

I saw in the VALLEY NEWS (12/13/25) about the VT State Senators visiting various VT schools and taking public comments on matters that concern individuals.

I wasn't able to attend the recent Woodstock event, and I appreciate the chance to share my concern on school safety: assault weapons.

Last Tuesday (12/9/25) I spearheaded a public event in Woodstock on banning assault weapons. Nearly 40 folks braved the arctic chill to hear VT State Senators Alison Clarkson, Becca White & Joe Major, and Woodstock's State Rep Charlie Kimbell say why they support a ban now on assault weapons. And I was really impressed by the quality of questions all those in attendance posed to the four lawmakers.

As you probably know, gun violence is now the #1 killer of American children, not cancer, heart disease or vehicle accidents. Every year it's the equivalent of 52 school buses full of kids driving off a cliff & all perishing. When did that become acceptable?

I do this volunteer work because of a horrible shooting tragedy in my children's school 37 years ago in Winnetka, IL (Hubbard Woods School). My two daughters, Clare & Kate, were spared, but only by dumb luck. Eight-year-old Nicky Corwin was killed, and five other six-and-seven year olds were critically wounded. We need so much. better than dumb luck.

AR-15s & the like are the weapon of choice of mass shooters. There are more than 20 million of these combat-style firearms in civilian hands, and our nations suffered more than 650 mass shootings in 2023. Two assault rifles from Vermont (Century International Arms in Fairfax, VT) were used to deadly effect in 2019 at the El Paso Walmart and the Gilroy Garlic Festival in California. Vermont exports crime guns to other states.

There's a billion dollar industry to "harden" schools, providing such products as shatter proof glass, bullet proof tables & desks, and programs for teaching educators on how to shoot. I'm a former teacher. The last thing I'd want is a sidearm while separating two youngsters fighting at recess. Schools are pretty hardened as it is now with safety plans, active shooter drills, locked doors with only one entrance that requires being buzzed in. We need to address what's outside of schools now. The 2023 mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine, showed that rural states like our own are vulnerable. Even Gov. Phil Scott said at a recent school safety conference in Killington: "We are not immune."

Please consider a ban on assault weapons in the 2026 Legislative Session. It makes sense & will save lives, plus it's on the right side of history. The tragedy this past

weekend at Brown University weighs heavily on my mind now, as does the carnage in Australia. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Bob Williamson
Founding Board Member
of Gun Sense VT