School Boards in Illinois to again consider Arming Teachers

Should we Arm our Teachers?
Fact Sheet #1 - 2019

Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Illinois
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Illinois Association of School Boards to take another vote on Arming Teachers on November 23, 2019

In November of 2018, the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) presented a resolution to their membership to approve arming teachers in Illinois schools during the school day. The vote was taken at their annual November conference in Chicago. The resolution lost by 24 votes.

On November 23, 2019, this resolution will be addressed again for the third time. If this resolution passes the delegate assembly, then the IASB will work to support and advocate for legislation which provides local school boards the option of developing safety plans which may include administrators, faculty, and teachers to be trained and licensed to carry a firearm in school while students are present.

Illinois currently prohibits the knowing possession or carrying of any firearm, stun gun, or taser on or about the person in any public or private elementary or secondary school, on the person or in a vehicle on the real property of any school, in any conveyance owned, leased or contracted by a school to transport students to or from school or a school related activity, or on the person in a vehicle or any public way within 1,000 feet of the real property comprising a school. There are some exceptions, including law enforcement and school security officers. This law would have to be changed if this resolution is passed. The IASB would work with legislators to get these changes passed for the entire state of Illinois.

There are many good ideas on plans to protect our students while they are in school. In February of 2019, there was a collaboration between Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. Their plan includes the following suggestions:

- Pass Red Flag Laws
- Encourage responsible firearm storage
- Raise the age to purchase semiautomatic guns
- Require background checks on all gun sales
- Create Threat Assessment programs in schools
- Use expert-endorsed school safety upgrades
- Initiate effective emergency planning
- Create safe and equitable schools

These solutions work together to help create safe schools and address violence before it happens. The report also says that “Allowing teachers to carry guns in schools increases the risks to children and it is unrealistic to believe a teacher would be able to protect their students, neutralize a shooter, and not be a risk to themselves and to their students.”

A survey in March of 2018 by Gallup finds that 73% of U.S. educators said they oppose the idea of arming teachers in schools. More than 80% said they would not train to carry a firearm if their school presents the option. You can view the article at: News.gallup.com/poll229808/teaches-oppose-carrying-guns-schools.aspx

Read more on the following websites:
Illinois Gun Violence Prevention Coalition: https://ilgvp.com
Everytown for Gun Safety: https://everytown.org
League of Women Voters of Illinois: www.lwvil.org
The PEW Research Center conducted a survey regarding how people view teachers carrying a gun in school. The study was done in April of 2018 and asked students and parents how they felt about measures to keep our schools safe. 51% to 64% of the students were worried about more violence at their school as were 64% - 82% (varies with income) of their parents. The students felt addressing mental illness, banning assault weapons and metal detectors in schools were the best ideas. Only 39% felt teachers with guns were a good idea. Many students do not feel comfortable at school and some are avoiding hallways, cafeterias, open spaces and skipping school on a regular basis.

You can view the survey here:

[pewresearch.org/fact-tank-/2018/04/18/a-majority-of-u-s-teens-fear-a-shooting-could-happen-at-their-schools-and-most-parents-share-their-concern.]

*According to research published in the American Journal of Public Health*, there is no empirical evidence that arming teachers would deter gun violence in school settings. Further, there are many questions which would need to be addressed:

- What would be the liability to the school district if a gun is fired accidentally and harms a student?
- Would a teacher be able to shoot her own student or a former student if needed?
- How would schools afford adequate training for their teachers?

Keep in mind that police professionals receive 840 hours of basic training and are required to receive 168 hours of training on weapons, self defense, and the use of force, and still hit their target only 20% of the time. In the states which already permit guns in classrooms, there is no uniform policy on required minimum training.

[https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304464]