

Dr. Roy Guerrero - Testimony

Thank you. I'm grateful for the chance to testify before this committee and share my perspective on gun safety in America. As a rifle-owning son of a rancher, as a pediatric doctor, and as a member of a broken community traumatized by the loss of 19 children and 2 teachers in May, I believe my experience reflects the deep complexities of the gun control issue and my feelings no doubt echo those of many in our country.

But today I want to share a few things that I know for certain. Because I am a doctor and when it comes to solving problems we doctors prefer to stick to the facts and the science rather than get caught up in the emotion. No matter how hard that is.

When you choose a career in medicine you're signing up to make people better and save lives. Healing is always the ultimate goal. And we use a number of strategies to do that depending on the challenge. In the modern developed world we have a plethora of incredible medicines, tools, equipment, regimens and machines that test, diagnose, administer, sustain and cure. You've all no doubt crossed paths with at least one of these. Maybe it was a doppler, an MRI machine, or a course of anti-COVID drugs. For my patients I'm always looking for the most effective remedy or tool that I can find to relieve their pain, to stem the bleeding or kill the pathogen.

So I understand the power of an effective tool.

The AR15 is a very effective tool. It was designed to deliver quick and heavy fire in combat. It was made to be light and easy to use. And it's as exacting in its application on the battlefield as radiation is in a patient with cancer. So let me ask you this. How comfortable would you be if every day during homeroom, your kids and grandchildren were being administered radiation therapy for two hours. Never mind the books with suggestive material in the library, I'm talking

about highly radioactive particles flooding into the beautiful healthy bodies of your precious children on a daily basis. Why not? Some research suggests we all have the potential to develop cancer. Maybe it could be preventative?

If this sounds like a ridiculous or terrifying prospect you're right? Because cancer radiation doesn't belong in the bodies of healthy children. Just like AR15s or any semi automatic weapon that holds high capacity magazines don't belong in the hands of everyday civilians, especially when they're not old enough to even buy a pack of beer. They are not appropriate for self defense in the home, in the school or in the supermarket. They are and have always only been designed as military grade killing machines.

We've made significant progress on sensible gun legislation - most Americans agree that we need background checks, age limits and safe storage rules. But one of the arguments I hear on repeat from the chorus of objections to the ban of assault weapons is that the problem isn't the guns, it's the people who pull the trigger. This is a meritless argument. How does an anti Mexican extremist walk into a Walmart and kill 23 people in minutes without a semi-automatic rifle? How does an anti-LGBTQ radical slaughter 49 clubgoers without his Sig Sauer MCX? The children in the classrooms of Sandy Hook Elementary, Marjorie Stone Douglass and Robb never stood a chance against the speed and power of the weapons they faced. And let me tell you: these kids, they weren't helpless victims before that day. They were spunky, intelligent, street smart kids. I know this because some of them were my patients. Amerie was trying to save her friends when the 18 year old gunman burst into her classroom wielding the AR15 he'd bought a day after his birthday. She was calling 911 when she was shot to death. She knew what to do, she was brave. She was a fighter. But against artillery like that she had no chance. No chance to run, to hide or to shout for help from someone at the police department. Amerie's call never connected. When you see pictures of Amerie and her friends on the news you should

know, they didn't get buried looking sweet and happy like their photos. Some were missing limbs, some missing parts of their faces. You might mistakenly imagine a funeral where a child lies peacefully in a colorful coffin. But make no mistake there is no peace in the death of a child by a weapon of war.

Guns are now the leading cause of death among children. Yes. It's not flu or drowning or even car accidents. Because we've dealt with that with seatbelts and car seat regulations. It is only because of AR15s, bumpstocks and the lack of restrictions on how and who gets hold of them. That is why our children are dying. That is why marginalized groups are terrorized. And here we are, still squabbling about who gets to keep what.

Last time I was here I told you that one of the reasons I wanted to work with young patients was because of how flexible and open their minds are about treatment and learning from their experiences. But of course, they're not always enthusiastic at the outset. As a pediatrician I had to learn a few strategies for dealing with children who didn't want to follow doctor's orders. I have to convince them to trust me when they're too scared to get the shot or to get their blood drawn. You know, 5 year olds don't want to miss out on fun with friends, 10 year olds are worried something might hurt more than I'm saying it will. So you know I've got all kinds of tricks up my sleeve. Screentime, Disney Pencils. Stickers. I might be the only doctor who doesn't give out lollipops though.

As I sit here today 10 years after Sandy Hook, and 6 months after the massacre in my own town of Uvalde, I'm asked what we can do about finding solutions to gun control and I find myself thinking about pencils and the stickers. Because the naysayers and obstructionists in this debate about assault weapons, the people who don't want to give up their toys, they look like adults but they sound a hell of a lot like children to me.

As I said, I'm a gun owner. I believe in the 2nd amendment. But I'm also a doctor and I deal in facts over emotion. So yes, I love an effective tool. But when a body comes into the hospital riddled with bullets, there is no tool that's going to help. And I'm left to wonder, what it's going to take to get these guns out of the equation. What is going to stop this? You've seen all the evidence you could possibly see that they inflict needless death and destruction, so what is going to change your minds? Please don't tell me it's a lollipop....

Thank you.