

# Treasurer Introduces Plan For Connecticut To Divest From Gun Industry

By RYAN LINDSAY & VANESSA DE LA TORRE · DEC 3, 2019



*Connecticut treasurer Shawn Wooden frequently spoke about divestment from the gun industry while on the campaign trail last fall.*

ADAM ROSEN / CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

The state of Connecticut announced Tuesday that it plans to divest from its investments in civilian gun manufacturers -- the latest move in a state that has enacted stricter gun policies since the Newtown massacre.

Leading the initiative, known as the Responsible Gun Policy, is state treasurer Shawn Wooden, who said he lost a cousin to gun violence in 2012, just months before the mass shooting that killed 26 children and educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Its core components are divestment, disclosure and decision-making.

“So yes, this issue is personal to me,” Wooden said. “However, as state treasurer, gun violence is a matter of significant financial concern, which warrants the attention of this office.”

Wooden manages more than \$36 billion in pension investments, which include contributions from more than 200,000 state and municipal employees, teachers and retirees. Wooden said recent court cases involving civilian gun manufacturers make them “risky financially, legally and reputationally,” so he plans to reallocate \$30 million in pension funds to more “stable” investments.

The \$30 million in pension funds from the Connecticut Retirement Plans and Trust Funds (CRPTF) is invested in four companies that manufacture guns: Clarus Corp. (\$114,087), Daicel Corp. (\$233,668), Vista Outdoor Inc. (\$626) and Olin Corp. (\$1.61 million), and one that manufactures ammunition for civilian firearms, Northrop Grumman. The bulk of the money is invested within Northrop, at \$28 million.

CRPTF does not hold any investments in Sturm, Ruger & Co., nor will it in the future -- based on the Responsible Gun Policy’s guidelines -- “unless they move to advance smart gun technology.” The Southport-based company was one of two gun companies pushed into producing a gun violence report after a shareholder resolution driven by faith-based groups.

The policy explicitly prohibits investing state pension funds in “public securities of civilian firearms manufacturing companies.” It also asks banks to disclose their gun policies and relationships with the firearms industry when doing business with the state.

Janet Rice, the outreach coordinator for Connecticut Against Gun Violence, was among the gun control activists who stood alongside Wooden during his announcement. Her 20-year-old son was shot and killed in Hartford in 2012.

“As a survivor and as a mother, the grief is unimaginable. You learn a pain that you never knew was possible,” Rice said. “You learn the loss is unique and universal for thousands touched by gun violence each year.”

That same year, Wooden said the nation “lost its innocence” after the fatal shooting of 20 students and six staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Wooden included divestment from the gun industry as a key tenet of his platform when he ran for office last fall.

“Money talks,” Wooden said. “And I want our policy to speak loud and clear. May it speak loud enough for gun manufacturers to understand it’s time to make safer, smarter products for the marketplace.”

Wooden also announced that Citibank and Rice Financial were selected as senior underwriters for the state's next general obligation bond sale of \$890 million, calling Citibank a "leader of gun safety in the financial services industry." Its commercial firearms policy restricts its retail clients from selling firearms to individuals under the age of 21 and those who have not taken or passed a background check. It also prohibits the sale of bump stocks and high-capacity magazines.

The plan needs approval from the Investment Advisory Council. Wooden said he expects the policy to be reviewed in February.

"The treasurer's decision to divest from gun manufacturers and enact a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive, responsible gun policy should be applauded," Gov. Ned Lamont said in a statement. "While divesting sends a strong message, we still need a moment of action in Washington that will bring an end to the mass shootings that have become an everyday tragedy for our country."