

Please OPPOSE Resolution # 3 School Safety Grant Program



Are School Resource Officers Effective? Fact Sheet # 2 - 2019

Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Illinois October, 2019

Do School Resource Officers need More Training on Working With Students in Our Schools?

On November 23, 2019, the Illinois Association of School Boards will be presenting Resolution # 3 to school board members from across Illinois. The resolution would create and fund a school safety grant to help assist school districts in the hiring of School Resource officers or school security personnel for the protection of students and staff. The school resource officers would be authorized to carry a firearm providing training is received, the same as police officers.

This means school districts would find it easier to hire security officers and pay their salaries. It is also expected to help in rural areas who will wait for much longer times for help to arrive.

There is some evidence however that these officers are not making the school environment safer for our students. A study done by the US Dept. of Justice/FBI “*A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the US between 2000 - 2013*” found that most incidents ended between 2 and 5 minutes, with the majority around 3 minutes. They also said that even when law enforcement was present or able to respond within minutes, civilians often had to make life and death decisions.

Another study done by U.S. News in January of 2015 called “*School Resource Officers: Safety Priority or Part of the Problem*”, says that these officers are not proven to be effective and proper training with students is critical.

Inconsistent training and lack of clear standards often allows the school resource officers to give students harsh punishment for classroom misbehavior. The officers often treat students like adult offenders using tasers, stun guns, and body slamming maneuvers. This has resulted in children as young as 5 and 6 being zip tied or hand cuffed and brought to the police station. In one case, a high school student in Texas was tasered when he tried to break up a fight between two other students and wound up in a medical coma for 52 days.

School security officers must be properly trained to work with students and understand the parameters of their job. They need a clear understanding of who will respond to what and what belongs in the school districts staff and what belongs to the security officer.

Mr. Mo Canady, Executive Director of the National Association of School Resource Officers says “It is critical for these officers to be trained to work with children.” He acknowledges that this training can be expensive and is not required in many places.

The National Association of School Psychologists in a 2018 report, “*School Security Measures and their impact on Students*”, said there is no evidence that these security officers are making students safer. Research shows security officers and metal protectors negatively impact student perceptions of safety and even increase fear for some students. NASP



Check these facts on the following websites:

Illinois Gun Violence Prevention Coalition: <https://ilgvp.com>
TRACE: <https://www.thetrace.org/2019/04/guns-armed-guards-school-shootings/>
School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org
League of Women Voters of Illinois: www.lwvill.org

also notes that research suggests the presence of school resource officers has caused concern that schools are criminalizing student behavior by moving problematic students into the juvenile system rather disciplining them at school. While non violent misbehavior in students is not rare, students are now receiving criminal records for doing things that have received school discipline in the past. Is this the right path to keep students safe?

The FBI report noted that “the analysis showed that lethal force from police and bystanders has brought an end to the incident in less than one-third of the active shootings, but not usually in schools.” Another report from TRACE, in April of 2019, “Gunmen often target schools with armed guards. In 2018, this happened in Kentucky, Florida, Maryland and Texas.” Ad to those points that Louis Klarevas, a professor from the University of Massachusetts analyzed 111 shootings between 1996 and 2015 in his book *Rampage Nation* and found only 18 took place in areas where firearms are banned.

This gives us pause when we hear the argument that more guns in schools make people safer and would deter a shooter.

Perhaps a focus on creating a uniform and proper training model will help bring a safer environment for everyone. A clear understanding of what is expected from the officers , and what is not, would help. Currently the situation has not been better for all of our children as they enter the doors of their school. They spend a lot of time in school. We need to keep them safe and to respect they are not full grown adults. You can view the various reports of things that have happened with guns in the schools on the Giffords web site. The link is: giffords.org/2019/08/every-incident-of-mishandled-guns-in-schools-blog.

After all, we are teaching the next generation to be prepared for the future. They will be in charge and they will be making our laws and adding to our history. Their experiences now and as they continue to grow will form their view of society. It is our job now to make sure they have a safe environment that does not place them in danger and does not challenge their freedom to be a student. Let's take another look at school resource officers and not pass a hasty plan to get more until they are ready and well trained.



We are asking you to **OPPOSE** this resolution and to ask your local school board members to **OPPOSE** it at the IASB conference.

Please plan to attend a board meeting, or call your local school and ask to speak to the superintendent. Ask him or her to share this fact sheet with all board members.

Also ask the superintendent to get back to you as soon as the district takes a position on Resolution # 3 to let you know what that position is going to be.

We suggest that you find others in your school district to join you in this effort. Attending the board meeting would be the best step. You can check the school web site to see when the next meeting will be held and where. You can do that by Googling the district.

Share this with your friends and neighbors. Many people are not aware of what is going on in their child's school. Make sure they know.

PLEASE SHARE THIS FACT SHEET

OPPOSE RESOLUTION #3

Thank you!

League of Women Voters of Illinois Position on Gun Violence Prevention

Gun Violence Prevention

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons.
Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.