

Gun Control Advocates Continue Push

by Hugh McQuaid | Feb 19, 2013 3:16pm



HUGH MCQUAID PHOTO

Connecticut Against Gun Violence Executive Director Ron Pinciario

Religious leaders and a coalition of organizations opposed to gun violence called Tuesday for the legislature to pass an ambitious package of gun control proposals in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School murders.

During a press conference at the Legislative Office Building, Connecticut Against Gun Violence Executive Director Ron Pinciario said, if enacted, the proposals would be among the most comprehensive gun laws in the country.

“We feel that this is the package that truly addresses the enormity of what happened on Dec. 14, and really, we expect no less,” he said.

The Rev. Kate Heichler, executive director of the Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut, said too many people have died already in the name of 2nd Amendment rights.



HUGH MCQUAID PHOTO

Rev. Kate Heichler

“We are here because our security has become gravely threatened by the laxity of gun laws in this country. In the name of freedom, weapons of war are brandished on our streets, in our schools, workplaces, and houses of worship,” she said.

The group called for lawmakers to pass a bill tightening the state’s gun regulations in a number of areas.

Their proposal would broaden the definition of what legally constitutes an assault weapon so more guns would be prohibited under Connecticut’s current assault weapons ban. It would also ban ammunition magazines that carry more than seven rounds.

The proposal would require a background check and a permit for the purchase or transfer of all guns. Currently universal background checks and permits are not required for the sale and possession of long guns.

The package also includes a proposal requiring gun owners to register all handguns annually with an updated background check. They would also need to stipulate whether they are still in possession of the weapon or be able to explain why they are not.

The proposal would make gun owners liable to be charged with a Class D felony if someone gains access to their firearm and injures someone or damages property.

Nancy Lefkowitz, a Fairfield mother who helped organize a gun control rally that drew 5,500 supporters to the Capitol last week, expressed frustration that the state legislature had yet to pass a bill.

Lawmakers in Connecticut have chosen to take a careful, more deliberative approach to legislation following the shooting. That approach stands in contrast to neighboring New York, where the legislature quickly passed [stricter gun laws last month](#).

Here, lawmakers have formed a supercommittee to draft recommendations regarding gun control as well as school safety and mental health reforms. Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has established his own task force to inform his recommendations.



HUGH MCQUAID PHOTO

Nancy Lefkowitz and Meg Staunton

But Lefkowitz said the state government is not moving fast enough to address the issue.

“In the 67 days since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, 5,360 people have died because of gun violence. And all the while, our legislators have not acted. This is not acceptable,” she said.

Because “safer, rational gun laws” have yet to be passed, Lefkowitz said thousands of the state’s residents have become single issue-voters who are watching what lawmakers are doing.

But even though Malloy has publicly endorsed many of the group’s proposals, some are likely to be controversial in the legislature.

It’s unclear whether contentious ideas like broadening the assault weapons ban and prohibiting extended magazines will be recommended by the legislative subcommittee on gun control. Chairs of the subcommittees were given a

directive from leadership to find and recommend proposals on which there is consensus on both sides of the aisle.

That doesn't mean [such proposals](#) won't have the opportunity to make their way through the traditional committee process, where they will be subject to more public hearings and committee votes.

Robert Crook, the head of the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen and who has been lobbying the Connecticut legislature for more than 30 years, said he didn't expect the proposals outlined Tuesday to gain much traction this year.



HUGH MCQUAID PHOTO

Robert Crook, head of the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen

“The legislature in the past has not really been interested that much in guns. Once in awhile we come up with a bill like the magazine bill two years ago,” he said, referring to a previous attempt to limit ammunition magazines to 10 rounds. “I think we proved it’s worthless [and] affects too many people.”

During the press conference, Pinciario said that the standard for new legislation limiting the size of magazines was seven rounds rather than 10. New York’s new law limits them to seven rounds.

Crook said that “standard” clashes with the philosophy that the “citizenry should be armed the same way the police are armed.”

“If they’re carrying AR-15s we should be able to carry AR-15s. If they’re carrying magazines of over 10 rounds or seven rounds, the new standard, we should be able to do that,” he said.

Crook said there's no reason why civilians should not be armed as heavily as police and said some of his members are better trained than police officers.

He said that there are already laws on the books which address a number of the proposals the group called for. For instance, he said the measure making a gun owner liable if someone else gained access to their gun was unnecessary because there already are laws which can make one person liable for the actions of another.

While he disagreed with the proposals the gun control advocates laid out, Crook said he was considering another proposal which would require casual gun sellers to call in to the state police to check on the record of someone trying to buy a gun from them. Currently gun owners can do this, but it's a voluntary process.

"Most of my guys do it. We don't have any objection to making that mandatory," he said.

For his part, Pinciario said he expects lawmakers will pass the entirety of the package his group recommended this year.

"We do believe we will get this agenda through this legislature," he said. "I think there will be incredible disappointment on the part of the rest of the country and Washington if we don't."

Thanks,
Betty