

Wooden Calls For Divestment of Civilian Firearm Holdings

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CHRISTINE STUART / CTNEWSJUNKIE PHOTO | [Connecticut Treasurer Shawn Wooden](#)

HARTFORD, CT – Divesting Connecticut’s pension funds from five civilian gun manufacturers is personal for Connecticut Treasurer Shawn Wooden, but he said it’s also a financially prudent move.

Wooden, who lost his cousin, Michael, to a gunshot wound in June 2012, said Connecticut is home to some of the strongest gun violence prevention laws in the country, but more needs to be done.

“Yes, this issue is personal to me. However, as state treasurer, gun violence is a matter of significant financial concern,” Wooden said.

Because of that, Wooden is looking for permission from the Investment Advisory Council to divest \$30 million in Connecticut pension funds from five companies involved in manufacturing guns and ammunition for the civilian market. The companies are Northrop Grumman, Olin Corp., Daicel Corp., Clarus Corp., and Vista Outdoor.

Other gun manufacturers like West Hartford-based Colt would not be affected by Wooden’s divestment because it’s a privately-held company.

“Simply put, the business of civilian guns has become an increasingly risky proposition,” Wooden said.

He said the recent court decision to allow some of the Sandy Hook victims to proceed with their claims against Remington Arms underscores that increasing legal risk.

The risk is more than financial.

Each year in Connecticut, gun violence costs an average of 180 lives and \$1.2 billion from the state economy, according to Wooden.

Wooden said the \$30 million in investments in those five companies will be reallocated to investments with the same return targets “to increase long-term shareholder value for Connecticut’s pension funds.” He still needs permission from the Investment Advisory Council, which, due to the public notification process won’t be able to take up the policy changes until February.

Wooden oversees \$36 billion in pension and trust assets for approximately 212,000 state employees, teachers and retirees.

In the meantime, Wooden said the second prong of his “responsible gun policy” is to ask banks about their policies and relationships with the civilian firearm industry.

“For banks that do not have policies in place, we are encouraging them to adopt a responsible gun policy,” Wooden said

He said some large banks like Citibank have already implemented policies for retail clients which require background checks, age limits, bans on high-capacity magazines and bump stocks.

The treasurer’s office selected Citibank as one of the senior bankers for Connecticut’s next general obligation bond sale in part because of its policies on guns.

Wooden said he wants to incentivize Connecticut’s financial partners “to do the right thing,” and he bristled at the suggestion that he was punishing law-abiding companies.

Wooden said he’s just responding to market forces.

“We’re not barring any firm from doing business with this office. What we are saying is that if you are a responsible actor and you’re willing to step up and reduce the risk of your business and do something that most Americans support that we will consider that a positive and do more business with you.”

Wooden’s “responsible gun policy” also makes good on his campaign promise to purge the state’s investment portfolios of gunmakers.

Gov. Ned Lamont applauded the move.

“The treasurer’s decision to divest from gun manufacturers and enact a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive, responsible gun policy should be applauded,” Lamont said. “Connecticut continues to be a leader in responsible gun safety policies and as a state we must go beyond legislation in order to reflect the importance of protecting our communities from gun violence.”

Wooden made the announcement in his office surrounded by gun violence prevention advocates from Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut (CONNECT) and Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

Janet Rice of Hartford who lost her son, Shane, to gun violence in 2012, thanked Wooden for “standing up and doing something.”

“Every story of gun violence is unique and heartbreaking,” Rice said. “We need to tackle gun violence from every angle.”

CONNECT has used their buying power to purchase stock in gun companies, which gets them a seat at the table and an opportunity to influence company policies. They are looking to get companies

to tighten their gun distribution systems to prevent theft and illegal sales. They are also looking for companies to invest in research and development of new gun safety technologies.

Members of Mothers United Against Violence, Newtown Action Alliance, Connecticut Education Association, and AFT-CT also attended the press conference.