

To the School Safety Working Group:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify with regard to safety in our schools. While I am not a police officer or security specialist, I am a professional pilot who manages and captains a transport category jet aircraft for a high net worth individual. As you can imagine, safety is at the core of my profession.

To begin to examine the problems, we must look for some consistencies. All of the well know shootings that we have seen from Virginia Tech to Aurora to Sandy Hook, have all occurred in “gun free zones” where an equivalent level of protection (security/police officers) was not provided to the disarmed victims. It has become glaringly obvious to every potential criminal out there, that these zones are prime targets for their horrific behavior. There is simply no disputing that “soft targets” are always sought out by those who wish to do harm... whether it is a criminal looking to burglarize, a rapist, a knife wielding mad man like those at Chinese schools or a sick individual looking to commit mass murder with a firearm. A method of deterrence must be put in place to present a hard target.

How we do this can be debated endlessly.... My first thought was to tap into the good citizens of our community and have them partner with local law enforcement. It's easy to come out and say “Just put cops at all schools.” Is that really feasible based on budgets and availability of police which are already strained? What I would do is to use local volunteers who have pistol permits at local schools to provide the bulk of the deterrent. They would be highly vetted beyond the requirements of their permits and of course, trained in the specifics of this type of duty... similar to airline pilots who carry firearms in the cockpit of airliners. They would be plain clothed and directed/overseen by local law enforcement officials. I would be willing to submit to and pay for all vetting and training of myself as well as dedicate a significant amount of time at local schools. I'm sure many other citizens would stand up as well. Vetting and training must be recurrent in order to maintain consistency/safety of the volunteers. We cannot have a rent-a-cop style system here. We need to have people that are going to get the job done and done right.

This tactic would provide multiple benefits beyond having the ability to stop a criminal:

- The children would not really even notice a difference. I don't think anyone wants to turn our schools into max security style prisons and this would help to avoid that by using local citizens who are carrying concealed weapons

- It would save money and reduce strain on already highly taxed police departments

- It would give citizens a chance to give back to their community in a meaningful way

- Since pistol permit holders are some of the most law abiding citizens in the country, we would be starting off with a high quality person and further assuring the standards through the vetting/training process.

- It would allow teachers to focus on teaching

Just quickly... with regard to arming teachers and other school employees. I don't think that they should be made to carry a firearm. As I just said, they have enough on their plates just trying to do their job these days with today's hyperactive, over-medicated children. That said, if they want to carry, I believe that they should be allowed to IF and only if they go through the same process as the volunteers. They would need to maintain their currency just the same as well.

I realize that some of these ideas are controversial but my purpose was to provoke further thought. I hope you will receive many good ideas that can be put into practice. One thing that is clear to me is that the old, lame idea of passing paper laws and hoping for the best is dead. We must not rely on paper tigers for safety. I do not, I do not expect others to do so and I hope that you will not either.

Thank you,
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