



*"The only no-compromise gun lobby in Washington"*  
-Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX)

June 4, 2018

Dear [Student's name redacted],

Thank you for your letter to Gun Owners of America. I appreciate your willingness to discuss important issues facing our country. And as a high school government teacher (in my free time), I understand the importance of critically thinking and examining issues to determine your own viewpoint.

While I will address your specific comments in a moment, let me give some history and context surrounding the Second Amendment, beginning with the United States' founding documents.

The Declaration of Independence states that individuals are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." In essence, rights do not come from the government, but are inherent -- or God-given, as our Founding Fathers stated. Furthermore, because rights do not come from the government, the state has no jurisdiction to regulate those rights. This principle is made particularly clear in the Second Amendment which ensures that the right to keep and bear arms "shall not be infringed."

Additionally, rights do not change because technology advances. Just as free speech applies to blogs and the internet, the Second Amendment applies to modern firearms.

With this in mind, I will respond to your specific inquires.

No doubt the events of the shooting in Las Vegas were extremely tragic. However, the calls to ban bump stocks that were reportedly used in the shooting, raise a bigger question -- at what point should we ban objects that are used to harm others?

I am only aware of one instance where bump stocks were used in crime -- the Las Vegas shooting. Again, while every loss of life is tragic, individuals killed by vehicles, for example, vastly outnumber individuals killed with bump stocks. Should cars be banned because traffic accidents can be deadly? Or should greasy food be banned because it leads to heart disease?

One might counter that cars -- and even greasy food -- can serve a good purpose, so it would be misguided to ban them. Well, if that is true, it's even more misguided to infringe upon the right of gun owners to protect themselves -- something that happens more often than you might think (since the regular media steadfastly refuses to report on most cases of self-defense). But if you want to do your own research on this, look up the Center for Disease

Control study which was commissioned by President Obama. They found that firearms are used 16-100 times more often to save life than to take life.<sup>1</sup>

Next, you propose a ban on semi-automatic rifles, particularly the AR-15 which is the most popular rifle in America. Despite the vast popularity and widespread ownership of AR-15s, they are rarely used in crimes.

According to the FBI, "hands, fists and feet" kill almost twice as often as rifles.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the FBI reports there are less than 400 rifle-related deaths (and probably less than 10% of these would involve AR-15's). So let me ask you this, would you favor putting the entire population in handcuffs? That may sound like a silly question, but you would actually be targeting a bigger killer (personal weapons like "hands and fists" which kill almost 700 people per year) as opposed to AR-15s (which are used in fewer than 40 murders per year).

In fact, as noted by the anti-gun Rockefeller Institute, AR-15s are not the weapon of choice for mass killers -- it is the handgun (over 75% of the time).<sup>3</sup>

But even though AR-15s are rarely used in crime, they are often used for self-defense purposes in the home (and this is a major reason for their tremendous popularity). Consider the seventeen-year-old who used an AR-15 to defend his life and home from three intruders.<sup>4</sup> Or another homeowner who used an AR-15 to defend himself from a drive-by shooting consisting of three attackers.<sup>5</sup> Or another one who used his AR-15 to fend off seven attackers in his home.<sup>6</sup> Or the Texas hero who ended the Sutherland Springs church shooting with his own AR-15, stating that he wouldn't have been able to stop the gunman with any other firearm.<sup>7</sup> These are just some of the many examples of defensive uses of the AR-15.

Also, a note on the ballistics of the 5.56x45 NATO (or .223 Remington) round, which the AR-15 is typically chambered in. The 5.56 has been criticized for its **lack** of power. In fact, in some states it is illegal to hunt deer with a rifle chambered in that caliber. Furthermore, consider the ballistics of the round when compared to a traditional hunting round, such as the .270

---

<sup>1</sup> See "CNN Gets Schooled by Guest With Actual Facts on Gun Violence in the U.S.,"

<https://www.gunowners.org/news06232016.htm> See also *Slate*, "Rethinking Gun Control"

[http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/human\\_nature/2013/06/handguns\\_suicides\\_mass\\_shootings\\_deaths\\_and\\_self\\_defense\\_findings\\_from\\_a.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2013/06/handguns_suicides_mass_shootings_deaths_and_self_defense_findings_from_a.html)

<sup>2</sup> See "Crime in the United States, 2016" <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls>

<sup>3</sup> See "Widespread use of handguns in mass shootings undercuts push to ban semiautomatic rifles"

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/29/mass-shooting-handgun-usage-figures-undercut-rifle> and Rockefeller Institute, "Can Mass Shootings be Stopped?" <http://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/5-22-18-Mass-Shootings-Brief.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See "Homeowner's son kills three would-be burglars with AR-15" <https://nypost.com/2017/03/28/homeowners-son-kills-three-would-be-burglars-with-ar-15/>

<sup>5</sup> See "2 men die, 1 hospitalized after homeowner shoots at drive-by suspects, officials say"

<https://www.click2houston.com/news/1-dead-2-men-hospitalized-after-shooting-in-north-houston>

<sup>6</sup> See "Residents Open Fire with AR-15, 9mm Handgun and Turn the Tide on 7 Invasion Suspects"

<http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2018/04/19/residents-open-fire-ar-15-9mm-handgun-seven-invasion-suspects>

<sup>7</sup> See "Hero Who Stopped Texas Gunman: I Couldn't Have Stopped Him Without My AR-15"

<http://thefederalist.com/2017/11/07/hero-stopped-texas-gunman-couldnt-stopped-without-ar-15>

Winchester. The 5.56 round has approximately 1200-foot pounds of muzzle energy,<sup>8</sup> while the .270 round has approximately 2700-foot pounds of muzzle energy.<sup>9</sup> In the world of firearms, this is a dramatic difference. The 5.56 cartridge is in no way a "high-powered" round.

Finally, you call for stricter background checks. While stricter background checks may sound good in theory, they are a failure in reality. Many mass shooters passed background checks, and many others completely circumvented them entirely.<sup>10</sup> Consider the Sandy Hook and Santa Fe shooters, who stole firearms from relatives to carry out their evil deeds. There's no background check -- no matter how "strict" or "universal" -- that could have prevented those tragedies.

The sad reality is that evil exists in our world, and we must be prepared to protect ourselves from evil, not establish ineffective solutions to keep good people disarmed.

Finally, I do believe we want to accomplish the same goal -- the safety of our schools, malls, churches and country. However, the best way to prevent these tragedies is not to disarm good people, but to enable them to protect themselves and those they care about.

I urge you to think critically of this issue -- do your own, independent research -- and come to the conclusions on your own after considering all sides.

I wish you the best in your studies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erich Pratt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erich Pratt  
Executive Director  
Gun Owners of America

---

<sup>8</sup> See "223 Remington" [http://www.ballistics101.com/223\\_remington.php](http://www.ballistics101.com/223_remington.php)

<sup>9</sup> See "270 Winchester" [http://www.ballistics101.com/270\\_winchester.php](http://www.ballistics101.com/270_winchester.php)

<sup>10</sup> See "Most Mass Shooters Pass the FBI Background Check," <https://www.gunowners.org/most-mass-shooters-pass-the-fbi-background-check.htm>