture, transfer and importation of 157 of the most commonly-owned military-style assault weapons. It also bans large-capacity magazines and other ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. These are important steps in the right direction.

For months, our members have been writing us with their stories and with their calls for us to step up the pressure. These are excerpts from just a few of the thousands of letters we have received.

Avia from New York, New York said:

“With the deaths of the children and school staff, this time feels different to me. Homes with guns in them have three times more fatalities than those without. I feel that if my dad hadn't had a shotgun, my brother would not have killed himself.”

Susan from Westminster, Maryland wrote:

“There are NO words to truly explain how a parent feels when you are told that your child has been shot! Even now writing this nearly 9 years later, [after her daughter was shot] I have PTSD and am in tears!...There is NO reason that anyone, aside from a military person, should have an automatic weapon that shoots so many rounds.”

Ashley from Berkeley, California wrote:

“The increase in mass shootings this year makes me afraid for my children's safety and the future. The time is now to get real about the variety changes we need to make our communities safe.”

Some of the MomsRising members we've heard from are also gun owners and NRA members, and they, too, are deeply concerned about the outdated gun safety laws that fail to protect our children and our communities. This bill provides a much-needed remedy to the problem. It takes action in response to the countless pleas for help from parents and children across the nation.

To be clear: This isn't about banning guns; this is about gun safety and responsibility, and making sure that weapons for mass killing aren't in public spaces or near our children. Parents shouldn't have to hesitate, even slightly, wondering if our kids will be safe when we drop them off at school, the mall, or the movies.

In January, MomsRising was among several groups that collected and delivered nearly 300,000 petition signatures to Walmart urging the retailer to pull assault weapons and ammunition from their shelves. On February 14 of this year, we delivered gun safety Valentine's Day messages, as well as a petition with more than 150,000 signatures, to Congress, calling on members to support legislation that would end gun violence and protect ALL our children.

If I may end on a personal note: I, too, have experienced the fear and anxiety associated with gun violence. More than once in the last year, I've received a call that no parent ever wants to get from their child's school saying that the school is in lockdown because of a nearby threat.

The first time was in May when there was a mass shooting at Café Racer in Seattle, which is a short distance from the school my children attend. The gunman had fled on foot. The second time was related to an armed bank robbery just blocks away.

This is not the sort of society we want to live in.

Laws that would give more parents and more kids peace of mind are desperately needed. We thank Senator Feinstein for introducing the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 and urge all members of Congress to support this crucial legislation.

#

MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States. [MomsRising](http://MomsRising.org) is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. [MomsRising](http://MomsRising.org) also advocates for health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start. Established in 2006, [MomsRising](http://MomsRising.org) and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2012, Forbes.com named [MomsRising](http://MomsRising.org)'s web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the third year in a row. In 2013, Working Mother magazine included [MomsRising](http://MomsRising.org) on its "[Best of the Net](http://BestoftheNet.com)" list.



January 23, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, House Minority Leader Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Reid:

We are writing to express support for Senator Feinstein's Assault Weapons Regulatory Act of 2013 and to urge its prompt passage. The tragedy at Newtown, Connecticut and the swift reaction of President Obama placed an important spotlight on gun safety in America. As mayors of the largest cities in California, we are charged with protecting the safety of our residents. Banning the sale, transfer, import or manufacture of assault weapons – weapons that are disproportionately involved in murders with multiple victims, multiple wounds per victim, and police officers as victims – is a straightforward, common sense measure that will improve the safety of our citizens.

Senator Feinstein's legislation strengthens and improves the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban by moving from a 2-characteristic test to a 1-characteristic test, banning firearms with "bullet buttons" – a loophole exploited in the 1994 ban, and eliminating the 10-year sunset provision that allowed the original ban to expire. This legislation protects legitimate hunters and the rights of existing gun owners by grandfathering weapons legally possessed on the date of enactment and exempting weapons specifically used for hunting and sporting purposes.

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 200
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681
TELEPHONE: (415) 554-6141

This proposal, in combination with the significant measures initiated by President Obama last week, will make a measurable impact and go far to protect the safety of all Americans. We appreciate President Obama and Senator Feinstein's leadership on this important issue and urge your support.

Very truly yours,



EDWIN M. LEE
Mayor – San Francisco



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor – Los Angeles



KEVIN JOHNSON
Mayor – Sacramento



CHUCK REED
Mayor – San Jose



BOB FOSTER
Mayor – Long Beach



JEAN QUAN
Mayor – Oakland



BOB FILNER
Mayor – San Diego



MIGUEL PULIDO
Mayor – Santa Ana

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President
David Agnew, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs,
Members, California Delegation, United States House of Representatives



Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence

3535 Kessler Boulevard North, Indianapolis, IN 46222 • (317) 636-2388 • info@hcgv.org • www.hcgv.org

2013 FEB -8 PM 1:41

January 30, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

This letter is to express our support of your legislation S. 150, the Assault Weapons Ban, to reinstate the ban military-style assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition feeding devices.

In recent years incidents of mass gun violence, including the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, have served as terrible reminders of the senseless loss of life and extreme harm these weapons are capable of. Semi-automatic and high-capacity assault weapons have no place on our streets, in our shopping malls and theaters, and most of all, in our schools. S.150 offers a sensible solution that will take these weapons out of our cities and neighborhoods while protecting the rights of legitimate hunters and current gun owners. Indiana has been spared such a mass shooting. However, we recognize that without stronger gun laws it could happen here.

We support this common-sense gun safety measure to protect our communities and reduce violence. Please add Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence to the list of those endorsing S.150.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Dunlop, M.D.

Stephen R. Dunlop, M.D.

President, Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence

Board of Directors

Dr. Stephen Dunlop, Rev. Loring Prosser, Marian Towne, Dr. David Mason, William Ney, Joyce Bowman
Dr. Marilyn Bull, Rev. Roger Heimer, Angela Plank, Repr. Greg Porter, Prof. Brad Yoder, Joe Zelenka

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."—Margaret Mead



Grandmothers for Peace International

P.O. Box 1292 • Elk Grove, CA 95759 • U.S.A.
phone: (916) 730-6476 • e-mail: lorraine@grandmothersforpeace.org • web: www.grandmothersforpeace.org

December 17, 2012

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

We at Grandmothers for Peace International support your upcoming bill to ban assault weapons.

Our membership is over 1,000 and you will be hearing from them on a single basis also.

Peace to all of us,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lorraine Krofchok".

Lorraine Krofchok, Director

2012 DEC 31 PM 4: 20

Endorsements for the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013

- **Law Enforcement**

- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Major Cities Chiefs Association
- National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives
- National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
- Police Executive Research Forum
- Police Foundation
- Women in Federal Law Enforcement
- Chaska, Minn. Chief of Police Scott Knight, former chairman of the Firearms Committee, International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca
- Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck
- San Diego Police Chief Bill Lansdowne

- **Localities**

- U.S. Conference of Mayors
- National League of Cities
- Boston City Council
- Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
- Oakland Unified School District Superintendent Anthony Smith
- San Francisco Board of Supervisors
- San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Bruce Gibson
- Ventura County Board of Supervisors

California Mayors

- Alameda Mayor Amanda Gilmore
- Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox
- Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster
- Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa
- Martinez Mayor Rob Schroder
- Morro Bay former Mayor Janice Peters
- Oakland Mayor Jean Quan
- Orange Cove Mayor Gabriel Jimenez

- Petaluma Mayor David Glass
- Pleasant Hill Mayor Michael Harris
- Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson
- San Diego Mayor Bob Filner
- San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee
- San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed
- San Luis Obispo Mayor Jan Marx
- Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido
- Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider
- Santa Cruz Mayor Hilary Bryant
- Saratoga Mayor Jill Hunter
- Tiburon Mayor Emmett O'Donnell

California Cities

- Beverly Hills
- Calabasas
- Chula Vista
- Del Mar
- Encinitas
- Lemon Grove
- Los Angeles
- National City
- Petaluma
- San Francisco
- Santa Rosa
- Stockton
- Ventura
- West Hollywood

- **Gun Safety**

- Arizonans for Gun Safety
- Arizona People Acting for a Safer Society
- Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
- Ceasefire Oregon
- Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
- Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence
- Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence
- Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

- Mayors Against Illegal Guns
- Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence
- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
- Protect Minnesota
- StopOurShootings.org
- Violence Policy Center
- Washington Ceasefire
- Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort
- Women Against Gun Violence

- **Education / Child Welfare**

- 20 Children
- American Federation of Teachers
- California PTA
- California Teachers Association
- Child Welfare League of America
- Children's Defense Fund
- Every Child Matters
- Los Angeles Community College District
- MomsRising
- National Association of Social Workers
- National PTA
- National Education Association
- San Diego Unified School District
- Save the Children
- United States Student Association

- **Religious**

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches of the South
- American Baptist Home Mission Societies
- American Friends Service Committee
- Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
- Camp Brotherhood
- Catholic Charities USA
- Catholic Health Association
- Catholic Health Initiatives

- Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
- Catholics United
- Church of the Brethren
- Church Women United, Inc.
- Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Dominican Sisters of Peace
- Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence
- Franciscan Action Network
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Health Ministries Association
- Heeding God's Call
- Hindu American Foundation
- Interfaith Alliance of Idaho
- Islamic Society of North America
- Jewish Council for Public Affairs
- Jewish Reconstructionist Movement
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious
- Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office
- National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
- National Council of Churches
- National Episcopal Health Ministries
- NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
- Pathways Faith Community
- Pax Christi USA
- PICO Network Lifelines to Healing
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness
- Progressive National Baptist Convention
- Rabbinical Assembly
- Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
- San Francisco Interfaith Council
- Sikh Council on Religion and Education, USA
- Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Sojourners
- Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church
- United Methodist Women
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
- Washington National Cathedral
- Women of Reform Judaism

- **Health care**
 - American Academy of Nursing
 - American Academy of Pediatrics
 - American College of Surgeons
 - American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
 - American Medical Association
 - American Public Health Association
 - California Medical Association
 - Doctors for America
 - National Association of School Nurses
 - National Physicians Alliance
 - Physicians for Social Responsibility
 - San Francisco Mental Health Association
 - Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research

- **Other**
 - Alliance for Business Leadership
 - American Bar Association
 - Black American Political Association of California
 - Center For American Progress Action Fund
 - Grandmothers for Peace International
 - National Parks Conservation Association
 - Precision Remotes
 - Sierra Club
 - TASH
 - VoteVets.org
 - Washington Office on Latin America

- **Former Elected Officials**
 - Former California Governor Deukmejian
 - Former Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Tom Ridge

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you as a concerned taxpayer and registered Connecticut voter. I strongly appose, all of the proposals that put further restrictions, of any kind on legal firearms owners, or infringe on the United States Constitution. Legal firearms owners should not be punished due to one deranged individuals actions.

Legal firearms owners are not the concern of this committee. The focus for this committee is to find a better way to prosecute those who ignore the law and hurt others in our society. The proposed laws to restrict firearms in Connecticut will only lead to making current owner's criminals. These new laws will not stop those who wish to infringe on the safety of others.

In my opinion, our justice system is failing more than the current state firearm laws. We need to do away with plea bargains and reduced jail time. We need a set level of justice that gives mandatory incarceration time for set crimes. If more prisons need to be built to accommodate this action so be it. We also need to bring back and use the death penalty. I truly believe in an eye for an eye. Since the state of Connecticut likes to lead the way this is how the death penalty should be used. You get one trial if you are found guilty you get one appeal within one year. If you lose this appeal you are executed within five days.

We were all touched by the tragedy in Newtown, but we cannot solve any problems with a knee jerk reaction to such a tragedy. You should also not be influenced by a community that is in mourning, as our state has more than one town. Remember you are in a position to represent ALL residents of Connecticut.

In closing, I would like to inform you that I send my entire family into schools Monday through Friday. I have two children that attend school in North Haven and my wife is a teacher in a school only miles from Sandy Hook Elementary School. Their safety is my number one priority. So, I would ask that this committee collectively introduce ways to protect ALL residents of Connecticut without infringing on law abiding firearms owners or the United States Constitution.

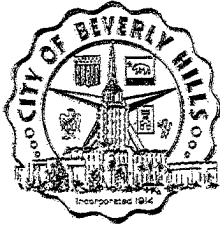
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Barbour
North Haven, CT



VIP - JONATHAN T.



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

455 NORTH REXFORD DRIVE • BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90210
13 JAN 24 PM 3:00

January 11, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the City of Beverly Hills, the City Council and the residents we represent, I want to commend you for your congressional leadership in championing gun control legislation that will help protect our children, families and communities from military-style assault weapons that have only one purpose – to kill people. The horrific slaughter of elementary school children in Newtown, Connecticut is an affront to the moral fabric of our society and puts in sharp relief the urgent need to enact sensible, federal gun control legislation that puts an end to this madness.

We have followed with great interest your recent comments highlighting your plan to introduce a bill to ban the sale and transfer of semiautomatic weapons and large capacity magazines. Banning large-capacity ammunition clips capable of accepting more than 10 rounds, as you propose, is a necessary first step. A mandatory background check for owners of grandfathered weapons makes sense as well. Moreover, prohibiting the sale, transfer, importation or manufacture of 120 specifically-named firearms that pose the greatest threat to our communities is, at its core, the foundation of good gun control law. Therefore, we applaud and wholeheartedly endorse this critically important initiative.

Your legislative proposal is a key part of any long-term solution Congress must adopt if we are to end the plague of gun violence that threatens the lives of far too many of our fellow citizens. While the causes of gun violence are both complex and multifaceted, our national leaders must have the political courage to say enough is enough. The time for decisive and deliberate action is now.

The City of Beverly Hills enthusiastically embraces your bill. We look forward to working with you to ensure its enactment into law.

Sincerely,

William W. Briën, M.D.
Mayor, City of Beverly Hills

CC: City Council
City Manager, Jeff C. Kolin
Police Chief, David L. Snowden

Black American Political**Association of California****Officers & Executive Board:**

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*Founder and
Honorary Chairman*

Bishop H. H. Brookins
National Chair

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Amcal Moore
Rev. Cecil Murray
Bedford Pinkard
Rev. Frank Pinkard
Larry Reed
Doris Ward
Rev. Cecil Williams

December 17, 2012

The Honorable U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dianne Feinstein,

We are living in critical times. The gun violence in this Country has become an epidemic that is crippling our Nation. It is the most challenging event that is going on all over the Country and it needs to be addressed immediately. It is not something that we can continue to dialog about, the Country needs to act now. We are therefore calling up on you to reintroduce your assault weapons ban. We have the examples of today's shooting, shopping centers, religious institutions, elected officials and law enforcement that are being gunned down.

Today the Nation is hurting. A disturbed gunman took the lives of many innocent children. Our educational institutions are now in threat and our children are the target.

We are calling upon you and your colleagues to act swiftly and pass sensible gun control legislation. There is no doubt your assault weapon legislation was an effective tool to stop the spread of assault weapons. Along with thousands of others, we are convinced if reenacted it would help prevent such senseless gun shootings as we saw in Connecticut.

We need your leadership to stand with strong conviction on this issue and to act quickly to prevent future tragedies. You can count on the support of the Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to assist you in every way.

Sincerely yours,

Alice Huffman & Beata Draga,
President, NAACP Executive Director & CEO, BAPAC

34th ANNIVERSARY - 2012
Post Office Box 25474, Los Angeles, CA 90025
Telephone (310) 479.4727



Arizona --- People Acting for a Safer Society

www.azpass.org

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senator

VIA FACSIMILE
B85 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 228-0515

VIA U.S. MAIL
2200 E. Camelback Road
Suite 120
Phoenix, Arizona 85016

Dear Senator Flake:

AZPASS, Arizona People Acting for a Safer Society, is a group of concerned citizens in the Phoenix metropolitan area who have joined together to demand legislative action to reduce gun violence. The group was formed this year as consequence of an overwhelming response to my on-line petition to ban assault weapons. **There are now over 120,000 signers on the petition.** You can learn more about AZPASS at our website, www.azpass.org.

We are asking you to support the legislation sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013, S. 150, which lists and bans 150 specific assault weapons. The legislation bans the sale, transfer, manufacturing and importation of:

- All semiautomatic rifles that can accept a detachable magazine and have at least one military feature: pistol grip; forward grip; folding, telescoping, or detachable stock; grenade launcher or rocket launcher; barrel shroud; or threaded barrel.
- All semiautomatic pistols that can accept a detachable magazine and have at least one military feature: threaded barrel; second pistol grip; barrel shroud; capacity to accept a detachable magazine at some location outside of the pistol grip; or semiautomatic version of an automatic firearm.
- All semiautomatic rifles and handguns that have a fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds.
- All semiautomatic shotguns that have a folding, telescoping, or detachable stock; pistol grip; fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 5 rounds; ability to accept a detachable magazine; forward grip; grenade launcher or rocket launcher; or shotgun with a revolving cylinder.
- All ammunition feeding devices (magazines, strips, and drums) capable of accepting more than 10 rounds.

- 157 specifically-named firearms

This law represents a sensible balance between individual freedom and public safety. The fact that this bill does not ban ownership of existing weapons is not a reason to oppose it – it is rather a reason to support this reasonable compromise. We strongly agree with late President Reagan’s position that assault rifles and assault pistols with high capacity magazines are not needed for sport shooting or home defense. But they can be used to kill many, many innocent law-abiding people in minutes. These weapons were used in the Tucson, Aurora, and Sandy Hook shootings. In Tucson, Jared Laughner was wrestled to the ground when he stopped to reload his Glock 19 semi-automatic pistol with a 33 round clip. In Aurora, James Holmes did not have to reload because he had a 100 round clip on his AR-15 and was able to wound 58 and kill 12 people in less than 4 minutes. Studies have shown a link between the use of these weapons and the number of people killed. Passing this bill will not prevent all such crimes, but the law may make the next shooting less lethal.

We are also asking you to support legislation requiring backgrounds for all gun purchases when that bill is finalized.

We would also like a time to meet and discuss this legislation as well as other proposed legislation to make our schools and communities safer from gun violence.

Please voice your support and vote for this legislation before Arizona or another state in our great country experiences another mass murder carried out with one of these weapons. You have the power and the obligation to make our state and country safer and more civil.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Ellen B. Davis
Chair of AZPASS



A Union of Professionals

Newtown: A Call for Ideas

(Submitted on Behalf of the American Federation of Teachers)

We have a collective responsibility to ensure that our public schools are safe sanctuaries—both physically and emotionally—for every child, every educator and every community. That’s the first step in creating safe, nurturing, supportive learning environments where teachers can teach and kids can learn and grow.

Each of us was shaken to our core by the brutal massacre of innocent children and educators in Newtown, Conn. Two of the educators who were killed and one who was wounded are part of the AFT family. We grieve for them as we do for the entire Newtown community. Right now, as we still mourn, we have to help those in Newtown heal and we have to act. The instinct to protect, to serve and to love children is at the core of every educator and school employee. It is why educators need a critical voice in ensuring what happened in Newtown never occurs again.

Creating safe schools can’t be an empty promise. It will require a balanced approach that addresses both the physical and emotional safety of kids, educators and school employees—including comprehensive school safety programs and procedures, welcoming and supportive school environments, mental health supports and commonsense gun safety legislation.

School Safety Programs and Procedures

- Every state should have policies in place requiring individual school/building safety plans and districtwide safety plans. These plans serve as a guide to address all safety needs in the school, in areas such as lockdown procedures, chain of command, evacuations, personnel assignments in crisis situations, procedures for drills or practices, and reporting procedures.
- Every school should conduct regular audits or building walkthroughs to evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of their school safety and security plans.
- Audits should be designed and implemented by the entire school community, including administrators, parents, students, educators, school support staff and their unions. These same parties also should be given the chance to offer feedback before the results are publicly released.
- Appropriate state and local agencies need to devote more attention to ensuring that school communities and families are better informed about community- and school-level emergency preparedness protocols. This should include a special focus on the protocols for communication between the families of victims and the agencies responsible for incident management.
- Communication with and between students, school staff, parents, community and first responders is absolutely critical to every step and stage of safety planning and emergency preparedness. This holds true in planning and implementation of the plans as well as in the aftermath of tragedy.

- Schools should provide regular training for all school employees in their district's and school's emergency management systems and protocols to ensure that staff are able to protect and assist students during any crisis. All school staff also should receive regular training in violence prevention such as that required by New York state.
- As part of a school safety program, panic buttons or other methods of quickly contacting first responders should be available in classrooms.
- Our public schools should not be armed fortresses. Efforts to arm educators and increase guns in our schools put educators and students at risk and undermine our ability to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment for students.
- Whether to bring police officers into schools should be decided on a school-by-school basis; it should be the decision of the school community and must be part of a comprehensive school safety plan. Some schools, due to their remoteness or following horrendous tragedies such as the massacre in Newtown, may decide to have police at their individual schools. If a school decides to bring police into schools, they should be part of the fabric of the school community, not simply a stationed armed guard. School resource officers and programs like D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) provide rich learning experiences and opportunities for students in addition to being part of the school safety team.

Welcoming and Supportive School Environments

- When unspeakable tragedies do occur, we must provide immediate and ongoing physical and emotional support and assistance to students, parents, educators and school employees to help them grieve, heal and feel safe once again.
- Safe and respectful environments must be created for all students in our schools. Investing in ongoing schoolwide practices to reduce bullying behavior, increasing after-school activities, and integrating community services and programs like peer counseling, wellness programs and other social supports, are just a few examples of how communities like Baltimore and Cleveland have been able to reduce school-based violence. There are many other programs (such as Peace First) that can serve as models for how communities can reduce school-based violence. Noted researchers have asserted that this type of connectedness is a key element in fostering a sense of belonging and security in neighborhoods, particularly among marginalized students.
- Programs encouraging partnerships between schools, local law enforcement and appropriate community agencies (such as mental health) must be created to prevent and reduce school violence. The program would establish the creation of school-based safety committees composed of parents, educators, student and administrators. Law enforcement and other agencies should develop ongoing relationships with school safety committees and work jointly with them to help create safe and respectful environments, prevent and address violent incidents in schools, and serve as a resource on all safety issues for the faculty, staff and student body.

Mental Health Supports

- As a nation, we have a collective responsibility to help those who are suffering from mental health issues by making services more accessible. To do this, we need to reverse the recent

trend (documented below) of slashing funds for social workers and mental health services; we must let people know they are not on their own and help is available.

- States have cut at least \$4.35 billion in public mental health spending from 2009 to 2012, according to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. In fiscal year 2012 alone, 31 states that provided information to the association reported cutting more than \$840 million. We must reverse this trend.
- We need to establish an appropriate ratio of students to counselors, psychologists and social workers in order to ensure that children get the diagnosis, support and help they need to reduce the incidence and risk of students feeling disaffected and isolated in their schools. Parents then have a responsibility to ensure their children participate in counseling or other services recommended by school or other mental health professionals.
- Community schools offer a vehicle for how schools can best deliver a wide range of coordinated services, including mental health services. This strategy puts in place a safety net to prevent students and families from falling through the cracks. At the crux of the community school strategy are coordinated, results-focused partnerships that include both public and private entities, to provide not only comprehensive educational and developmental services, but also access to mental health services for students and families, with the objectives of improving academic achievement, building school and community engagement, and improving the skills and well-being of the surrounding community residents.
- A concentrated and sustained public campaign to destigmatize mental health issues is needed. Effective prevention hinges on the networks of support available to students and members of their communities.

Commonsense Gun Safety Legislation

The AFT supports commonsense gun control legislation, including:

- Banning assault weapons and large-ammunition magazines, such as the bill introduced on Jan. 3 by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.);
- Requirements for thorough background checks;
- Ending the “gun show” loophole; and
- Ensuring gun owners keep their weapons secure while creating or increasing penalties for those who fail to do so.

We have witnessed the violent effects of gun violence for too long—both in our schools and in our neighborhoods. The tragic massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary must be a galvanizing moment to change this. We stand prepared to not only flesh out these ideas but work with you to create safe schools and communities for everyone in America.

Laurel G. Bellows
President

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

321 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60654-7598
(312) 988-5109
Fax: (312) 988-5100
abapresident@americanbar.org

January 17, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members nationwide to commend you for your exemplary leadership in introducing the Assault Weapons Regulatory Act of 2013. We enthusiastically support the proposed act, which will carefully and rationally regulate the availability of military assault-type firearms and the large-capacity ammunition feeding devices they utilize.

These particular weapons and clips were designed for killing large numbers of persons quickly; they have no other use in civilian hands. The ABA believes that enactment of this legislation is an essential step, though only part of the answer, to keeping our nation's school children and all our citizens safe from future mass shootings.

It is not surprising that the public is demanding action by Congress following the horrific slaughter last month of young children and their teachers at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. This event – following on the heels of mass killings at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and mass killings in Tucson, Arizona, that also resulted in severe injuries to former Representative Gabby Giffords – has caused the nation to more fully recognize the danger to the public posed when the common components of these shootings come together: military firearms, high-capacity clips and their use by mentally disturbed persons who easily amassed the firepower capable of quickly killing many innocent citizens involved in everyday settings and activities. We do not need another such tragedy to give us incentive to improve and reenact the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004.

The expired 1994 federal assault weapons ban clearly reduced the incidence of assault weapons used in crime. In the five-year period (1990-1994) before enactment of the ban, assault weapons constituted 4.82 percent of the crime gun traces the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) conducted nationwide. When the ban was in effect, these assault weapons made up only 1.61 percent of the guns ATF traced to crime – a drop of 66 percent from the pre-ban rate. ATF data showed a year-by-year decline in the percentage of assault weapons, evidence that the longer the statute was in effect, the less

available these weapons became for criminal misuse. A report by the Department of Justice documented these findings along with a decline in the absolute number of assault weapons traced to crime during this period. Every major law enforcement organization in the country has long supported a strong assault weapons ban.

The ABA applauds your revisions to the 1994 Act that strengthen it in a number of important respects. The proposed Act protects the rights of existing gun owners by carefully defining the characteristics of assault weapons to distinguish them from the over 900 specifically named weapons used for hunting or sporting purposes. It grandfathers into legal status assault weapons currently owned rather than rendering them illegal, but requires more careful regulation of their transfer and sale by bringing them and large capacity ammunition devices under the provisions of the National Firearms Act, subject to the existing registration requirements long in effect for fully automatic firearms. We also strongly support the proposed act's ban on future transfer of grandfathered ammunition clips, as well as the proposed voluntary buyback of these clips, as we believe the public safety of everyone in our country will be best served by eventually eliminating these devices from civilian circulation.

We commend you for drafting a new assault weapons law that is clear and enforceable and that will commence the process of removing these weapons from our communities. The ABA stands ready to work with you and leaders in both parties in the Senate and the House so that the Assault Weapons Regulatory Act of 2013 will become law.

Sincerely,



Laurel G. Bellows
President



January 19, 2013

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Carolyn McCarthy
United States House of Representatives
2346 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Feinstein and Congresswoman McCarthy:

20 Children is a non-partisan, grassroots movement of parents and families across the U.S. who have come together to end gun violence. We are pleased to support your legislation, the "Assault Weapons Ban Reauthorization Act of 2013." If enacted into law, your bill would renew and strengthen the 1994 ban on semiautomatic assault weapons (SAWs) and would help keep these military-style guns out of the hands of criminals. Enhancing the expired 1994 law by ensuring that all SAWs are banned from sale is vitally important to achieving the intent of the assault weapons ban, which is why 20 Children supports closing all loopholes in this regard.

SAWs were the weapon of choice for the shooters in Newtown and Aurora because of their capacity to inflict the maximum amount of casualties in the shortest period of time. These guns were originally developed for use on the battlefield, and not intended for hunting purposes or civilian self defense. In order to reduce gun violence and protect children, the nation must reinstate reasonable protections on these types of weapons.

20 Children submitted recommendations to the White House Task Force on Gun Violence and called for many of the provisions contained in your legislation, including:

- Banning the importation of SAWs for sale;
- Banning the sale of SAWs by licensed dealers;
- Banning the private sale or personal transfer of SAWs; and
- Strengthening the definition of SAWs enough to keep all similarly dangerous weapons from being manufactured and sold in the future.

The Newtown tragedy made clear the urgent need for common sense legal, legislative and policy reforms to help keep our nation's children safe. Gun violence should be treated as the dire public health threat that it is. 20 Children will continue to advocate for the enactment of evidence-based gun policies that will help reduce gun violence and save lives. Every day that passes without enacting a comprehensive set of safety measures is another day that children's lives are needlessly put at risk.

20 Children appreciates your leadership on this very important issue and we look forward to working with you to pass this necessary legislation.

Sincerely,

20Children.org

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am a mother of four children (who graduated from Sandy Hook Elementary School) and the shooter lived in my neighborhood. We lost our neighbors, educators, and principal on that dreadful morning on December 14, 2012. Our neighborhood is one of the safest places in this country. Sandy Hook Elementary School was one of the most nurturing environment for my four children therefore we were in a state of shock when we heard the horrific news on December 14th.

After more than two and a half months, our community is still reeling from the tragic loss of 26 innocent lives. December 14th has forever changed our town, our state and our country. If something like this can happen in Sandy Hook then it can happen anywhere in this nation.

Since December 14th, I have spent my days and nights researching the issue of gun violence and I am shocked by what I have learned. I learned that I could go to an unlicensed gun dealer and buy a gun without a background check, buy guns from gun traffickers, buy unlimited amount of ammunition online and I can buy a military-style assault weapons with high capacity magazines easily. Meanwhile 100,000 Americans are shot every year and 32,000 of those individuals die (~12,000 are murdered and ~19,000 commit suicide using guns). Almost 2,500 Americans have died due to gun violence since December 14th. One out of five Americans know a victim of gun violence. Recently, the Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that Americans worry more about being a victim of gun violence than they do about losing their job or paying their mortgage.

Polls show that 82% of gun owners including 74% of NRA members support requiring criminal background checks for anyone purchasing guns. Yet, the NRA is fighting background checks. Pew Research Center poll found 55% respondents favored assault weapons ban. Despite this, rumor has it that you don't have the political courage to pass the assault weapons ban and other sensible gun regulations. I was hoping that the brutal massacre of 20 innocent children and six of their educators in Newtown would forever change you and you would act swiftly and boldly to save thousands of American lives.

I believe stronger gun regulations would have saved lives on that tragic day. I also believe if millions of people in this nation demanded change after Columbine, Virginia Tech, Tucson and Aurora then maybe just maybe this type of massacre in our neighborhood elementary school could have been avoided. It is unacceptable for us to not take action. Too many Americans are dying every year. You acted swiftly and boldly to institute measures to improve public safety after September 11th and you must do the same after December 14th. We have the right to feel safe in our schools, malls, movie theaters, places of worship, work place, salons and on our city streets.

I made a promise on December 14th that I will no longer stay silent and do more to save lives by writing, e-mailing and calling the lawmakers. I traveled down to Washington DC with 40 Newtown teachers, clergy, parents, students, other members of Newtown Action Alliance and families of victims on February 26th and 27th to meet with congressional leaders and to attend Senator Feinstein's Assault Weapons Ban hearing. We shared our stories of tragic loss, our pain and we asked many of you to honor the 26 lives by helping us to turn our tragedy into meaningful action and change. Please have the political courage to save American lives by banning military-style assault weapons, prohibiting gun trafficking, requiring universal background check on all gun purchases and limiting high capacity magazines. You have the ability to save lives and I am asking for your leadership.

Thank you for your consideration.
Po Murray

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

As a long-time resident of Newtown, whose three children went through Sandy Hook Elementary, I know about the rapid devastation that assault weapons can do to a community. I urge you to support Senator Feinstein’s Assault Weapons ban bill. It’s the right thing to do and it will, without a doubt, save lives.

Miranda Pacchiana

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

I am a mother of three boys in first, fourth and sixth grade in Newtown. We were lucky in that our family still has all of our members. However, we are one of the thousands of unlucky victims who now live in a community forever changed, still trying to figure out how to go back to "normal." I don't foresee it happening for a long time.

Please enact the legislation proposed in SB-150. Without better restrictions on the weapons sold to ordinary citizens, it is inevitable that the arms race for bigger and better weapons will lead to greater casualties.

There is an angle to the discussion about guns that I have not seen discussed: the idea that there are good guys and bad guys and that the constitution allows for an arms race for anyone so inclined to carry a bigger and better weapon than the “bad” guy, bad guys being those who use a gun to threaten harm in order to gain something, those with mental health issues, those who lose their temper, those who accidentally fire a gun that injures or kills someone, those who do not maintain their weapons in a safe place, those who go on shooting rampages, and, now, thanks to NRA propaganda, even those in government.

I must agree with the NRA on one point: universal background checks and restricting sales will not eliminate “bad” guys with guns. Why? Because we ALL have the potential to do bad things. There is no way to unequivocally identify the “good guys” and the “bad guys.”

If the NRA had its way, everyone with a gun would become a judge and jury, with qualifications to be reconciled at a later time, after the damage has been done. Clearly there will be those who are bad judges. We see it all of the time: Nancy Lanza, who gave her troubled son access to ridiculously high powered weapons; Jeffrey Giuliano, who shot his own son in New Fairfield, thinking he was an intruder; Robert Bell, who shot his wife in a domestic dispute in New Fairfield; Jason Razzino, a father in Norwich who shot a police officer before taking his own life; and most recently Debra Denison who shot her two grandsons and then shot herself in Preston, CT. These people were not “bad” people before the shootings occurred. Their neighbors and friends are often quoted in the papers saying they never saw it coming. We all have the potential to make horribly bad decisions in an instant. To err is to be human. With more and more powerful guns in more people's hand, however, those bad judgements are that much more likely to end in profound injury and death.

There are ways to reduce the damage done by those making bad choices. The fewer weapons there are in total, and the less powerful they are, the less likely there are to be massive injuries and deaths. Better background checks can help eliminate those most likely to do bad things. Make the requirements to obtain a gun stricter and stop letting the gun manufacturers distribute the newest and most powerful weapons to any customer who has bought into the propaganda that they need bigger and better weapons.

If you accept the NRA's position that the second amendment rights should be less restricted, then you are allowing all people, with all of their good and bad characters traits, to have access to bigger and more powerful guns and to serve as judge and jury without any qualifications. This is not the world I want to live in.

Please do what you can to limit magazine capacity, expand the ban on assault-style and semi-automatic weapons, increase universal background checks, restrict registration to those most qualified, require permits of all gun owners, limit the number of firearm purchases in a 30-day period and require background checks for ammunition purchases.

Thank you,

Michelle Embree Ku

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

My name is Michelle Dargon and I live in Newtown, CT.

I have 2 beautiful children who are 5 years old.

The December 14, 2012 tragedy has left me heartbroken for the victims, their families, friends and heartbroken for my children who now live in such a violent world. No one should have to live in fear. No one should have to live looking over their shoulder while shopping in a mall, grocery store, taking in a movie, attending school or simply going about their lives. No one should have to put their kids on their school bus and fear that they may not come home. NO ONE.

I support SB 150, Senator Feinstein’s bill to ban assault weapons and high capacity magazine bans and I demand a vote.

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

I am the Chapter Head for Moms Demand Action, Richmond and Southeastern VA. I represent 1200 registered members in this region.

We strongly support SB 150, Senator Feinstein’s bill to ban assault weapons and high capacity magazine bans. Please let the Senators know that we demand a vote.

The issue with military-style assault rifles is not that they are big or scary, and it is not that the majority of crimes are committed with them; in fact the majority of gun deaths are from handguns. However, the chance of surviving if shot with a handgun is large; estimates range from 70-80% survival rate overall for handguns.

Military style assault rifles such as the AK-47 (semi-automatic version of the fully automatic military version) and the AR-15 (semi-automatic civilian version of the fully automatic M-16 machine guns) differ in only 1 respect from their military versions, and that is that the trigger must be pulled for each shot. The bullet type, speed of the bullet, and specs of the guns are otherwise the same. These guns have a fatality rate of about 25% per shot on the battlefield, where wounds are sustained typically a long distance from the shooters, usually 100 yards or more. Thus the bullet velocity of 3000 ft/second, which is higher than other guns, slows significantly as the bullet travels further from barrel to target, making the shot more survivable.

This is not the case in civilian spree shootings such as Newtown, and these types of semi-automatic guns are favored by spree shooters. In Newtown, where people were shot at close range, there were 2 survivors out of 26 shot. This is a massive fatality rate. Also, the NRA has claimed that these guns only have a sustained maximum fire rate of 12-15 rounds a minute. They fail to note that this is defined as the rate when one includes loading, aiming, firing, and allowing the gun to cool down between shots. The actual rate at which these guns are capable of firing, their max rate, is 45 shots per minute according to the manufacturers.

This means that in civilian hands, 45 shots per minute can be fired from a weapon for which there are magazines commonly available that hold 30 or more rounds. The shooters do not even need to re-load.

Furthermore, the bullets used in these guns are particularly dangerous. These guns take 223 rounds, which are designed to fragment in the body into a snowstorm of metal fragments, generating maximal tissue damage and hemorrhage for maximal lethality in a battlefield situation. Because the bullets fly at such a high velocity, they also create a shockwave in tissue that can kill even if a vital organ or major vessel is not hit. This is especially true in children. I know a great deal about tissue damage to the human body because my doctoral degree is in human anatomy and am qualified to teach Gross Anatomy to medical and dental students, and have done so at 2 major universities.

For all the reasons above, spree shootings using these weapons are practically unsurvivable. These weapons belong in the hands of our military. They do not belong in the hands of civilians. Hunters do not NEED this much firepower to kill their targets, and in fact the use of these weapons in the context of hunting makes accidental shootings more likely because more rounds are fired at targets.

These weapons should be illegal. There is plenty of legal precedent. When sawed-off shotguns were frequently used in massacres during the gang wars of the prohibition era, they were outlawed. We no longer have massacres with sawed-off shotguns. When "Tommy Guns" were regulated so heavily that the fully-automatic machine guns practically disappeared from the market, there were no more massacres with fully automatic machine guns.

Make no mistake that it will take at least a generation, maybe two, before we see an appreciable difference in crime with these guns after a ban. The populace stocks up on the guns and ammo after EVERY massacre as the NRA tells them to. There are many guns already out there in civilian hands and nothing much can be done about that except to wait for that population to age out. But we can stop any more of these killing machines from going onto the market. And we can stop new high-capacity magazines from going onto the market. Those can wear out (springs, rust).

Please tell the judiciary to do the right thing, do what is right for public safety, rather than obeying their gun lobby masters who write fat checks. The NRA accounts for only 1% of the population of the US. They are loud, and well organized, but they are a minority. I urge you to tell the Senate to vote the way the majority of citizens want them to. Outlaw these guns and high-capacity magazines. Do it now. Do it permanently with no sunset clauses like the Brady Bill.

Thank you,

Rebecca Caffrey, PhD, MBA, MBA
Chapter Head, Richmond and SE Virginia
Moms Demand Action
www.momsdemandaction.org

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

March 6, 2013

Chairman Patrick Leahy
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Senator Leahy and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to support the passage of Senator Feinstein’s S.150, the Assault Weapons Ban. On April 16, 2007, my family was devastated by the loss of a close and dear friend, Reema Samaha, who was killed in her French classroom at Virginia Tech. My children still struggle with the loss of their good friend and not a day goes by I do not think of her.

But, the loss on Reema’s family was far worse. As it was on the 31 other families who lost someone they loved that day. I also knew Erin Peterson, an only child, who died with Reema. Unfortunately, our high school graduated the Virginia Tech killer and Michael Kennedy, who gunned down two police officers at our local police station.

Since April 16, 2007, I have come to know the majority of families who lost someone that day and the survivors. I cannot begin to tell all of you the horrific impact that April 16 has had on these families and survivors. Any time you think of gun violence, picture an empty chair at the dining room table, a mother whose eyes well up every time you mention her child’s name, a father rocking in a chair, the grief so great, he cannot speak, a sister who cares for her siblings while holding up her parents who fall apart, children who no longer have a father to hold them, survivors who struggle with physical and psychological wounds every day. Gun violence is a best friend whose lyrics are “I never had a chance to say good-bye,” a grandmother who lost both her grandchild and child, because her child will never be the same again. Gun violence impacts generations.

The Supreme Court was very clear that the Second Amendment is not inviolate. You have the right – and the duty – to ensure the public safety of your citizens and the right of all people to live without the fear of gun violence in their homes, their schools, their malls and churches. Our founding fathers never envisioned the types of weapons we have today – weapons that were intended for war, not our streets. Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines may be “fun” for those who like to shoot multiple rounds, but they are unnecessary for sport, hunting or self-defense.

This country has stood by too long and done nothing while we watch tragedy after tragedy, from Columbine to Blacksburg, Chardon High School to Newtown, Aurora to Tucson, on and on and on. Meanwhile, real families suffer the consequences each and every day. I implore you to act and pass this much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,
Lu Ann Maciulla McNabb

Subject: Testimony to support S-150, the Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazine Bill

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

“History says don’t hope on this side of the grave. But then once in a life time, the longed for tidal wave of justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme. “

These lines were written by the Irish Nobel Prize winning poet Seamus Heaney. He based his play in which these lines are found, on a Greek drama about the all-too-true conflicts that can arise between political expediency and personal integrity. Those conflicts are evident today in the debate over guns in this country. Do we act with political expediency and give our citizens virtually unregulated permission to own guns, even high powered assault weapons; or do we honor our personal moral beliefs that include the rights of children to grow up, and adults to live in a world that is safe and as free as possible from gun violence? And maybe even, do we allow money from the NRA to influence our votes, a politically expedient move, indeed; or do we weep with those who have lost loved ones to gun violence and promise to do our best to stop it?

Yes, these are the tensions in our nation, in our world--the tensions between political expediency and personal integrity. However, we believe that this latest tragedy at Newtown has caused that long awaited “tidal wave of justice,” at least in the area of gun violence. Perhaps now hope, hope in a future more free of violence, and history, this historic pivotal moment, can finally rhyme. Now, with this latest tragedy, we see an opportunity to change our laws so that gun owners bear some responsibility for their right to own hand guns and rifles; and an opportunity to ban assault weapons, which can have no good purpose in the hands of ordinary citizens.

We are a group of citizens living in Charlottesville, Virginia. We are asking you to support S-150, the Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazine bill, and the other proposals from lawmakers that will reduce gun violence in our country. We are pastors, teachers, Christian educators, professors, tax payers, parents, grandparents and moral activists all. Please make sure that THIS time hope and history rhyme.

Yours,

The Rev. Dr. Gay Lee Einstein
The Rev. Tina Cox
Bob West
Howard Miller
The Rev. Dale Dealtrey
Dr. Philip Shane, CPA
Linda Gehle

Jim Tromater, Organizer,
Richmond Community Committee Against Gun Violence

The Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights
Chairman Dick Durbin

March 6, 2013

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senator Diane Feinstein's Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 Bill, S150. As the organizer of the Richmond Community Committee to Stop Gun Violence, I am speaking on behalf of all of our members. We are united in our belief that there is much that can be done legislatively to make our country a safer place that will not infringe upon Second Amendment rights. We formed in the wake of Sandy Hook, as a grass-roots organization committed to preventing gun violence. All of our members are parents; many are grandparents. We are regular folk, including gun owners and sport shooting enthusiasts. We cannot countenance explaining to our children and grandchildren that in the face of mass slaughter of 6 year olds, our country did nothing to protect their precious right to life, thus we urge you to act and view inaction in the face of gun manufacturing lobbying as unconscionable. There is absolutely nothing inconsistent with believing in both the Second Amendment and in sensible legislation to prevent the mass shootings that have plagued our country like an out-of-control virus. Every right has limits and the Second Amendment is no exception. No one outside of the military needs an assault weapon or a 50-caliber sniper rifle that can penetrate a police officer's bullet-proof vest. No one needs a high-capacity magazine capable of turning an ordinary handgun into a killing machine.

Today we write urging you to renew the federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines and close all of the loopholes that existed in the earlier assault weapons ban. Mass shootings have increased in frequency since the ban expired in 2004. In addition, during the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban, these weapons were declining as a percentage of crime guns in Virginia (one of the few states where such data is available). Since the expiration of the 1994 Assault Weapons ban, the percentage of assault weapons used in crimes has predictably once again sky rocketed to pre-ban previous levels, indicating we have once again given criminals and drug dealers easy access to weapons of mass terror and death. These are reasons enough to reinstate the ban. There is no need for a weapon designed for battlefield use and easily outfitted

with magazines holding up to 100 rounds of ammunition to be legally available to civilians but there is a very compelling reason to ban these weapons – it will save lives, it will lessen the ease with which a deranged individual can visit the terror and horror of the knowledge of easy mass murder of children upon all the children of our country. We have allowed our children to be terrorized for long enough, now is the time to act.

Most Respectfully,

Jim Tromater
Organizer
Richmond Community Committee Against Gun Violence



The Senate Judiciary Committee

March 5, 2013

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of S150, Senator Feinstein's Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazine Ban bill. As the Virginia State President of the Million Mom March, I am speaking on behalf of all of our chapters and members. We are united in our belief that there is much that can be done legislatively to make our country a safer place that will not infringe upon Second Amendment rights and this bill is where Congress should start.

Many of our members attended last week's Senate Judiciary Hearing. We heard heartbreaking testimony by the father of a Sandy Hook victim and wrenching testimony by a doctor on the scene. We saw video clips of how powerful and destructive assault weapons are and we listened intently as Police Chief Flynn stated that getting assault weapons off the street is the single most important thing that can be done to protect his force. We heard Mayor Nutter speak on behalf of Mayors all over this country and state that the assault weapons ban is their top priority.

It is difficult to fathom how or why weapons designed for battlefield use with a sole purpose of killing as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, were ever allowed into the civilian market. The same goes for high-capacity magazines that can turn an ordinary handgun into a killing machine. The only explanation is of course commercial. Gun manufacturers profit from the sale of these weapons. However, Congress has been protecting these dangerous commercial interests at the expense of public health and safety and it must stop.

The American people are speaking loudly and clearly. We expect Congress to start protecting our children rather than protecting guns. We expect Congress to put the interests of public safety ahead of the interests of the gun lobby.

Legislators on both sides of the aisle have an obligation to protect and safeguard the welfare of Americans – not to safeguard the commercial interests of reckless gun manufacturers. Hiding behind the Second Amendment as an excuse for inaction is unacceptable. There is absolutely nothing inconsistent with believing in both the Second Amendment and in sensible legislation to prevent the mass shootings that have plagued our country like an out-of-control virus. Every

right has limits and the Second Amendment is no exception. No one outside of the military needs an assault weapon or a 50-caliber sniper rifle that can penetrate a police officer's bullet-proof vest. No one needs a high-capacity magazine capable of turning an ordinary handgun into a killing machine. No one should be able to purchase a gun of any sort without having to undergo a background check. Loopholes need to be closed. Bans need to be reinstated. We are counting on you to get this done; for our country and for our children. Please pass S150 now.

Most respectfully,

Martina Leinz
Virginia State President
Million Mom March

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

Subject: Gun Legislation Testimony
Testimony of Lisa M. Fryer, M.S. SLP-CCC
March 5, 2013

Dear Senators and Representatives,

My name is Lisa Fryer and I am a resident of Ridgefield, CT. I am writing to **urge you to PASS the legislative proposals submitted by Connecticut Against Gun Violence**. Encompassed is a comprehensive package of gun violence prevention measures that will make our children safer and rid our nation of assault weapons and high capacity magazines.

I am a Speech Language Pathologist who has worked in the public schools for many years and am also a mother to three beautiful children. My eldest daughter, Isabella, is a first grader and is the same age as the young victims of Sandy Hook Elementary. How many shootings are enough to precipitate a response? You have the position, and influence, to make a positive change in gun laws. I urge you to take sensible action. I understand this is a multi-faceted problem and the list is long, trying, and incomplete. However, because it is a difficult path does NOT entitle a course of no action or WEAK legislation. I respect the law-abiding hunter and know many; and as any sensible hunter would tell you, these assault weapons and high capacity magazines are not used for sport - they are an effective means for mass and quick killing. I don't believe the Second Amendment grants people the right to arm themselves anyway they see fit. There must be COMMONSENSE laws in place that will make gun ownership safer and I believe the greater society supports this action NOW.

I am now a single issue voter. The time is now! Take action now!

I urge you as my legislator to do the right thing. **I urge you to BAN semi-automatic assault weapons and high capacity ammunition**. Voice these positions loudly, work in a bi-partisan manner and urge your constituents to do the same in a peaceful manner. Please take action now, do the right thing for our society, for our kids. For me, this is the only way that I will know in my heart that something positive has come out of these senseless tragedies.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

Dear Mr. Thessin,

I am writing to you in support of common sense gun reform legislation. I'm just an ordinary, voting Mom/housewife from Raleigh, NC. I am an ordinary Mom that was shaken to her very core when I watched the events of 12/14 unfolding on my television.

David Wheeler, Dad of Ben Wheeler, has asked parents to imagine what they are going through. He's asked for other parents to imagine their profound loss, shock, horror. I have, I do. I imagine it every day. When I drop my kids off at school, I can't escape the thought that 12/14 can happen in my town. I can't escape the thought that this could be my very last moment with my children. Things like this never crossed my mind before 12/14. Things like that are what nightmares are made of, but this nightmare came true. This nightmare can happen again if common sense laws are not passed.

I want background checks for all gun buyers. I want the gun show loop holes closed in ALL states. I want a ban on all "assault type" weapons. I want a ban on magazines over 10 rounds.

Newtown is all of our towns. We need to do everything in our power to make sure 12/14 NEVER happens again.

Thank you for your time,

Jenny Newbrough
Raleigh, NC

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Senator Feinstein has for more than 20 years been burdened with the pain of gun related tragedy –one that we only recently experienced with such magnitude in Newtown. She has worked tirelessly to carry this torch and keep this issue as part of the dialog of our country’s leaders and we owe her a debt of gratitude for her efforts. We travelled a long way to Washington D.C. last week to support S-150 the Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazine bill, and the other proposals from lawmakers who are on the right side of history to stand up for ideas that will reduce gun violence, and we will persist until there is a vote

The Newtown Action Alliance has sent representatives to D.C to demonstrate to all our elected officials that we stand by them and anyone else who is committed to bring reasonable ideas forward to reduce gun violence and death.

We know that there are many elements that we can expect our government to address with stronger legislation, and many others we need to address as a community. We are here with community interfaith leaders, teachers, students, mothers, fathers, and others willing to work within our communities to make us safer. However we also need our lawmakers, at a national level, to ensure our efforts are not undermined by inconsistent laws between states.

As individual citizens, every person in our organization and the hundreds behind each of us have been compelled by the Newtown tragedy to take action, because our conscience will not allow otherwise. It is no longer a choice for us. We expect our elected representatives to be obligated by oath and conscience to take action, and not consider inaction as a viable option. There is so much that can be done without infringing upon the second amendment, and every day of inaction directly equates to lives lost.

Newtown Action Alliance is a Newtown based grassroots organization that takes action and lends support to any reasonable measures to reduce gun violence and death while respecting the rights granted by the Second Amendment.

Newtown has been forever changed by the senseless killing on December 14, 2012. Almost 2500 others have died since December 14th. We all deserve a vote on sensible legislation to protect our precious children and citizens in our towns and cities across this nation.

On behalf of Newtown Action Alliance,
Dave Ackert
Chairman
Newtown Action Alliance

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

I am a resident of Newtown, Connecticut, and a former intern at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Newtown has brought my life so much love and opportunity, for which I will always be grateful. The events that transpired last Friday morning I likely will never fully grasp or understand. As my heart begins to heal, I wanted to share my story in hopes that it will encourage others to help foster change in the coming days, weeks, and years.

With my family, I moved to Newtown when I was six years old – the same age as so many of the children lost in the Sandy Hook shooting. I quickly became acquainted with my new teachers and made new friends, joined dance classes and softball teams, and became part of the town. I watched parades down Main Street on Labor Day, enjoyed signature “Flagpole” sandwiches at the old-fashioned general store, enjoyed the flickering luminaries that line the Ram’s Pasture and Main Street before the Christmas Tree Lighting, and entered raffles for trees at the annual Festival of the Trees (I still haven’t won). While so many of us here go far away for college, I find that many of us come back here to settle. There’s a strong reason for that – our community.

I attended Sacred Heart University and earned a degree in psychology and my elementary school teacher certification. As I neared graduation, I interned at a nearby preschool and completed my student teaching. Following graduation, I was fortunate to become a paid intern at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where the staff was always so gracious, welcoming, and generous. My year of teaching and assisting special needs children helped shape me as a person and future teacher. I worked alongside so many of the heroic staff that saved lives and gave their own. Vicki Soto and I, both then 23 years of age and fresh from school, were interns that year. We learned from the Sandy Hook teachers and began to develop our teaching styles, inspired by the talented educators around us.

As my internship at Sandy Hook was nearing completion, a life dream of mine came true – I was offered a position with a dance company that would take me across this globe. The staff and students shared their excitement at my opportunity, knowing how much it meant to me.

Since those days in 2009, I’ve traveled the world dancing, visiting over 25 countries and 45 of the 50 states in this country – and met my fiancé from Australia in the process. I was so proud to bring him home to Newtown. Despite all the amazing cultures and places we’d experienced, I felt confident Newtown would be our future home. He agreed.

Hearing the initial news of a possible shooting near Sandy Hook Elementary, I felt empty and in disbelief. At that point, all that was reported was that there’d been a police call about a shooting. I prayed it would be a false alarm. But as the hours passed, we painfully learned otherwise.

As I learn about the courageous and selfless actions of Vicki Soto and the other educators at Sandy Hook Elementary, I can't help but picture myself in that classroom, knowing that but for a twist of fate I might have taken the same career path. Could I have possibly been so brave? Vicki is, and forever will be, a hero and an inspiration to me and hopefully to us all.

I ask myself, how could this tragedy happen? But I guess what we really should be asking is, what could have been done to prevent it? How can we prevent it from ever happening again?

Some will talk of providing principals and administrators access to guns for protection. But surely if the schools of our youngest children, our precious future, need to become armed fortresses, we have lost our way as a culture and a country. I respect the rights of citizens to own guns for sport and other legitimate purposes. But our neighborhoods, our communities, our malls, our theaters, our schools are no place for the likes of assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips that, in the wrong hands, are for all intents and purposes weapons of mass destruction.

During the vigil here in Newtown, our President said, "If there's even one step we can take to save another child or another parent or another town from the grief that's visited Tucson and Aurora and Oak Creek and Newtown and communities from Columbine to Blacksburg before that, then surely we have an obligation to try." He vowed that "these tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change." He will need your support and he has mine. We have no more time to waste. We must change for those lost at Sandy Hook, for the town of Newtown, for our country, for our children. We must protect our nation's people with the same courageousness and selflessness that the staff of Sandy Hook Elementary School showed for their own. I fully support Senator Feinstein's bill to ban assault weapons as well as high capacity magazine bans. I deserve a vote. Newtown deserves a vote.

Sincerely,

Christina Dolzall

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I was raised in the beautiful town of Newtown, CT. As you well know, my hometown was struck by an extraordinary act of violence. This horrific event has changed my town forever and has impacted all of us who call Newtown our home. Although I am writing to you as someone who has been affected by gun violence, I am hoping to get across that public health and medical investigation shows that assault weapons cause more harm than good. As someone who will enter a master's in public health program in a few months, I have focused my energy since the tragedy on delving into public health and medical journals.

One of the most compelling articles I have read was written by representatives of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The article, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, discusses the public health issue that is gun deaths among children. According to the article, Gun-related injuries accounted for 6,570 deaths in children and young people (ages 1 to 24) in 2010. The death of over 6,500 children in a single year is extremely problematic. America can do better to protect our children. The article also stated that less than 5% of suicide attempts involving drugs are lethal while 90% of those involving guns result in death. This clearly shows that having a gun makes a suicide attempt more likely to be fatal. While these statistics do not specifically separate assault weapons from other firearms, the American Academy of Pediatrics offers several measures that should be taken to reduce gun deaths among children and one of these recommendations is a federal ban on assault weapons.

Pediatricians do not have political agendas, but rather are seeking to protect the young lives of our nation. Their recommendations should be taken into consideration.

Another interesting article published in the Public Library of Science Medicine journal discusses the possibility of being able to determine whether or not a person will become violent based on whether or not the individual has a diagnosis of schizophrenia or other psychoses.

The article was interesting to me because the argument that we should simply prevent the mentally ill from getting weapons rather than banning them is often used. While this is complicated for other reasons, such as that all states report mental illness differently, the article stated that the risk of homicide in persons with schizophrenia was shown to be 0.3% compared with 0.02% in the general population. This data suggests that it is nearly impossible to determine whether or not someone with mental illness will become violent. Simply preventing the mentally ill from acquiring guns will likely not be effective enough. If we can prevent civilians from having military-grade firearms it will be more likely that someone who wishes to commit a violent act will have difficulty in acquiring a gun made for killing many people at once.

I urge you to explore the research on gun violence. The research conducted by physicians and public health professionals overwhelmingly supports an assault weapons ban as well as many other violence prevention measures. Please support the assault weapons ban. The people of Newtown and all other American citizens affected by gun violence deserve your support. No other town should ever have to experience the pain that Newtown is feeling right now. Anything that can help prevent mass shootings from taking away innocent lives should be done.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Clement

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

Dear Senators,

I am a resident of Sandy Hook, Connecticut, and the mother of two young boys. In two years, I will put my older son on the bus for his first day of kindergarten at Sandy Hook Elementary. I'm writing today in support of SB 150, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013.

Over the past two months, I have brought meals to neighbors who have lost children, and wept with friends who have had to tell their six-year-olds that five of their young friends had died. I have seen surviving Sandy Hook students cling desperately to their parents, to their dolls, to their dogs. I have watched parents of surviving Sandy Hook students withdraw from their support systems. I have seen my own son, who just turned three, develop a sudden fear of monsters. The effects of this shooting, even in a community as supportive and loving as Newtown, will be with all of us forever.

In the time it took Adam Lanza to reload, children were able to escape. While it is unrealistic to think that we can stop every incidence of gun violence in this country, we have a moral obligation to do what we can to reduce the unacceptably high rate of gun-related deaths every year. A weapon that can put eleven bullets in a six-year-old in a matter of seconds has no place on our streets or in our communities.

The children of our country deserve better. Please be brave, and do the right thing.

With respect,

Aimee Pokwatka

“Hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013”

February 27, 2013

I am writing to let you know that I support SB 105, Senator Feinstein’s bill to ban assault weapons and high capacity magazine bans.

Even further, I believe that armor piercing bullets should be banned. I believe that military style weapons should only be for the military and police. I believe that everyone should undergo a background check and training before purchasing any weapon. I believe that guns should be registered and gun owners should be responsible for their safe keeping. If a gun is stolen and not reported I believe they should be held responsible.

I am a dog trainer and there are many laws in place as to how I keep a dog that the law deems "dangerous". If the dog escapes and kills someone then I can be charged with manslaughter. Surely if I am required to keep a living animal properly contained then gun owners can keep their weapons secured or be held responsible.

I grew up in WV with guns all around me. I believe that everyone that is mentally capable and is a law abiding citizen should be able to own guns. I live in Newtown now and on Christmas of this past year, just days after the massacre at Sandy Hook, my brother gave my father an assault rifle. There are a few things that bothered me- my father does not own a safe for his guns and my mother is bipolar. These are very smart, successful people but there seems to be no common sense when it comes to guns. They are completely disconnected to the horrors that I have heard. They believe that nothing like that will happen to them. They are ignorant in this regard and they need to be educated to the danger that they put everyone in.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my voice.

Abby Hill CPDT

The Exceptional Pet LLC

www.theexceptionalpet.com

203-994-7678



Laura Fisher
Co-founder, MOURN



mournmoms@gmail.com

The Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights
Chairman Dick Durbin

March 5, 2013

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the hearing on the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 held on Feb. 27. As co-founder of Mothers United for Reform Now, I am speaking on behalf of 80 members in the Northern Virginia area. MOURN was founded on Dec. 21 by Laurie Chidlow and myself in response to the horrific shooting that occurred in Newtown, Conn. Our mission is to mobilize mothers to advocate for gun violence prevention measures that make children and communities safer, in lasting tribute to the victims of gun tragedies. More information about MOURN can be found at www.usmourn.com.

We are united in our belief that there are steps that Congress can take to make our country a safer place without infringing upon Second Amendment rights. The first step in restoring commonsense to our nation's gun policy is to pass Sen. Feinstein's Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 (S. 150). The members of MOURN support the following actions to prevent gun violence:

1) Institute an Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazine Ban by passing S. 150

Renew the federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines and close all of the loopholes that existed in the earlier assault weapons ban. These tools of mass carnage are useful for one and only one purpose – to kill as many people as possible in the shortest period of time. In fact, mass shootings have increased in frequency since the ban expired in 2004. That is reason enough to reinstate the ban. There is no need for a weapon designed for battlefield use and easily outfitted with magazines holding up to 100 rounds of ammunition to be legally available to civilians but there is a very compelling reason to ban these weapons – it will save lives.

2) Require Universal Background Checks on both Guns and Ammunition

Every purchaser of a firearm should be subject to a background check through the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Currently, an estimated 40 percent of gun sales are made by private individuals (at gun shows, over the Internet, through classified advertisements, etc.) who have no legal responsibility to subject purchasers to background checks or maintain records of sale. What is the purpose of having a NICS database with millions of disqualifying records if prohibited purchasers can simply circumvent the system? It would be the equivalent of having optional security screening at our airports, with a second line for folks who simply wish to bypass the scanners. In this Information Age, NICS checks are typically completed in a matter of minutes, and they can be administered by any one of the nation's more than 50,000 federally licensed firearm dealers. Background checks should also be required on all ammunition purchases.

3) Repeal Tiahrt and Make Gun Trafficking a Federal Crime

The Tiahrt Amendment should be repealed as it restricts access of law enforcement to gun-trace data making it very difficult for the police to track down sellers of illegal guns, to investigate gun trafficking patterns, and to make connections between individual gun-related crimes. It also denies the ATF the authority to require gun dealers to inventory lost and stolen guns and requires that NICS background check records be destroyed within 24 hours. In addition to repealing Tiahrt, Congress should make gun trafficking a federal crime so there can be tougher enforcement. We should be doing everything we can to trace illegal guns and to empower the ATF and law enforcement to do their jobs effectively.

4) Improve Mental Health Reporting

While the vast majority of those who suffer from mental illness will never be dangerous, a more effective approach to preventing persons that are a danger to themselves or others from acquiring firearms is needed. Under current law, only individuals who have been *involuntarily* committed to a psychiatric institution or formally adjudicated as "mental defectives" (the law was written in 1968) are prohibited from buying firearms. This standard tells us little about who might be dangerous and allows people to acquire firearms who should never get anywhere near a gun.

There are many other issues that need to be addressed, such as violent video games, the glorification of gun violence in movies and TV and the effect this has on our youth. But these issues will take time to tackle and resolve and will require a cultural shift. The suggestions above are immediate steps that would help prevent gun violence.

The American people, especially mothers, are speaking loudly and clearly. We expect Congress to start protecting our children rather than protecting guns. We expect Congress to put the interests of public safety ahead of the interests of the gun lobby.

Public safety should not be a politically charged issue. Legislators on both sides of the aisle have an obligation to protect and safeguard the welfare of Americans. Hiding behind the Second Amendment as an excuse for inaction is unacceptable. There is absolutely nothing inconsistent with believing in both the Second Amendment and in sensible legislation to prevent the mass shootings that have plagued our country like an out-of-control virus.

Every right has limits and the Second Amendment is no exception. No one outside of the military needs an assault weapon or a 50-caliber sniper rifle that can penetrate a police officer's bullet-proof vest. No one needs a high-capacity magazine capable of turning an ordinary handgun into a killing machine. No one should be able to purchase a gun of any sort without having to undergo a background check. Loopholes need to be closed. Bans need to be reinstated. Let's get this done for our country and for our children. Let's get this done now.

Sincerely,

Laura Fisher
Co-founder
Mothers United for Reform Now