



Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

THEY'LL BE PACKING

Arming school employees PA Senate Bill 383

Calling it a response to the times and out of concern for school safety, a majority of state senators on Wednesday approved legislation that would give school districts the option of developing a policy to allow trained school personnel to carry firearms on school premises. The measure, approved by a 28-22 vote, now goes to the House for consideration, which is not expected to consider it until after the summer break.

Senate Co-Sponsorship Memoranda Session of 2017 - 2018 Regular Session

From: Senator Donald C. White
To: All Senate members
Subject: School Safety Options

In the aftermath of a number of tragic school shootings, the debate continues across the country on how we can better protect our children. While most of this discussion surrounds whether or not more gun control measures are needed, I believe we must look at all options when it comes to improving the safety and security of our children, teachers and school staff. I plan to re-introduce legislation (Senate 416 from last session) to clarify the authority school boards have to allow certain school employees to carry firearms on school property to further enhance security measures. The PA Crimes Code is unclear on the possession of a weapon at school, which includes a "firearm, shotgun or rifle." Under this section there is a defense for a weapon that is "possessed and used in conjunction with a lawful supervised school activity or course or is possessed for other lawful purpose."

According to the Department of Education, the scope of law, specifically in regard to "other lawful purpose" is "unclear and unsettled, especially as it relates to school employees and parents (or citizens) possessing a weapon on school property." A letter from Secretary Rivera is attached which further outlines the department's analysis of the statute. Also attached is a letter from the Indiana County District Attorney who interprets the law to include the act of protecting school students as an "other lawful purpose" or "lawful supervised school activity." As such, he

believes school boards already have the authority to permit their employees to carry firearms on school property. I plan to introduce legislation to clear up the uncertainty in the law and establish a framework to serve as guidance for school districts. My bill would allow school personnel to have access to firearms in school safety zones if they receive authorization from the school board of directors, are licensed to carry a concealed firearm and have met certain training requirements in the use and handling of firearms (as outlined in my proposal). This legislation will not mandate a school's participation, but will give school boards the ability to establish policy and put in place protocols needed to enable personnel to exercise their ability to access a firearm on designated school property.

As we weigh our options, I believe we need to consider providing school employees with more choices than just locking a door, hiding in a closet or diving in front of bullets to protect students. With the legal authority, licensing and proper training, I believe allowing school administrators, teachers or other staff to carry firearms on the school premises is an option worth exploring. This bill will provide another option for schools—especially those in rural areas—by providing a quick response to school shootings and improving the safety and security of our children, teachers and school staff.