



**Testimony of Mr. Jason Adkins, MCC Executive Director, Concerning Assault Weapons and Ammunition  
House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee  
February 6, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee:

The Minnesota Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota, supports H.F. 241 and H.F. 242—bans on “assault” weapons and high-capacity magazines. But we offer this testimony less as experts on weaponry, but instead to offer some thoughts concerning some of the moral and ethical considerations related to addressing problems of gun violence.

The right to keep and bear arms, like all rights, carries with it responsibilities and limitations, particularly the responsibility to use a dangerous weapon only for lawful or legitimate purposes, such as self-defense and hunting. When weapons become more powerful and capable of being used for destructive and unlawful purposes, as well as have fewer legitimate civilian justifications and uses, such as military-style assault weapons, limitations on their use and purchase become more prudent.

Consistent with this reasoning, the Catholic Church—both nationally and here in Minnesota—has long supported bans on assault weapons,<sup>1</sup> and strongly advocated for the renewal of the federal assault weapons ban before and after it expired in 2004.<sup>2</sup> The Church renews its call today in support of a similar set of regulations here in Minnesota.

To be sure, the horrors of gun violence have deeper roots than just the prevalence of guns in our society.<sup>3</sup> But that does not mean we should not take significant steps to keep weapons designed for and capable of quickly killing many people out of the hands of dangerous people. Persons, not guns, are undoubtedly responsible for the massacres seen around the country. It is often the gun, however, that makes these mass killings possible. And for that reason, guns may be restricted and regulated to protect the common good and everyone’s right to live in peace and free from fear.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Confronting a Culture of Violence and Promoting Peace,” February 2013, available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/violence/upload/2013-02-Violence-Backgrounder-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Assault Weapons Backgrounder,” February 2005, available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/assault-weapons-background.cfm>

<sup>3</sup> Jason Adkins, “Gun Control: What Does the Church Say?” *The Catholic Spirit*, January 17, 2013, available at <http://thecatholicspirit.com/columns/faith-in-the-public-arena/gun-control-what-does-the-church-say/>.