



Connecticut Governor Signs Toughest Gun Bill in America

At noon on Thursday Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy (shown, signing bill) signed into law a wide-ranging bill in response to last year's shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. After weeks of closed-door negotiations between Republican and Democrat leaders and another 13 hours of debate on Wednesday, the 139-page bill was passed by the House, 105-44. It had previously passed the Senate, 26-10.



The new law [enhances](#) Connecticut's already highly restrictive ban on so-called assault weapons by expanding their definition so that it now includes 100 more. It plows new ground by requiring that buyers of ammunition must undergo background checks in order to receive from the state an "eligibility certificate," and it creates a state "dangerous weapon offender registry" for all present gun owners. In addition, beginning immediately, the new law requires background checks for all private sales and purchases of firearms in the state. The sale of magazines holding more than 15 rounds is banned, while present owners of such magazines would have to register them with the state before the end of the year.

The bill also creates a commission to study mental health issues related to violent crime, thus setting the stage for further legislation. And penalties for illegal gun trafficking — smuggling — are expanded as well.

Supporters of the bill expressed relief that the negotiations and debates were over, and that the legislature had finally done something to keep Newtown from happening again. House Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz said:

I pray [that] today's bill — the most far-reaching gun safety legislation in the country — will prevent other families from ever experiencing the dreadful loss that the 26 Sandy Hook families have felt.

Senate Minority Leader John McKinney added, "I've been working ... to see what we can do ... to make Connecticut safer. I'm proud that we've done that."

Perhaps the most useful explanation of how legislators were able to override the state's constitutional guarantees of gun ownership with nary an expressed pang of conscience came from Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams, who opened the debate with a highly emotional plea:

When word came to us that there had been a shooting at an elementary school in our state ... All at once, there was a report that as many as 20 children had been killed together with a number of teachers and administrators. For a few seconds it was hard to breathe.

At the end of that unimaginable day, we learned that we had lost 20 elementary schoolchildren and six teachers and administrators. They were killed with a weapon of war, a semiautomatic assault rifle, the platform of which was originally designed for the battlefield and for mass killings.

That was 110 days ago. As we take action today, and as stunned as we are at the events of Newtown, we must also acknowledge this is not the first time in the history of the United States,



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most importantly the recent history of the United States, that we've confronted gun violence. Think of Columbine High School. A nursing class at a college in Oakland, California. An Amish school in Pennsylvania. Virginia Tech University ... Every day urban gun crime claims the lives of tomorrow's Americans.

The tragedy of Newtown demands a response ... that transcends politics. This bill addresses gun violence prevention, school security and mental health services. It is the strongest and most comprehensive bill in the country.

Overlooking several serious factual errors in his remarks (such as describing "assault weapons" as "weapons of war" while ignoring the fact that they are not assault weapons but modified semi-automatic rifles for civilian use that may be useful as tools of hunting and personal defense), neither Williams nor Aresimowicz nor McKinney explained *exactly how* any of these new and expanded laws will impact potential shooters like Adam Lanza and keep them from attacking other innocents in the future.

Will criminals bent on mayhem now be unable to find firearms to use in mass killings? Will smaller magazines deter them from unleashing their attacks? Will background checks on innocent and law-abiding citizens somehow slow a miscreant's plans? Will requiring Connecticut citizens to register their magazines with the state impinge on a criminal's ability to commit murder? Will background checks keep mentally unstable thugs from obtaining firearms? Will a state registry somehow slow their plans to destroy lives? If so, how exactly?

One of the few voices of reason in this vast emotional torrent was that of Anthony Guglielmo, a Republican state senator who voted "No." He said the bill made no logical sense:

I didn't need to get into the weeds of the [139-page] legislation because I can't get by the premise.

The premise that boggles my mind — and boggled the minds of so many of the people who testified in front of our committee — is that you have two columns: in one column you have a deranged young man, a mass murderer ... In the other column, you have ordinary citizens — clean record, work hard, pay their taxes, many of them veterans, [who just] want to be left alone. [They] never caused a problem in the past; won't today, won't tomorrow.

So how does this [legislative body] connect the dots between the mass murderer and the ordinary citizen? See, that's what I don't get ... You're punishing the wrong people. It's just that simple. The premise is wrong.

Guglielmo wasn't alone. He was joined by Democratic Senator Cathy Osten, who said that the law, despite loud and emotional declamations that it would eliminate such violence in the future, simply can't and won't work:

I don't think it stops those people who have chosen to act out badly ... Adam Lanza was the one who killed those 20 young children and those six adults. He's the one we should hold accountable today, not the legal gun owners in this state.

There are similar signs of the common sense of these two legislators [springing up elsewhere](#) in the country. Indiana state representative Jim Lucas lauded the passage of a bill by the Indiana House Education Committee on Tuesday that would mandate "protection officers" in each school in the state. Such designated persons wouldn't necessarily have to be police officers, but could be principals, teachers, staff members, or security guards. Said Lucas:

This is a common-sense approach to a horrible situation. [In Newtown] these people were



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defenseless. We know for a fact that Sandy Hook did everything by the book: the school was locked down, the shooter came in, broke dozens of laws and shot his way into the school.

And as noted by *The New American* [here](#):

If someone — anyone — had had the [firearms] training Indiana is now considering, Sandy Hook would have been just another footnote in the Cato Institute's book *Tough Targets*, a compilation of researching eight years of reports of self-defense which concluded first, that the vast majority of those carrying firearms "are ethical and competent" and secondly that "tens of thousands of crimes are prevented each year by ordinary citizens with guns."

This is what the new Connecticut gun law does: It avoids entirely anything to do with reducing in any conceivable, measurable, or predictable way an attack in the future similar to that perpetrated by Lanza in Newtown. The fact that it turns innocent citizens into outlaws and overrides the state's constitution is simply ignored in the legislature's attempt to do something, even if it's wrong. It also provides a false sense of security to other teachers and parents who send their kids off to their classrooms, thinking that their loved ones are somehow safer thanks to the new law.

They are not.

Photo of Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy signing new gun control legislation into law in Hartford, Conn.: AP Images

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