

Highland Park, IL Mayor Nancy Roterling Statement to the McHenry County Board – February 21, 2023

I'm reading a statement provided by Highland Park Mayor Nancy Roterling. Mayor Roterling spoke to us last week during the Committee of the Whole and asked that I share her perspective this evening.

"Good evening, McHenry County Board. On July 4th, 2022, like so many of you, our community was fully celebrating our patriotism at our Fourth of July parade. At 10:14 a.m., our joy was shattered by one young man shooting 83 rounds in under **one minute** from a legally obtained weapon designed to devastate as many human bodies as quickly as possible.

Until a mass shooting arrives in your front yard, you really don't understand the magnitude of its devastation. The US Department of Justice-Office for Victims of Crime tells us that the impact of this **one-minute event** will last for decades, if not lifetimes. It's incomprehensible.

Seven months later, we remember the seven individuals who were taken too soon, and we keep the four-dozen injured, so many *still* trying to recover from devastating wounds, and their families in our thoughts.

Highland Park's story includes eight-year-old Cooper Roberts, who went to a Fourth of July parade with his family and as a result missed the beginning of third grade because he was still hospitalized, trying to recover from a severed spinal cord, shredded esophagus and liver, and

partially collapsed lung, learning about living forever more in a wheelchair with PTSD. His statement on his first day back? “If I hadn’t been shot, if I hadn’t been paralyzed, if I hadn’t been in a wheelchair, it would have been a perfect first day of school.” Eight years old.

It includes two-year old Aiden McCarthy still asking for his mom and dad, both of whom died shielding their only child during a family celebration of freedom. Imagine what it’s like to see a photo circulating on social media and receiving text messages with the photo of an unaccompanied toddler covered in blood with a message asking if anyone knows him. That horrible moment when you imagine the worst and then learn that it’s true.

It includes the Toledo family, all seventeen of them, who directly experienced what happened to their grandfather’s head when he was hit by high velocity gunshot, many still dealing with painful shrapnel that may stay in their bodies for the rest of their lives.

This is a uniquely American problem. Shooters using assault weapons and large-capacity magazines regularly and randomly wreak terror and carnage throughout our nation. Shooters strike churches, grocery stores, movie theaters, concerts, schools, and main streets. *It’s not only the loss of life, but the loss of living life freely that’s impacted.*

Among America’s mayors, there is the common refrain of “not if, but when” a mass shooting will come to our communities. I cannot sufficiently convey to you the horrible, sick feeling of hearing that a mass shooting has occurred in **your** community.

I recognize that restricting access to assault weapons does not stop all gun violence, but banning combat weapons is one common-sense step proven to be effective at curbing gun deaths as shown by the ten-year Federal Assault Weapons ban that expired in 2004. During that time, our nation experienced a 70% drop in mass shooting-related deaths.

While my town is next door in Lake County, we know that a single city or county cannot protect its residents from a mass shooting because none of us are islands. But if we can make it that much harder for someone intent on committing an instantaneous killing spree to obtain a weapon with the impact and speed of the one used in my community, we have taken a step in the right direction.

The Illinois General Assembly passed the Assault Weapons Ban – Protect Illinois Communities Act. Opposing that law sends a message that it is more important to allow public access to combat weapons than to protect our human right to live freely from random carnage; that profits matter more than lives; that McHenry County will only comply with laws that it likes, undermining the stability of a society based on a common set of rules and procedures. Worse, it invites non-law-abiding citizens to find refuge here.

It's important to note, after his first mass shooting, the Highland Park shooter drove two and a half hours to Madison, WI, by his own admission, contemplating a second mass shooting. He could have just as easily driven here to McHenry County. Just take a moment and think

about where you were last Fourth of July, who you were with, who could have been next.

This debate isn't about whether we are burdening lawful gun owners with new regulations. Prior assault weapons bans repeatedly have been deemed to be constitutional and as recently as last Friday, a federal judge in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois upheld the Illinois Assault Weapon Ban as constitutional in the case of *Robert Bevis, et al. v. City of Naperville, IL and Jason Arres*.

According to Gallup, most Americans support a ban on assault weapons. They recognize the very real threat these weapons pose to our daily lives. I urge you, do not make assumptions about your constituents.

Please uphold the law and prioritize the public safety of your county.”