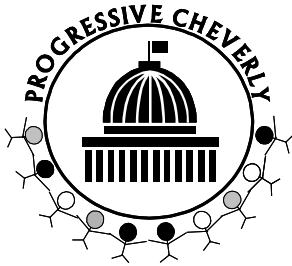


Progressive Cheverly

Democracy from the Ground Up

progressivecheverly.org



Testimony to Senate
Judicial Proceedings
Committee - 2/6/13

Support SB 281—The Firearm Safety Act of 2013

Testimony by Joani Nelson Horchler of Progressive Cheverly

Hello—I am here to testify as a member of Progressive Cheverly, a grassroots citizens' organization based in Prince George's County, and to speak from my heart as a mother and grandmother.

Twenty-one years ago, we lost one of our six children to a natural death, so we know personally how crushing it is to lose a child to any type of death. But to lose a child, as happened at Newtown, to a mass murder that could have been prevented with better laws—that's devastating beyond words. Laws should have kept that gunman from having access to assault weapons capable of slaughtering 20 little children and 6 educators in just minutes.

Some parents from Newtown have already shown tremendous courage by publicly speaking out for common-sense gun legislation. We find it outrageous that the parent of one six-year-old murdered at Newtown was shouted at by gun rights advocates—How dare anyone shout at the victim of such a horrendous crime?

Having lost a child myself, I know how awfully challenging it is for those families just to get up and face the day without their precious children, much less face insensitive people shouting at them. That's why I believe that we the American people must BE the voice for the Newtown victims and fight the good fight for them. While others shout, let's quietly and peacefully pass the intelligent and common-sense legislation proposed in SB 281.

It must be noted that—as horrifying as mass murders are—they are actually a tiny fraction of the murders that tear our children and grandchildren from us each year. Gun violence is something that happens far too often in Prince George's County and across Maryland.

We are not suggesting banning guns or taking away rights. We support the 2nd Amendment. But the “well-regulated militia” described there seems a far cry from the free for all that is today's gun market—where weapons of incredible destructive power are available to almost

anyone, at any time, under any circumstances, with little regulation. Even the current Supreme Court, which has adopted a very expansive interpretation of the rights of individuals under the 2nd Amendment, has left little doubt that those rights are not absolute when they infringe excessively and unnecessarily on public safety.

Our Founding Fathers meant the Constitution to be a living document, not a stagnant 18th century relic. They expected it to be adapted and interpreted over time to meet the basic needs of our society, including public safety. I think they'd be shocked to be cited as the reason for not protecting our children with common-sense gun legislation.

Banning assault weapons or high-capacity ammunition clips is no radical idea...it's just common sense. Even conservative Ronald Reagan supported the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban. Polls show that most gun owners support universal background checks, and even the NRA testified for them in 1999. We also need to make gun trafficking a federal crime, with stiff penalties for those who arm criminals. We will never be able to stop all gun violence, but these steps will go a long way toward protecting our kids and grandkids from gun violence. Thank you.