Keep Guns Out of Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

**Bottom Line:** In recent years, the gun lobby has pushed legislation across the country that would arm teachers and allow civilians to carry guns into our elementary, middle and high schools. These bills are sold as a way to keep children safe, but in reality, they do just the opposite, putting children at risk of unintentional shootings and escalating conflict without decreasing the risk of an active shooter. That’s why **teachers and school safety experts oppose these bills.** Statehouses should listen to school safety experts and local communities, rather than letting the gun lobby put children’s lives at risk.

- **Teachers and school safety experts oppose allowing guns in schools.**
  - The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation’s two largest teachers’ organizations, oppose allowing guns in schools.¹
  - The federal government’s chief legal, law enforcement, public health, education, and emergency management agencies all agree that allowing civilians to carry guns in schools is not a sound security practice.²

- **The focus on arming teachers ignores the risks and consequences of bringing more guns onto school grounds.**
  - Everytown has tracked 168 incidents of gunfire on or onto elementary, middle, and high school campuses since 2013. Of those incidents, 1 in 5 were unintentional shootings, and nearly 1 in 6 incidents began as a verbal altercation that escalated because of the presence of a gun. **Introducing guns on school campuses increases the potential for such tragedies.**³
  - Schools that have allowed employees to carry guns have seen difficulty in obtaining insurance coverage. Some liability insurance providers have declined coverage to these schools while others have increased annual premiums, stretching already tight budgets.⁴

- **The gun lobby uses fear of “active shooter” situations to justify these policies, but arming civilians is not an effective way to stop an active shooter.**
  - An FBI review of active shooter incidents from 2000-2013 found that only 1 in 160 incidents ended when a civilian shot the shooter—and that one “civilian” was a former U.S. Marine.⁵
  - While law enforcement officers are extensively trained to handle the chaos and fluctuating dynamics of active shooter situations, civilians are not.⁶ Research casts significant doubt on the idea that civilians can shoot as well as trained police officers in active shooter situations.⁷

- **In fact, armed civilians make active shooter situations more difficult and dangerous. Armed civilians put law enforcement in danger, delay law enforcement response, and pose a risk to innocent bystanders.**
  - Following the shooting of 12 police officers at a demonstration where dozens of open carry activists contributed greatly to police confusion, former Dallas police chief David Brown said, “We don’t know who the good guy is versus the bad guy when everyone starts shooting.”⁸
  - When a man shot and killed three people at a Walmart in Thornton, Colorado, law enforcement reported shoppers drawing weapons in self-defense “absolutely” slowed the process of identifying the suspect.⁹
When Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was shot and injured in Tucson, Arizona, an armed civilian came very close to firing at the unarmed civilian who disarmed the shooter.\(^\text{10}\)

**Instead of arming teachers, states can save lives by enacting Red Flag laws, creating a way to intervene before a disturbed potential shooter arrives at the schoolhouse door.**

- Mass shooters like the 19-yr-old in Parkland, Florida often display warning signs before committing violent acts.
- When a person is a danger to self or others, loved ones and law enforcement are often the first to see signs that they pose a threat. Red Flag Laws allow them to seek help from a court to remove guns from dangerous situations.
- Red Flag Laws empower law enforcement and immediate family members to petition a court for an Extreme Risk Protection Order, sometimes called a Gun Violence Restraining Order.
- If a court finds that a person poses a significant danger of injuring themselves or others with a firearm, that person is temporarily prohibited from purchasing and possessing guns and required to turn over their guns while the order is in effect.
- Red flag laws have been enacted in 5 states,\(^\text{11}\) and have been introduced in 18 additional states so far this year.\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^12\) Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and DC.