



Sen. Ted Cruz

Opening Statement – “What Should America Do About Gun Violence?”
Senate Judiciary Committee, January 30, 2013

This country was rightfully shocked by the tragedy at Shady Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012. Every parent was understandably horrified by the senseless murder of 20 children and 6 adults that day in Newtown, Connecticut.

We are now appropriately engaged in a national discussion about mental illness and how state and local governments can prevent future tragedies. But politicians should not be exploiting the tragic murder of children as an excuse to push an extreme anti-gun agenda.

Gun control would not have stopped the massacre of the 26 innocent Americans at Newtown. But it would restrict the constitutional rights of every American. We cannot outlaw evil, but we can remain vigilant in working to deter and punish violent criminals. And we should vigorously defend the constitutional right of law-abiding citizens to arm and protect themselves and others from deadly attacks.

Study after study has shown that strict gun control does not reduce violence. When DC banned handguns, homicides went up. When Chicago banned handguns, homicides went up. When Australia banned guns, violent crime went up. And after Great Britain banned guns, its violent crime rate was more than four-times higher than the rate in the United States.

We should not pass legislation that the evidence has proven is utterly ineffective. In particular, the Department of Justice has already concluded that the so-called “assault weapons ban,” when it was in effect, had no impact on reducing crime. This is unsurprising, because real assault weapons—machine guns—have been functionally illegal since 1934. All an “assault weapons ban” would do is restrict cosmetic features of firearms, in effect, banning “scary-looking guns.” Instead of passing ineffective show legislation—sound and fury, signifying nothing—we should be acting to deter and punish violent criminals and to prevent those with dangerous mental illness from illegally acquiring firearms.

There is wide agreement that guns should not be in the hands of the mentally ill. Current law seeks to identify those individuals, but it relies on states submitting relevant medical records. Not all states are doing this. We should make sure current state law is enforced and work with states to help them get past the challenges that prevent them from providing more robust data. This is an area of bipartisan agreement and a direct way to address the real problem of the mentally ill getting guns.

I look forward to our discussion today and to future hearings that will address the best strategies for preventing violent crimes and preserving the constitutional rights of every American.