

# **Arming Teachers Promotes Gun Sales, Not Safer Schools**

*Rob Resnick*

In large part as a response to the horrendous tragedy last year in Parkland, the Florida Legislature is plowing ahead with legislation not just allowing, but potentially mandating, teachers carrying guns in school. The original legislation left it to individual school systems to determine whether and how to allow teachers to arm themselves; however, current efforts attempt to remove any input from local school boards. While some teachers would accept the opportunity to be armed, most teachers, parents, and gun safety organizations oppose arming teachers, believing this practice would lessen their children's safety, not enhance it.

There is one powerful group pushing for the legislation – the NRA, and in few states does the NRA carry more influence over legislators than in Florida. Republican legislators seem more concerned with ensuring their ongoing, large donations from the NRA than keeping our children safe in schools. The NRA's primary mission is to promote and increase gun sales in Florida and across the nation with outright, fervent opposition to even the most reasonable and popular

(supported by 80-90% of the American people) safety measures, such as universal background checks and military assault weapons bans. There is one highly noticeable commonality with the scourge of mass shootings, including school shootings, and that is the use of the AR-15, a military style assault weapon with no valid hunting, recreational, or home protection utility.

Parents, teachers, and law enforcement agencies all raise valid serious concerns about arming teachers in schools. First is training. Weapons training, which would of course be secondary to their official duties, can only go so far and would not adequately prepare teachers to act in such an emergency. As someone with 25 years of active military service, including a combat tour during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, I can clearly attest that even the best training is never like the real thing. Parents are right to be concerned that teachers may lack the ability to identify and hit the "bad guy" amidst the chaos of a school shooting. Law enforcement is right to be concerned whether they can immediately identify the "bad guy" with teachers as well as shooters holding and potentially firing weapons. The Parkland shooting was over in under 4 minutes. Would an armed teacher wielding a handgun against a military assault rifle have made much difference?

Imagine the grief of a teacher who accidentally shoots a student or law enforcement that accidentally shoots a teacher (or student). Concerns of accidents are valid. There have been instances where guns were accidentally left in a bathroom or on a desk. Teachers performing their duties are mobile and focused on multiple students, black/white boards, and sometimes leave the classroom. How secure will their weapons be during the school day? Ironically, instituting proper weapon security measures may result in a slower response time by teachers who must react to the stimulus, identify the threat, and retrieve their secured (hopefully) gun. Parents have weighed the difficult question concerning whether to move their children to classes. The legislation intentionally omits any provision addressing the right of parents to move their children to classes without armed teachers to avoid the potential for a tragic accident. Insurance companies are contemplating not writing policies to indemnify schools because of their own concerns about the risk of accidental or mistaken action.

