



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 18, 2014

## Wyoming Lawmakers Vote to Let School Staff Carry Guns

While some have pointed to tragedies such as that of Sandy Hook and Aurora as reasons to disarm the populace, others recognize those moments as further reason to honor the Second Amendment. That is why lawmakers in the Wyoming Legislature voted 54 to 6 on February 13 to advance a bill that would permit individual school districts “to allow teachers and other school workers” with concealed carry permits to bring their guns on campus.



Sponsored by Representative John Eklund (R-Cheyenne), the bill would repeal a law that currently requires public K-12 schools to remain “gun-free zones.” It also requires any school employees who wish to carry a firearm on school property to complete 40 hours of firearm training.

Eklund asserts that allowing school staff to have weapons will deter criminal activity. “I believe that it might be a deterrent for a terrorist or criminal to break into a school or harm our kids. It might be a deterrent to know that there might be guns waiting on the other side of the wall.”

He said that the bill would be particularly useful for school districts in areas with limited local law enforcement. “Presently, there are communities with little enforcement nearby,” Eklund told the *Tribune Eagle*. “Some of them have response times of an hour or longer. The design of the bill is to fill in the gap.”

The bill has the support of the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police and the Wyoming School Boards Association.

According to Lawrence Anderson, who represents the school boards group, says that the bill is a necessary control measure and that districts should have a choice of how they would like to deal with the issue. “We trust all of our education, all of our buildings and everything that goes on to our boards of trustees,” he said. “So I think this is a good step moving forward.”

Rep. Hans Hunt (R-Newcastle) indicated that he voted in favor of the bill for that reason. “I’m a huge proponent of local control, and this couldn’t be done better as far as addressing that issue.”

Not everyone agrees.

Kathy Vetter, president of the Wyoming Education Association, asked lawmakers to reject the bill. She claims that even with firearm training, educators may not be prepared to respond in a dangerous situation. She contends that accidents may also occur. “I don’t want a student to be injured because something happens,” she said. “We’ve had people drop their guns right here in Cheyenne in businesses and people have been hurt.”

There was some dissension amongst Republicans in the Wyoming House of Representatives. Rep. Kermit Brown (R-Laramie), stated after the vote that he believes teachers should have weapons, but that having a concealed carry permit does not represent a sufficient level of training.

The Bizpac Review reported:



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Opponents counter that even people with permits do not necessarily know how to respond to a crisis and allowing guns could lead to accidents in the classroom. Some parents have even threatened to pull their kids out of school if guns are permitted on campus. Then there's the concern that leaving the decision up to local school districts could lead to a patchwork of varying rules that would be hard to follow.

Others are opposed to the bill because they do not feel it goes far enough in protecting Second Amendment rights.

Rep. Kendell Kroeker, an Evansville Republican, also spoke against the bill. He is cosponsoring another bill that would allow anyone who owns a weapon, not simply school employees, to bring their weapons onto school and college campuses.

Wyoming Gun Owners, a pro-gun advocacy group, labeled Eklund's bill a poorly drafted "counterfeit gun bill." They asserted it does not sufficiently honor the Second Amendment.

Cheyenne resident Anthony Bouchard argues, "I don't think we need a knee-jerk policy to fix something that we could really sit down and get fixed." Instead, the current proposal creates a "patchwork" of varying rules that make it difficult to travel from one district to another. Bouchard believes instead that the state should adopt a unified state-wide gun policy. He proposes that Wyoming model its policy after Utah, where the law states that it's a right for qualified concealed-carry permit holders to have guns on school grounds.

Laws across the country vary on guns in the classroom.

*USA Today* wrote:

Hawaii does not regulate guns in schools, and New Hampshire bans only students from possessing a firearm on school grounds, according to the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, a nonprofit advocacy group.

This year, legislators in Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas passed laws that authorize at least one school employee to carry a weapon on campus, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Some of the statutes revised existing laws.

Lawmakers at the federal level have also advocated for school employees to have weapons. Kentucky Senator Rand Paul told a crowd of students at the University of Kentucky early last year that the Sandy Hook massacre could have been prevented had school employees had firearms. "The only thing that probably could have prevented that shooting would have been if the principal had a gun in his desk or if the teacher had a gun at his desk," Paul said on March 27, according to WDKY.

He later reiterated that assertion to Eric Bolling, during an appearance on Sean Hannity's Fox News program on March 28.

"In fact, the only thing that would have changed the outcome, potentially changed the outcome, is something that so many people don't want to hear, and that's self-defense," Paul said on Fox. "That if someone there had had a concealed carry, if someone had been armed, they might have had a fighting chance. They might not have saved everybody, but they might have been able to save some of those."

Similar sentiments have been articulated by former Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, Texas Governor Rick Perry, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, and former Education Secretary Bill Bennett.

A January Gallup Poll reveals that more Americans are opposed to U.S. gun laws and stricter gun



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policies. Fifty-five percent of Americans are dissatisfied with U.S. gun laws, while 40 percent support them.



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