

Opinion: Time to keep weapons away from the mentally ill

By Ted Gaines

Inspired by the tragic events that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., on Dec. 18. I announced legislative plans to introduce a bill that would make a critical change to California's existing gun control laws, keeping dangerous firearms out of the hands of the mentally ill.

It's time to take a hard look at gun violence in America and California. As a father of six children and a legislator, I am sickened by the recent events in Connecticut. While there is no single solution to completely preventing this kind of horrific crime, I believe this bill is an important step in protecting our children and anyone who is at risk from the dangerously mentally ill.



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Current California law prevents anyone who has been judged by a court to be a danger to others due to a mental disorder or mental illness, or has been judged a mentally disordered sex offender, from owning or possessing a firearm. However, upon completion of treatment or at a later date the person can petition the court to issue a certificate saying they are approved to possess a firearm.

My bill will amend California law to permanently prohibit gun ownership for those people who met the conditions stated above. There would be no petitioning the courts for future firearm possession.

Although California has the toughest gun laws in the nation, there is a loophole that must be closed for those determined by a court to be dangerously mentally ill. I hope everyone with any mental illness gets the treatment and rehabilitation they need to live a healthy and productive life. But if the court has ruled you are a danger to others, that's it. That is your one strike. We are not going to pave the way for you to own a firearm ever again.

Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, Shasta, Sierra and Siskiyou counties.