

March 4, 2013

Columbine Survivors Against Gun Control

Adam Thompson

Lindsie Kole

Julie Vargo

Lucas James Johnson

Larry Smart

March 4, 2013

My name is Adam Thompson.

I am here today to speak about using sound judgment and factual information when deciding proper courses of action to deal with violence instead of using emotions to make those decisions. This bill, as well as, all of the other bills that are being presented today have the intent of providing safety but after reviewing them they actually do the opposite.

On April 20th, 1999 I was 17 years old and a Junior in high school. On that day two of my fellow classmates committed one of the worst school shootings that this country has seen. I am a Columbine survivor. On that day I lost friends, classmates, and my innocence as a child. On that day there was legislation that failed to do what it was intended to do... to keep me and my fellow classmates safe. It did not matter that there was a magazine capacity limit. One of the shooters had (13) 10 round magazines. He wore modified clothing so that he would be able to carry them all.

The point is that limiting magazine capacity will not stop these violent perpetrators from committing these acts. Instead this will only limit me and other lawful citizens from being able to carry or owning a single magazine that will hold enough rounds to be used defensively.

The shooters were also heavily armed with homemade explosives. If the killers had been successful in their plan I would not be here today. According to their plan I and many others were to have been blown up. Luckily their two main 20 lbs. propane bombs did not exploded properly.

All of this happened in a gun free zone. Where it was illegal not only to bring the gun on school grounds, but were it was illegal to discharge them and commit murder. No laws were obeyed that day by these criminals.

I struggled 12 years dealing with survivor guilt and that I was put in a position where I was defenseless and so were the people around me that were supposed to be there to keep me safe. I NEVER want to be defenseless again. I have learned that our police and other emergency personnel are not truly first responders. The public that is actually involved on scene are the true first responders as they are the ones with the ability to act immediately, and it is those decisive first response actions that save lives.

I have taken it upon myself to get educated on firearms by taking classes. I have become a firearms owner and believe deeply in the Constitution.

This bill that is before you would not have prevented this shooting from happening or any of the other shootings that have occurred. The shooters merely bring more magazines with them and change them out. It takes only a few seconds to change magazines. No one has "rushed" the shooters in these mass shootings without a firearm in their own hands.

March 4, 2013

Limiting magazine capacity will only limit me from being able to defend myself with the standard magazine capacities that are currently available.

All this legislation does is to ask me to be a potential victim again.

I am against House Bill 1224, as well as, all other pieces of legislation before you today that are limiting my right to self defense.

Please don't ask me or any other survivor to be a potential victim again!

Thank you for allowing me to be heard!

March 4, 2012

Colorado State Senators,

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story. My name is Lindsie Kole and I was a student at Columbine during the shooting in 1999. My voice is what you heard on the first 911 call that day. The experience of this horrific event has shaped my perspective on many things, but what I want to share with you today is how it has particularly shaped my views on the issue of gun control.

I will admit that my knee-jerk reaction to the events at Columbine was the same as many lawmakers across our country today. It was out of fear that I thought tightening up the gun laws and making it harder to acquire weapons, restricting the purchasing of "big" guns, and controlling where guns are allowed was the *only* and the *best* answer to this problem. But, we all know that decisions made in haste and out of fear are not wise decisions. Please hear me when I say that my initial conclusion was made out of fear, not education and understanding. Over the last 13 years I have educated myself and come to a clear understanding of the *facts* behind the gun control issue and it is now evident to me, more than ever, that our state is heading in the wrong direction on gun issues.

The most obvious and clear argument is, that criminals and those with their minds set on obtaining a firearm, will find a way to acquire their weapons regardless of the laws. This was true in the case of Columbine, as the firearms used were illegally acquired. Not one of the proposed bills would have prevented the shooters from obtaining the weapons they used. When one's mind is set on destruction and a firearm is not legally accessible, that person will undoubtedly find another source or another method to accomplish their goals. It is not the firearm that I should have been afraid of.

I am now a teacher at an elementary school. My school is, of course, a gun free zone and I wish I could tell you that this brings my students and I security. Rather, I feel more at risk, exposed and less able to protect my students. I know that criminally minded individuals will seek out a place like my school to reek their havoc because they know they will face no opposition. They can walk right in and have their way. I've been reassured that my school is safe; after all its a gun free zone. My response; I don't feel safe. I've been reassured that ID's are checked at the office and that security camera's are in place. My response; I don't feel safe. I've been reassured that the police are just a phone call away. My response; I don't feel safe. One with logic can see why a 'gun free zone,' whether at a local school, college campus, or movie theatre brings nothing more than a false sense of security.

Lastly, I will speak to one of our country's founding principles. Our human right to protect ourselves. This right is beyond critical to the concept of freedom and liberty and it saddens me to the core that it is in jeopardy. These proposed bills do nothing to make us more safe. These proposed bills make us less safe. They only deny us further of our unalienable and human right to protect ourselves. It is not only unconstitutional, it's un-American; it's un-Coloradan.

Thank you,

Lindsie Kole

My name is Julie Vargo, and I am a graduate of Columbine High School, class of 1999. I was inside the school on April 20th, 1999 and survived that terrible day. Ever since that day I have thought about ways that I could have helped victims of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. I have found no answer.

Gun restriction similar to the ones Colorado is voting on today were in place at the time of our tragedy. Perhaps, if Dave Sanders were permitted to carry a firearm, the retired military man could have effectively protected many more students than he was able to. I believe that a similar type of person in a similar situation on a college campus could prohibit a tragedy like ours.

gun restrictions on law-abiding citizens have never prevented tragedies like this. No laws could have stopped the two maniacs that attacked hundreds of my classmates and myself. They were intent to cause harm and act on insane impulses. Both of those boys got their firearms through illegal measures. This is the common activity of out-of-control people that are set on death and destruction.

A criminal will always find a way. If they can't buy a gun legally, they will steal one from a law-abiding person, which puts that person in greater danger. Criminals who can't get a bank loan, simply steal an identity. There is no reason, they can't use stolen identities to buy guns.

On April 20th, Eric Harris did not have super high capacity magazines, he simply had multiple magazines and changed them when they were emptied. A restriction would not have stopped him from shooting. Nothing can stop a madman with a gun, except for a sane man with a gun or something more powerful. These things were not available to us, so nothing stopped the two murderers.

I have promised myself and my family that I will never again be a victim. I cannot keep that promise if restrictions are put on my Constitutional rights, or on my simple human right of self-defense. How do I protect myself, my family, and those I care for if I do not have the government's support? If I choose to follow the laws and be law-abiding, I am resigned to be a victim of those that do not act lawfully.

Please think rationally. Restrictions do not help people. People set on evil will find a way

to commit it. Restriction will stop good people from fighting evil. Remind yourself that you do not want to be a victim. Remember your rights, which were not given to you by any person and therefore cannot be taken away lawfully or infringed upon by any other man. Having been given the precious gift of life, each one of us have a duty to protect our own. Police are there to help, but they are under no legal obligation to protect citizens - they can't be, because most gun homicides are over in a matter of seconds. They can not respond that quickly, so it makes sense that they cannot be liable for failing to protect us. Therefore we should be under no delusions that all we need to do when we find ourselves in mortal danger is dial 911 and wait. We waited for over 4 hours, as our classmates - people's children - were systematically being murdered. We were absolutely helpless. The restrictions on firearms use and ownership did nothing to protect us, they resulted in massive loss of life and have done so in many other places as well.

Our right to own firearms was not given to us by government, and government is not able to lawfully take those rights away. Owning firearms is one of the freedoms our government has in the past protected, preserved, and defended. It is one of the things that has made America unique and has held back tyranny. Be proud to be an American by respecting all the people, who are the rightful masters and rulers. Do not make victims of us all by disarming us while simultaneously arming yourselves. Keep America free by allowing us to defend ourselves.

My name is Lucas James Johnson, a resident of Colorado my entire life. I have traveled to many places over the world and have always come back home. I respect the freedoms, the liberty, and the beautiful skies of Colorado. I am now saddened at the fact that my elected officials want to take two of those three away from me. HOUSE BILL 13-1226 Prohibiting conceal handgun permit holders from carrying on college campuses, is a proposed bill that is both scary to me as a gun enthusiast and as a survivor of Columbine high school. I am not going to quote numerous studies on violence, assaults, and rape being reduced because of a person's constitutional right to carry a gun. I will not quote these studies because it is our god given right to protect ourselves and to bear arms. I do not know your stories or your thoughts, but I wish to share mine. I have never been a person to write down what goes through my mind when I think about what could have happened at Columbine, if more certified conceal carry permit holder adults / teachers / admins who were allowed to carry on campus were there. The potential lives that it could have saved. I know that it is the law that high schools are currently gun free zones. But colleges in Colorado should allow a certified, legal citizen, who has taken classes and has a carry permit to be allowed their constitutional right. Furthermore it is a deterrent from a criminal such as Seung-Hui Cho, who strolled into a building and methodically killed person after person at Virginia Tech (A school that is also a gun free zone). Do you ever stop to think, ask, and reflect on why it is that gun free zones are the targets for evil people with malicious thoughts? You might think it has to do with personal beliefs, thoughts, or emotion. But it is simple. The path of least resistance is usually the path a criminal will take.

I have reviewed

HOUSE BILL 13-1224 Prohibiting "Large Capacity" Magazines

HOUSE BILL 13-1228 Requiring a fee to pay for background checks (Poll Tax)

HOUSE BILL 13-1229 Universal Background checks

SENATE BILL 13-196 "Assault Weapon" Liability Act

HOUSE BILL 13-1226 Prohibiting conceal handgun permit holders from carrying on college campuses

I implore you to please listen to the people, not the lobbyist, not the special interest groups, but the people. We have a constitution right to many of the things these bills want to ban, but none above all the right to protect ourselves, our family, our friends, and our neighbors. Please vote NO on all 5 of these bills.

Regards,

Lucas James Johnson

My name is Larry Smart. I have been a long-time responsible owner of firearms since I was legally old enough to purchase them and have been using firearms since I was 8 years old. I am currently married to one of the survivors of the Columbine massacre.

I spent a number of years living in Southern California, and experienced the violence of their cities first-hand. Despite their heavily restrictive gun laws, magazine size limits, waiting periods, background checks, registration requirements, and restrictions on open as well as concealed carry, they still have some of the highest crime rates in the country. Some would argue that this means that they need more restrictions, but the heavy restrictions they already have passed have done nothing to quell the violence already. I would argue that those restrictions have created the hostile and violent environment that exists.

Personally, I have been in violent situations where I was happy that I had a firearm to protect myself. Working a graveyard shift one night, I stopped in an A.M./P.M. Mini-market convenience store at about 2AM to get some coffee, when a deranged man under the influence of something got into a violent confrontation with the store clerk. The store clerk ultimately ended the confrontation by drawing his Glock 9mm pistol from under the counter. I was armed with a handgun, but did not draw it as I saw the clerk had the situation under control. However, if the clerk had been injured or killed, or had not been as astute with his observation of the situation, I felt better knowing that I had my handgun for my own protection should it have been needed, even though I was carrying it illegally (since California had no provisions for lawfully carrying any means of protecting yourself).

In another situation, I was at a Mobil station in Whittier, CA. Keep in mind this was a nicer part of town and it was in the middle of the day, in broad daylight. I pulled into the station to fuel up my car and another driver became extremely angry with me for occupying the pump in front of his car. This meant that he would have to put his car in reverse in order to exit the station, and this just absolutely infuriated this person beyond all reason. I didn't notice he was upset at me until he drove past and headed toward the busy street when he began screaming and cursing at me. I looked at him, wondering why he was yelling, and he jumped out of his car (it was a convertible with the top down), and came towards me saying that he was going to kill me. I simply reached under the seat of my car and grabbed my hand gun, before I even had the gun out, he had already stopped in his tracks and walked away from me backwards towards his car, continuing to yell obscenities at me as he retreated.

There was another situation that occurred on a highway travelling through the Mojave desert in the early morning or very late evening hours, where me and a friend of mine were from a shooting trip, when another vehicle repeatedly tried to run us off the road.

None of the laws California had in place did anything to protect me or the other people involved. Armed individual citizens are what diffused these situations, and hopefully changed the way these people think about how they approach other people in the future. Though I have never had to fire a shot (thankfully), I am fully convinced that being armed in each of these situations

saved lives, even if it was just my own.

Wherever massive restrictions like these that California and other states or municipalities have placed on their citizens, there has not been any measurable improvements in public safety, but only a worsening of the situation. What's worse is that even when the crime stats get worse after these ridiculous laws get passed, there is never any talk of repealing the laws - only adding more to those already existing.

Meanwhile the handful of places where gun laws have been relaxed, violent crime as well as overall crime drops and peace has increased.

The restrictions that the legislators seek to impose are not based on any science, not any studies of what works or has worked to reduce crime, nor is it based in any reality whatsoever. These bills are based solely on imaginary theoretical ideas based on spreading fear, not on logic or reason. If our legislators really cared about reducing crime, why do they emulate Chicago, California, New York, and Washington DC? Why not emulate the places that have successfully reduced crime like Kennesaw, Georgia, or any number of Texas, Wyoming, or Montana cities?

Today, I have a family with three young children, and I see that Colorado is headed down the path led by Chicago, Washington DC, Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, and other violent crime-ridden cities and states. These are the places people flee from in order to come live in a place like Colorado. I know what the future holds for cities and states that pass laws like these and it's not good. Crime will increase, incarceration will go up, the police get more and more militarized, and more freedoms are taken every day. Now, I see that Colorado may not be such a great place to raise children - at least it won't be if this continues.

The Assault Weapons Ban did not prevent the Columbine Massacre. None of these proposed bills are Colorado solutions to a Colorado problem. They are Washington DC solutions to a Washington DC problem, which usually means perpetuating the problem for the next politician in line. I think these bills are more about John Hickenlooper trying to get some clout within the Democrat Party for a future presidential run than they are for doing what is right for Coloradans.

March 4, 2013

To the Colorado State Senate:

To introduce myself I am a Columbine High school shooting survivor. I strongly oppose the bills below because I feel they are taking my right to own a firearm and making it more of a privilege. The second amendment of the constitution gives citizens of this country the right not the privilege to own firearms. That right is something I don't take for granted and I think law makers are going in the wrong direction. I think the law makers should be doing more to defend that right and not chip away at it. I understand that firearms are not for everyone and that some people would like to have them banned for good. That being said I am not one of those people and I understand that firearms are weapons and I pray to God that I nor any of my loved ones ever need to use one to protect a life. Because it is a right to own a firearm in the USA and not a privilege I ask that you don't pass the bills below.

HOUSE BILL 13-1224 Prohibiting "Large Capacity" Magazines

I opposed this bill because it is pointless. This bill will not do anything to stop mass shootings and will only infringe more on the rights not privileges of law abiding citizens. When a person is mentally unstable decides to resort to firearms and violence to change the situation the number of rounds in their magazine will not stop them from doing harm. It is easy to swap out an empty magazine for one with more rounds in it. Criminals are criminals because they break the law. This bill will not stop them from breaking the law and if they feel they need to have magazines that carry more than 15 rounds they will get it in an unlawful way.

HOUSE BILL 13-1226 Prohibiting conceal handgun permit holders from carrying on college campuses

I oppose this bill because the individual who has gone through the training and passed the background check to obtain a concealed handgun permit is not a person that I would worry about on campus or anywhere else for that matter. Unfortunately, situations where one may need to defend themselves may arise anywhere and this bill does not let a law abiding citizen protect them if needed. Guns do not kill people. It is the individuals who are mentally incapable of dealing with one or more of their issues and turn to violence. Those people are every where and someone who meets all the requirements and has gone through the training to obtain a concealed handgun permit should keep the right to be able to protect themselves on a college campuses if they feel the need to.

HOUSE BILL 13-1228 Requiring a fee to pay for background checks (Poll Tax)

I oppose this bill because as tax payers Colorado citizens already pay for this. I could see paying for a background check if owning a gun was a privilege however it is a right that every American has. This bill would do nothing to stop mass killings because criminals and people who are in a mind set where they could intentionally hurt other citizens don't go through the proper means of getting firearms in a lot of cases.

HOUSE BILL 13-1229 Universal Background checks

I oppose this bill because it would not allow a loved one to use any firearm in my house for personal protection from an intruder without having to first run a background check. If an intruder breaks into house the person(s) being threaten already have a right to protect themselves with a firearm. This bill will make it a criminal offense for my loved one to use my firearm to protect herself if I am, A, not home at the time of invasion or B, already dead from the intruder.

SENATE BILL 13-196 "Assault Weapon" Liability Act

I strongly oppose this bill because one can not be held accountable for a firearm that is not in their possession. I understand that this bill is trying to make citizens be more cautious with how and where they store firearms but just like anything else in this world if someone wants something bad enough they will take it. This bill would make the owner of a stolen firearm responsible for the criminal's actions. The only one who is responsible for the criminal's actions is the criminal. This bill makes it easy to place blame on a law abiding citizen for something that is completely out of their control.

Respectfully,

Mark Doucette
303.578.0090

