**Florida school shooting: Governor signs bill allowing some school teachers to carry guns**

*Neither school shooting survivors nor the National Rifle Association are pleased with it*

Mythili Sampathkumar, New York, *The Independent* Friday 9 March 2018 2

Florida Governor Rick Scott has signed a school safety bill in the wake of the Parkland school shooting in which 17 people were killed that would allow some school teachers to carry guns.

The $400m bill, written since the 14 February mass shooting, balances “our individual rights with need for public safety,” said Mr Scott.

Neither the shooting survivors nor the powerful gun lobby organisation the National Rifle Association (NRA) are pleased with the bill, however.

The legislation creates a so-called "guardian" program that enables teachers and other school employees in participating districts to carry handguns if they complete law enforcement training.

It also raises the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21, extends a three-day waiting period for handgun purchases to include long guns, and bans bump stocks that allow guns to mimic fully automatic fire.

The NRA, however, thinks even those limits are a sign of "bullying and coercion," as NRA and Unified Sportsmen of Florida lobbyist Marion Hammer said in a statement. The group felt the new limits restrict people's Second Amendment right to bear arms and a way to punish and demonise legal gun owners.

"Obviously, this is what we've been fighting for. It's nowhere near the long-term solution," said Chris Grady, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

"It's a baby step, but a huge step at the same time. Florida hasn't passed any legislation like this in God knows how long. It's nowhere near what we want, but it's progress and uplifting to see," he said.

Parkland survivors have been out marching, taking politicians to task on social media, and speaking to the press in full force since the shooting, advocating for an assault weapons ban across the country, but particularly in Florida. The gunman, suspected to be former student Nikolas Cruz, used an AR-15 assault-style rifle.

The bill would still allow the AR-15 to be sold in the state.

Mr Scott pointed out though that he is pleased the "guardian" program is not mandatory, since he is "not persuaded" to fully support it, as the NRA would have most likely wanted.

The program will be up to local officials to implement and "if counties don't want to do this, they can simply say no," he explained.

The voluntary programme would require these so-called guardians to complete 132 hours of comprehensive firearm safety and proficiency training, pass a psychological evaluation, submit to and pass drug tests; and complete certified diversity training.

It also excludes "individuals who exclusively perform classroom duties as classroom teachers" from participating in the programme.

It was named after Coach Aaron Feis, who had lost his life protecting students during the shooting.

Though the Broward County teachers union supports the overall bill, they did take issue with the guardian programme and want it taken out during the state's next budget go-round.

He also acknowledged that the debate on gun control will continue, adding that "this is a time for all of us to come together, roll up our sleeves and get it done."

Mr Scott commended the Stoneman Douglas student-activists for their outspoken advocacy: You helped change our state. You made a difference. You should be proud."

The bill also creates new mental health programmes for schools and establishes an anonymous tip line where students and others could report threats.

Improved communication between schools, law enforcement, and state agencies is also included in the bill after it was discovered the local FBI office had gotten a tip about Mr Cruz several months before the shooting took place but failed to act upon it.

“We can never replace the 17 lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, but in their memory we can, and through this legislation we will, do more to prevent a senseless tragedy like this from ever happening again," said Florida Senate President Joe Negron.

State Senator Bill Galvano noted that "the advice of survivors and the family members of the victims played a key role in the development of this legislation, and I was reassured to see the families of the victims join Governor Scott to see this legislation become law today".

# AP finds the NRA gave $7 million to hundreds of schools

Associated Press · Mar 9, 2018 · Education

The National Rifle Association has dramatically increased its funding to schools in recent years amid a national debate over guns and school violence, an Associated Press analysis of tax records has found. But few say they plan to give up the money in the aftermath of the latest mass shooting.

The AP analysis of the NRA Foundation's public tax records finds that about 500 schools received more than $7.3 million from 2010 through 2016, mostly through competitive grants meant to promote shooting sports. The grants have gone to an array of school programs, including the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, rifle teams, hunting safety courses and agriculture clubs.

In some ways, the grant distribution reflects the nation's deep political divide over guns. Nearly three-quarters of the schools that received grants are in counties that voted for President Donald Trump in the 2016 election, while a quarter are in counties that voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton, according to the AP analysis. Most are in medium-sized counties or rural areas, with few near major cities.

California received the most in school grants, more than $1 million, while Florida was a close second.

Florida's Broward County school district is believed to be the first to stop accepting NRA money after a gunman killed 17 people at one of its schools Feb. 14. The teen charged in the shooting had been on a school rifle team that received NRA funding. School officials announced the change Tuesday but declined to comment further.

Denver Public Schools followed on Thursday, saying it won't pursue NRA grants in the future and will turn down several that were to be awarded this year. But officials in many other districts say they have no plans to back away.

"Whatever I think of the NRA, they're providing legitimate educational services," said Billy Townsend, a school board member in Florida's Polk County district, whose JROTC programs received $33,000, primarily to buy air rifles. "If the NRA wanted to provide air rifles for our ROTC folks in the future, I wouldn't have a problem with that."

The grants awarded to schools are just a small share of the $61 million the NRA Foundation has given to a variety of local groups since 2010. But it has grown rapidly, increasing nearly fourfold from 2010 to 2014 in what some opponents say is a thinly veiled attempt to recruit the next generation of NRA members.

The NRA Foundation did not return calls seeking comment.

Annual reports from the pro-gun group say its grant program was started in 1992 and raises money through local Friends of NRA chapters. It says half the proceeds from local fundraisers go to local grants and half goes to the national organization. Tax records show roughly $19 million in grants going to the group's Virginia headquarters in 2015 and in 2016.

Besides schools, other typical recipients include 4-H groups, which have received $12.2 million since 2010, Boy Scout troops and councils, which received $4 million, and private gun clubs. Overall, about half the grants go to programs directed at youth.

Grant funding to schools rose sharply in the years after the 2012 shooting at Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary School, fueled in part by a new grant program the NRA unrolled to help schools make safety improvements. Three districts received safety grants totaling $189,000 in 2014, tax records show, but none appears to have been awarded since then.

Nearly half of the 773 overall school grants have gone to JROTC programs, which put students through a basic military curriculum and offer an array of small competitive clubs, like the rifle team at Broward's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. But JROTC leaders say few students ultimately enlist in the military, and the primary goal is to teach students skills like discipline and leadership.

"The safety that we're teaching, the good citizenship that we're teaching here, those are the things you don't hear about," said Gunnery Sgt. Jim Flores, a JROTC instructor at Cibola High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "The majority of people walk out of here awesome young men and women, respectful of authority, things of that nature. Not so much little tin soldiers."

In some parts of the country, shooting clubs draw the same sort of following as any school sport. Bill Nolte, superintendent of the Haywood County district in North Carolina, says he still shows up at school sportsman's club tourneys even though his son graduated. Starting in sixth grade, students can join the clubs to compete in shooting events, archery and orienteering. For many families, Nolte said, it's just like any other weekend sports event.

"You take your lawn chair and your coffee in a thermos, and do much like you would do if you were going to a youth soccer or travel basketball or baseball event," Nolte said, adding that NRA grants have helped buy firearms and ammunition and cover other costs that otherwise would fall to the parents. "We are constantly seeking revenue for sportsman's club just like we do for cheerleading and track."

Districts that tallied the largest sums of NRA money typically used it for JROTC programs, including $126,000 given to Albuquerque schools, $126,000 to Broward County and $125,000 to Anchorage, Alaska. The most awarded to a single district was $291,000, given to Roseville schools near Sacramento, California, which say much of the funding went toward ammunition and gear for trap-shooting teams.

Grants are often provided as equipment rather than cash, with schools given rifles, ammunition, safety gear and updates to shooting ranges. Nationally, about $1.3 million was provided as cash, while $6 million was provided through equipment, training and other costs.

The data does not include grants smaller than $5,000 -- those do not need to be individually tracked in tax filings.

Ron Severson, superintendent of the Roseville Joint Union High School District, says no parents have raised concerns over the funding, but administrators may reconsider it in the wake of the Florida shooting.

"After we get through this spring, we will probably take some time to assess how to move forward," he said.

School board members in some districts said they didn't know about the grants. Donna Corbett, a Democrat on the school board in southern Indiana's New Albany-Floyd County School Corporation, said she never heard about $65,000 that went to a JROTC program at one of the high schools. Corbett said she plans to raise the issue with her board but feels conflicted about it.

"I am not a big NRA fan, but I also realize that ROTC is a good program," she said. "I'm not sure I would be willing to pull it to the detriment of the kids and their programs."

While some states received dozens of school grants, about 20 got only a few or none at all. In Massachusetts, for example, known for its strict gun laws, no schools have received NRA grants since 2010, tax records show. Terry Ryan, a school board member in the Westford district northwest of Boston, says a local teacher considered applying for a grant in 2014, but the district ultimately didn't pursue it.

"We were not interested in any way, shape or form endorsing the NRA or its philosophy," Ryan said in an interview.

By contrast, parent Jana Cox in Louisiana's Caddo Parish says few in the area would have a problem with the $24,000 in NRA grants that have gone to school JROTC programs.

"Everybody here has guns," Cox said. "This is north Louisiana. You've got a lot of hunters and you've got a lot of guns."

Without NRA grants, some programs would struggle to stay afloat, officials say. For JROTC groups, which receive most of their money from their respective military branches, the grants have become more important as federal budgets have been cut. Programs at some high schools in Virginia, Missouri and other states have folded in recent years amid the pinch.

Lt. Colonel Ralph Ingles, head of the JROTC program at Albuquerque schools, says the Florida shooting has sparked a conversation about NRA grants, but he doesn't anticipate cutting ties anytime soon.

"I don't see anybody really backing down," he said. "I think it's just ingrained that we're going to continue to move forward in a positive direction."

**After another deadly school shooting, is it time for US teachers to carry guns?**

Joel Gunter, BBC News, 15 February 2018

*At least 17 people have died after a 19-year-old ex-pupil opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.*

***It's the deadliest school shooting since 2012, when 26 people were killed in Sandy Hook, Connecticut.***

***Two weeks ago, the BBC's Joel Gunter looked at whether arming US teachers could help prevent future bloodshed.***

Two schoolchildren died on Tuesday and 14 others suffered bullet wounds when a classmate opened fire outside a school in Benton, Kentucky. It was the third shooting incident at a school in 48 hours and the 11th in the three weeks since the start of the year.

The victims were Bailey Holt and Preston Cope, both 15. A 15-year-old boy was arrested and charged with the attack.

The story fell somewhere into the middle of the day's news agenda. "Americans have accepted these common atrocities as part of life here," wrote one commenter on the New York Times website. "Another day, another shooting spree, and no political will to do anything about it."

But there is political will building behind a certain sort of gun legislation — reforms that aim to increase, rather than decrease, the number of firearms in schools and other public buildings, and arm teachers and school staff as a means of defence.

Hours after the shooting in Kentucky, Republican State Senator Steve West rushed to file a bill that would allow Kentucky schools to have armed school marshals patrol the site. His bill joins another in the state which seeks to loosen gun restrictions around college campuses.

Mr West's bill received cross-party support from state Democratic Senator Ray Jones. "We need armed officers in every school in Kentucky," Mr Jones said. "That is a small price to pay if it saves one child's life."

The bill joins a raft of state legislation in recent years designed at putting more guns in schools. Most recently, the Michigan State Senate passed a bill in November which would allow teachers at primary, middle and high schools to carry a concealed handgun in class. Similar bills have been filed this year in Florida, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, South Carolina and West Virginia.

If successful, those states would join at least nine that already allow some form of concealed carry in high schools. Each fatal school shooting reignites a long-running debate over whether the solution is more gun control, or more guns.

## **Good guys, bad guys**

Efforts to arm teachers and school staff were jumpstarted in the wake of the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook elementary in Connecticut, in which 20 children and six teachers died. Facing a public outcry at the massacre, and renewed calls for gun control, the NRA pushed heavily in the opposite direction.

"The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun," said the NRA's Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre, a week after the shooting, and the catchphrase evolved into a philosophy that underpinned the NRA's key legislative priorities.

[The lobby group published a report calling for armed officers or staff in every school in America](https://www.nationalschoolshield.org/), and in 2013, the year after Sandy Hook, seven states enacted laws permitting teachers or school staff to carry guns.

"Over the past two or three years we've seen an explosion of legislative proposals to force schools to permit guns or to arm teachers," said Adam Skaggs, chief counsel at the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. "And it's not just pushing the idea that people need guns in schools to be safe, it's the idea that people need guns everywhere - city streets, public parks, even government buildings."

But advocates say these kinds of reforms are the only meaningful way to protect schoolchildren. They point in particular to more rural schools, where an emergency response from police may take too long in the context of an active shooter incident. They also argue that gun-free zones are creating "soft targets".

In Kentucky, home to Tuesday's shooting, Republican State Senator Tim Moore introduced bills in 2017 and again in 2018 in an effort to reduce restrictions around guns on school and college campuses.

"Whenever in our country people with evil intent seek to harm others, including innocent children, they will seek locations where they know there's going to be minimal chance of resistance," he said in a telephone interview.

"Allowing law abiding citizens who are properly trained, properly vetted, with a thorough background check and criminal check … that is a deterrent."

## **'Mindset development'**

School shootings erupted into the public consciousness in April 1999, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered 12 students and one teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. That massacre has since been eclipsed by shootings at Virginia Tech college (33 dead), Sandy Hook elementary school (25 dead), and 203 other shooting incidents in or around schools.

According to [an FBI study of 160 active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013](https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view), nearly a quarter occurred in educational settings, and more of half of those were at junior or secondary schools.

Fourteen years after Columbine, and eight miles down the road, Littleton suffered another shooting. Karl Pierson, 18, went to Arapahoe High School in December 2013 with two guns and shot 17-year-old Clare Davis in the head, before killing himself in the school's library.

One of the first police officers on the scene that day was Swat team member Quinn Cunningham. Still a serving officer, he now runs three-day active-shooter training sessions for armed teachers.

The "Faster" training courses - funded by Coloradans for Civil Liberties and the Independence Institute - include a day of "mindset development" - preparing teachers for the possibility that they will have to shoot dead one of their own students.

Mr Cunningham, 44, asks the teachers to close their eyes and imagine the student entering the classroom with a gun. In reality, a teacher might have just a split-second to assess the situation and respond. This is the most difficult and emotional part of the training, and reduces some of the participants to tears.

"But if we can have them win in their minds first, against that student, then when it comes to the actual incident they will prevail," Mr Cunningham said.

* [America's gun culture in 10 charts](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081)
* [Why are US mass shootings getting more deadly?](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41890277)

Five members of staff from Fleming High School in north-east Colorado volunteered last year for the training, which takes place in the summer break to keep students in the dark about who's involved. One teacher who took part, who asked to remain anonymous, said she decided to picture her favourite student during the preparation exercises, in an effort to harden herself to the worst possible eventuality.

"Teachers aren't really supposed to have favourites but you know, you have the ones that are close to you," she said. "But if that student made the poor decision to endanger everyone, I'm going to have to do something about it."

The school now has posters at every entrance stating that some of its teachers are armed. The students spent "about a week or two" trying to work out who was carrying guns, before giving up, the teacher said. Her wardrobe changed "quite a bit" to accommodate a handgun, she said. "It's just dressing to fit the gun."

The volunteers at Fleming High were subjected to background checks and a voice stress analysis, similar to a lie detector test, said school superintendent Steve McCracken. All five passed and now carry guns in the school.

"At the end of the day, no one in our school or community is in favour of having guns, but if a bad guy comes to the school we are now able to take care of it," he said.

"We do not have a local police department in our little town, and the sheriff's office could be at least 15 to 20 minutes away on a good day. The main reason for this is to close that gap."

Some staff vocally opposed the presence of guns and one teacher later left the school, but the general reaction from staff and the community was supportive, he said.

[In a 2013 poll by the National Education Association](http://neatoday.org/2013/01/15/nea-poll-educators-support-stronger-laws-to-prevent-gun-violence-2/), only 22% of teachers said they approved of the idea of arming staff, while 68% of teachers said they were opposed. In another survey the same year, 72% of teachers said they would not want to carry a gun even if the law allowed.

## **'Playing Rambo'**

In Michigan, when the state senate passed legislation in November that extended concealed carry to high schools, churches, day care centres, and sporting events, former teacher-turned-Democratic state senator Jim Ananich was among a vocal minority who opposed the bill. He said he thought the "overwhelming majority" of his former colleagues would be against the idea.

"Trying to play Rambo just doesn't fit with the reality of what happens in a stressful situation," he said. "Untrained individuals are much more likely to shoot a bystander, a police officer, or a child."

The three days of training administered by Faster - and the legal minimum standard in Michigan of just eight hours for armed teachers - was not nearly enough, he said.

"Pursuing the NRA philosophy that you can put guns into the hands of teachers and untrained individuals, and expect them to make decisions that law enforcement or military are supposed to make, is backwards and it's dangerous."

Those fighting to keep guns out of schools say arming teachers is a bad solution to the wrong problem, particularly in states that lack laws around securing firearms in the home.

According to the Giffords Law Centre, [27 states and the District of Columbia have some sort of Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws](http://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention/#state), which dictate how securely guns should be stored in the home.

The CAP laws in Kentucky, where the shooter reportedly took a gun from his parents' closet, are among the weakest of all those states. Parents or guardians will only break the law if they knowingly provide a gun to a child convicted of a violent crime or likely to commit a crime.

"If we want to talk about preventing school shootings, we should be talking about stopping kids getting their hands on guns in the first place," said Mr Skaggs, chief counsel at the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. "Those are the laws we should be looking at."

On the ground, groups like the Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus are fighting state-by-state against the NRA, its state-level affiliates and other gun-advocacy groups to defeat pro-gun schools legislation.

"We - the collective gun violence prevention community - are defeating most of the bills right now, but the intensity on the other side is there," said Andy Pelosi, director of Keep Guns off Campus. "The NRA has its fingerprints all over this issue now, they want to push guns everywhere," he said. The NRA did not respond to a request for comment.

**What Is the Realistic Next Step in Improving School Security?**

*'Arm the Teachers' isn't the answer—but rural schools have plenty to learn from how urban schools have approached safety for decades.*

Corey Williams, Mar 20, 2018, Corey Williams is an Associated Press writer. AP writer Jesse Holland in Washington contributed to this report.

Jondra Alvarez lives about five minutes from her high school on Detroit's southwest side but she drives there instead of walking because her mother fears for her safety. Once the 18-year-old enters the building, her surroundings take on a more secure feel almost immediately as she passes through a bank of closely monitored metal detectors.

As schools around the U.S. look for ways to impose tougher security measures in the wake of last month's school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead, they don't have to look further than urban districts such as Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York that installed metal detectors and other security in the 1980s and 1990s to combat gang and drug violence.

Security experts believe these measures have made urban districts less prone to mass shootings, which have mostly occurred in suburban and rural districts.

Officials in some suburban and rural school districts are now considering detectors as they rethink their security plans after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz allegedly brought in a duffel bag containing an assault rifle and opened fire. He's charged with 17 counts of first-degree murder and 17 counts of attempted murder.

The massacre has galvanized thousands of students around the country who walked out of their classrooms for 17 minutes — one for each Parkland victim — on March 14 to protest gun violence.

"I think urban schools are eons ahead. They've been dealing with violence a lot longer than suburban schools," said Philip Smith, president of the National African American Gun Association.

During the mid-1980s, Detroit was one of the first districts in the nation to put permanent, walk-through metal detectors in high schools and middle schools. New York schools also had them in some buildings.

By 1992, metal detectors had been installed in a few dozen Chicago high schools. And in 1993, under pressure to make schools safer, Los Angeles' district announced that it would randomly search students with metal detectors.

Such measures "are designed to identify and hopefully deter anybody from bringing a weapon to school, but metal detectors alone portray an illusion of being safe," said Nikolai Vitti, superintendent of the 50,000-student Detroit Public Schools Community District.

"Our schools need to be safer than they are," Vitti said. "As a nation, we need to fully fund and make sure all districts can adequately staff school resource officers and also offer mental health and first-aid training to all educators."

Security measures don't always keep guns off school grounds. A 17-year-old high school senior was killed and another student wounded March 7 in a Birmingham, Alabama, classroom shooting. Metal detectors at the school were not in use that day. A 17-year-old student has been charged with manslaughter.

Two students were shot and three people suffered other injuries in February when a gun in a backpack accidentally fired inside a Los Angeles Unified School District middle school. The district does daily random metal-detector wand searches in middle schools and high schools. A 12-year-old girl has been charged with being a minor in possession of a firearm and having a weapon on school grounds.

In response to the Parkland shooting, Florida's governor has said he wants to spend $500 million to increase law enforcement and mental health counselors at schools, to make buildings more secure with metal detectors and to create an anonymous tip line.

A package of legislation passed by the New York state Senate includes provisions for metal detectors and improved security technology in schools. A parent in Knox County, Kentucky, has said his law office would donate $25,000 for metal detectors in schools there.

Alvarez, the student at Detroit's Western International, said she and others who attend the school go through metal detectors every morning. Her elementary and middle schools also had metal detectors.

"I've always seen it as something that made me feel safe," she said, adding that all schools should have them and not just inner-city ones "so students don't feel discriminated against."

Metal detectors are seen as a symptom of a "stigma that already exists," said Mark Fancher, staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan's Racial Justice Project.

"There is a presumption that urban schools — particularly those with students of color — are violent places and security demands you have procedures in place that are intended to protect the safety of the students," Fancher said.

But metal detectors, property searches, security guards and police in schools create conditions similar to those found in prisons, he said.

"Students, themselves, internalize these things," Fancher said. "If you create a school that looks like a prison, the people who go there will pretty much decide that's what is expected of them."

Many urban districts have a greater awareness and sensitivity when it comes to students' needs, said Kenneth Trump, president of the Cleveland-based National School Safety and Security Services, a K-12 security consulting firm.

"I think in urban schools, the approach of most of the educators, administrators and security personnel is, 'We realize there are issues kids bring to school,'" said Trump, who has been in the school safety field for more than 30 years. "The people will tell you, 'We are not in denial ... we acknowledge our problems.’ Suburban and rural administrators, parents and students often view themselves as different from their big-city counterparts, and that may impact how they treat school security,” he said.

"There's very often that divide of 'There's us and there's them. We're not the urban district. We are the alternative. We're the place people go to get away from the urban district,'" he said.

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# Some Teachers Already Have Guns

## *At least eight states allow faculty to carry weapons; critics say that policy is dangerous*

Tawnell D. Hobbs and Leslie Brody, Feb. 22, 2018, *Wall Street Journal*

As President Donald Trump calls for teachers to carry guns to protect children, some districts already have gun-toting teachers in schools, though the identity of those carrying weapons is kept a secret.

Last week’s shooting at a Parkland, Fla., high school that left 17 dead has kicked off an intense discussion about arming teachers, escalated by Mr. Trump, who is calling for having “weapons talented teachers” armed in the schools to deter would-be shooters.

School districts with armed teachers said it is an extra security measure that can provide an immediate response when a shooter is on campus.

 “The faster we can respond, the more of our babies are saved,” said Christopher Burrows, superintendent in Georgetown Exempted Village Schools, a 1,060-student district in Georgetown, Ohio, where some school employees carry guns. “Those folks that are armed are part of our safety team.”

Many teachers unions and educators have come out strongly against the president’s proposal, saying it would make schools more dangerous. Teachers aren’t trained law-enforcement officers and have enough to do educating students, they say. “It’s a recipe for disaster,” according to Shanna Peeples, a former Texas English teacher who was named the 2015 National Teacher of the Year. “I can’t imagine having to add weapons training on top of what I already do.”

At least eight states already allow teachers in some capacity to carry guns on K-12 school grounds, including Kansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming, according to the Education Commission of the States, which tracks legislation.

So far in 2018, at least six states—Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Maryland, and Oklahoma—have introduced legislation that would make it easier to have school personnel carry firearms on school property, according to the commission. But it is unknown how many teachers are carrying guns in schools because there is no official national tally.

While some school districts have publicly announced their armed-employee programs, they won’t say who is carrying them and typically won’t divulge the number of armed staff members. The armed programs usually require educators to own their own weapons, but the school districts provide training.

Several school districts in Ohio and Texas with armed staff said Thursday they haven’t had any incidents involving guns accidentally going off or being shot unnecessarily, a concern by some who don’t want teachers armed.

Still, accidents have happened. A sixth-grade teacher was injured in 2014 when she discharged her gun by mistake while using the toilet in a faculty rest room in Taylorsville, Utah. She had the concealed gun legally. A spokesman for the Granite School District said state law requires permit holders to keep their guns with them.

“Police determined she had the weapon on her lap and it slipped and she reached to grab it and pulled the trigger,” said a district spokesman. “The front of the toilet blew off and it blew a porcelain fragment into the back of her leg.”

Kevin Dyes, superintendent in the Holliday Independent School District in the small community of Holliday, Texas, said arming employees was needed for safety because the schools had a large number of access points. Employees receive training and their weapons—typically high-quality semiautomatic handguns—are approved by the local police chief, he said.

“We’re not carrying a Saturday night special,” Dr. Dyes said. “We have training requirements where they have to shoot every so often.”

David Thweatt, superintendent in the Harrold Independent School District in Harrold, Texas, said his district began allowing armed teachers in 2007, paying them an undisclosed stipend. The district’s decision to use armed educators was based on the closest sheriff being about 30 minutes from the school—too long to wait during a shooter situation.

“We cannot hope for the best. You cannot hide in a closet for 30 minutes,” Mr. Thweatt said. Yet, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers who participated in a telephone town hall meeting with 60,000 educators this week, reported that “The response was universal, even from educators who are gun owners: Teachers don’t want to be armed, we want to teach.”

Donald Trump also wants to stop designating schools “gun free” zones so that properly trained educators can carry concealed weapons and fire back at a school shooter. As the argument goes, many school districts have tight budgets, and police and security personnel are often shared between campuses, in other words not readily available.

Some schools that incorporate firearms into their safety plans have received funding for training through Faster Saves Lives, a program sponsored by the Buckeye Firearms Foundation in Ohio. About 1,300 school staff in 12 states have received training through the program in the past five years, said program director Joe Eaton. “The faster we stop the killing, and the faster we start medical aid, that’s how we save lives,” Mr. Eaton said.

Jamaal Bowman, principal of the Cornerstone Academy for Social Action Middle School in the Bronx, called arming teachers “an insane idea.” He said it would be much more effective to invest in more mental-health counselors, social workers and arts programs that help children heal. “School is not just a refuge from guns, it’s a refuge from violence,” Mr. Bowman said.

Kenneth Trump, a consultant who is president of National School Safety and Security Services, said in states that allow teachers to carry guns, very few districts use the option. “Most school boards, superintendents and teachers say thanks but no thanks,” he said.

Mr. Trump, who is no relation to the president, said there could be a host of responsibilities with arming teachers, including weapon inspections, certification and storing guns. Armed teachers also could present confusion during a live shooter incident, he said.

“You arrive at the scene and you have seven people coming out with firearms in their hands,” he said. The idea of arming teachers “sounds good, it feels good, but the devil is in the details of implementation.”

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**The Second Amendment is a human right — ignorance toward it is troubling**

By Ned Ryun, opinion contributor — 02/25/18 01:30 PM EST

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In the wake of the Parkland, Fla., shooting some people are pushing their hopes for gun control, even gun confiscation, while others are virtue signaling and offering no real solutions for actually dealing with school safety, such as raising the age to 21 to purchase a rifle when in fact the average age of a mass shooter in America is [35 years old](https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/).

If we really care about school safety, there are some viable solutions. Schools can be made “harder” targets, and with four of my own children in public school, that is my priority. We can protect our children while not infringing on basic constitutional rights.

We need to repeal the [1990 Gun-Free School Zone Act](https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/2070) and stop advertising to madmen with guns that almost everyone on school grounds is unarmed.

The act, a brainchild of the Left and passed with the support of milquetoast Republicans in 1990, was a dangerous act of virtue signaling that actually made our schools some of the softest targets in the country.

In fact, most mass school shootings have taken place [after the law](https://townhall.com/tipsheet/chrisreeves/2018/02/22/most-mass-shootings-at-k-12-schools-happened-after-gun-free-school-zones-made-int-n2452948) was passed. We must repeal the act and remove the signs advertising gun-free zones. Heck, replace those with “Armed Guards on Duty” to act as a deterrent, even if no armed guards are present.

In repealing the Gun-Free School Zone Act, you allow teachers and administrators, who are willing, to be trained, armed and prepared if the school is attacked. Some are using the false argument that somehow all teachers would be expected to be trained and armed.

That’s not the point. The point is to give certain teachers the freedom to defend themselves and their students, and to have an “offensive approach” on school grounds at all times.

Case in point, Chris Hixon, the deceased athletic director at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, was a Navy [veteran](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-sp-school-shooting-chris-hixon-funeral-20180221-story.html). Aaron Feis, the deceased football coach who ran into the school to confront the shooter, was a trained [security guard](https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/football-coach-florida-school-shooting-trnd/index.html). Both were unarmed when confronting the shooter thanks to the Gun-Free School Zone Act. Imagine if they had been armed.

Beyond the discussion of actually making schools “harder,” it’s also fair to point out the utter failure of law enforcement in this situation. How is a young man not flagged when police were warned about him [dozens](https://nypost.com/2018/02/16/deputies-called-to-suspected-shooters-home-39-times-over-seven-years/) of times, who the police knew had held a gun to [someone’s head](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/02/23/not-first-time-hes-put-gun-someones-head-chilling-nikolas-cruz-911-call/366343002/) a few months before the horrific shooting?

Or how four cowardly Broward County officers were [outside](https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/23/politics/parkland-school-shooting-broward-deputies/index.html) the school sitting once the shooting began. And we can’t forget the FBI’s multiple [warnings](https://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-tip-line-caller-said-nikolas-cruz-is-going-to-explode-1519415442) about the shooter.

How about we have a conversation about the incompetence displayed by some of our law enforcement, both local and national, in addressing this situation? And even though we know there is a [clear link](http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-duwe-rocque-mass-shootings-mental-illness-20180223-story.html) between mental health issues and mass shooters, many on the Left want to go right to gun control and potentially even gun confiscation.

The ignorance on display regarding the Second Amendment and its history is troubling and is due to the fact that no one really teaches about our rights ensconced in our Constitution.

They weren’t pulled from thin air but from the idea of natural law and the concept of human rights endowed by a Creator.

There is absurd talk, from even some within [Republican](http://www.breitbart.com/video/2018/02/23/condoleezza-rice-dont-understand-civilians-need-access-military-weapons/) circles, asking why there’s a need for semi-automatic rifles for hunting and sport shooting.

While the SKS is a great rifle for hog hunting, as is an AR-15, the idea behind those guns, and other semi-automatic weapons, is very simple: “the [collective right](http://www.econlib.org/library/Bastiat/basEss2.html) of the individual to lawful self-defense.”

Of all of the rights we have as human beings, the pre-eminent one is this right to [self-defense](http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendIIs7.html) — “The right of self defence is the first law of nature: in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest limits possible.” Our founders weren’t thinking about hunting or sport shooting when they wrote about an armed militia being necessary for “the [security](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/United_States_of_America_1992) of a free state.”

They were actually talking about a populace being armed in the face of a powerful government. As they had just won their freedom from an oppressive government, they believed strongly in the collective right of the individual to defend himself or herself from a government that had overstepped its bounds.

So yes, a populace should be as well be armed as possible with the best legally available tools for self-defense. Even the rapper T.I. gets the [basics](http://www.tmz.com/2018/02/22/ti-gun-control-right-to-bear-arms-shooting-ban-automatic-weapons/), “If you lose the right to bear arms as a citizen, then you know what I’m saying, it’s easy to enslave.”

We were created to be free, yet with our deeply imperfect human nature there is a need for government — “If all men were [angels](https://mises.org/library/if-men-were-angels), no government would be necessary.” As we’re no angels, we’ve a need for government to insure God-given rights and have none of them taken away.

Yet let’s never assume that government is essentially good. It is a necessary evil in an imperfect world. It is naive to trust the explosive mix of imperfect human nature combined with the awesome power of the state. And let’s be honest — as the government failed those children in Parkland so many times, why on earth would we engender more trust in government? It should do precisely the opposite.

It is hoped and expected that the people’s duly elected representatives will always protect and defend the Americans' rights and demand transparency and accountability and keep government in check and in its proper role.

Yet the trends and the “arc of human history” do not point toward justice but injustice as government continues to expand and encroach and take more and more of life’s decisions away from the individual.

So we would do well to remember, in light of the understandably emotional response to Parkland, with many wrong solutions being proposed, the words of Alexander Hamilton from [Federalist 28](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed28.asp): “If the representatives of the people betray their constituents, there is then no resource left but in the exertion of that original right of self-defense which is paramount to all positive forms of government.”

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