



NRA NEWS RELEASE

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TESTIMONY OF WAYNE LAPIERRE

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

HEARING ON “WHAT SHOULD AMERICA DO ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE?”

216 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

JANUARY 30, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It’s an honor to be here today on behalf of more than 4.5 million moms and dads and sons and daughters, in every state across our nation, who make up the National Rifle Association of America. Those 4.5 million active members are joined by tens of millions of NRA supporters.

And it’s on behalf of those millions of decent, hardworking, law-abiding citizens ... to give voice to their concerns ... that I’m here today.

The title of today’s hearing is “What should America do about gun violence?”

We believe the answer to that question is to be honest about what works – and what doesn’t work.

Teaching safe and responsible gun ownership works – and the NRA has a long and proud history of teaching it.

Our “Eddie Eagle” children’s safety program has taught over 25 million young children that if they see a gun, they should do four things: “Stop. Don’t touch. Leave the area. Tell an adult.” As a result of this and other private sector programs, fatal firearm accidents are at the lowest levels in more than 100 years.[1]

The NRA has over 80,000 certified instructors who teach our military personnel, law enforcement officers and hundreds of thousands of other American men and women how to safely use firearms. We do more – and spend more – than anyone else on teaching safe and responsible gun ownership.

We joined the nation in sorrow over the tragedy that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut. There is nothing more precious than our children. We have no more sacred duty than to protect our children and keep them safe. That's why we asked former Congressman and Undersecretary of Homeland Security, Asa Hutchinson, to bring in every expert available to develop a model School Shield Program – one that can be individually tailored to make our schools as safe as possible.

It's time to throw an immediate blanket of security around our children. About a third of our schools have armed security already – because it works.[2] And that number is growing. Right now, state officials, local authorities and school districts in all 50 states are considering their own plans to protect children in their schools.

In addition, we need to enforce the thousands of gun laws that are currently on the books. Prosecuting criminals who misuse firearms works. Unfortunately, we've seen a dramatic collapse in federal gun prosecutions in recent years. Overall in 2011, federal weapons prosecutions per capita were down 35 percent from their peak in the previous administration.[3] That means violent felons, gang members and the mentally ill who possess firearms are not being prosecuted. And that's unacceptable.

And out of more than 76,000 firearms purchases denied by the federal instant check system, only 62 were referred for prosecution and only 44 were actually prosecuted.[4] Proposing more gun control laws – while failing to enforce the thousands we already have – is not a serious solution to reducing crime.

I think we can also agree that our mental health system is broken. We need to look at the full range of mental health issues, from early detection and treatment, to civil commitment laws, to privacy laws that needlessly prevent mental health records from being included in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

While we're ready to participate in a meaningful effort to solve these pressing problems, we must respectfully – but honestly and firmly – disagree with some members of this committee, many in the media, and all of the gun control groups on what will keep our kids and our streets safe.

Law-abiding gun owners will not accept blame for the acts of violent or deranged criminals. Nor do we believe the government should dictate what we can lawfully own and use to protect our families.

As I said earlier, we need to be honest about what works and what does not work. Proposals that would only serve to burden the law-abiding have failed in the past and will fail in the future.

Semi-automatic firearms have been around for over 100 years. They are among the most popular guns made for hunting, target shooting and self-defense. Despite this fact, Congress banned the manufacture and sale of hundreds of semi-automatic firearms and magazines from 1994 to 2004. Independent studies, including a study from the Clinton Justice Department, proved that ban had no impact on lowering crime.[5]

And when it comes to the issue of background checks, let's be honest – background checks will never be “universal” – because criminals will never submit to them.

But there are things that can be done and we ask you to join with us. The NRA is made up of millions of Americans who support what works ... the immediate protection for all – not just some – of our school children; swift, certain prosecution of criminals with guns; and fixing our broken mental health system.

We love our families and our country. We believe in our freedom. We're the millions of Americans from all walks of life who take responsibility for our own safety and protection as a God-given, fundamental right.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration.