



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

Statement from Senator Lee M. Zeldin RE: Tonight's Vote on Gun Legislation

LEE M. ZELDIN January 14, 2013

| ISSUE: **GUN CONTROL**

"The tragedies we have experienced in recent years, like last month in Newtown, Connecticut, deeply concern me and the vast majority of our state and nation. The senseless taking of innocent lives is unacceptable in any capacity.

In our Constitution are certain rights which provide the foundation of America's greatness. Its Second Amendment in no uncertain terms guarantees the right of law abiding citizens to keep and bear arms. Its purpose was not so much about hunting as it was for a deeper and much more important consideration of our founding fathers. The inspiration for this protection rose out of a fundamental mistrust of government. I believe our Constitution should be strictly construed in a manner consistent with the intent of our nation's founding fathers. Agree or disagree with how good or bad government is today, this was a primary purpose why the Second Amendment was created and why it should be respected and adhered to still today.

The actions government takes to protect its citizens through gun laws must strike the right balance of targeting illegal guns and the criminals who use them without eroding the basic protections of the 2nd Amendment for law abiding gun owners. If there was some common sense solution to take away every illegal gun from criminals without disarming law abiding gun owners, I would be all for it.

Respectfully, I don't believe that the gun package tonight strikes the proper balance and therefore I do not support it. I am currently in Virginia on Army Reserve duty for two weeks of mandatory military training. Had I been able to be present to vote, I would have voted against it.

There are a lot of good elements in this bill from expanding Kendra's Law to increasing many penalties related to the use and possession of illegal guns. I commend my Republican colleagues who fought so hard to add these positive aspects. We must also strengthen enforcement of our current laws which are already some of the strongest in the nation.

Moving forward, public safety must always be a top priority. This debate should be even more focused on targeting illegal guns and providing maximum assistance to New Yorkers with mental illnesses in order to most directly avoid another tragedy like Newtown. Our focus as a state and nation has to be on providing people in need of mental health care more access to help. Society as a whole also needs to better understand mental illness and develop improved means of detecting potential violence long before it can become a threat to anyone else.

As the State Senator from the Third District of New York, I have a responsibility to weigh the views of my constituents, our concerns for their safety as well as their constitutionally protected rights.

Our great nation was founded on the idea that all people have certain inalienable rights. Our founding fathers understood that these rights were not granted by the government and therefore, shall not be removed by it either."