

## School Boards in Illinois to again consider Arming Teachers



# Should we Arm our Teachers?

## Fact Sheet - 2019

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

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. Teachers are saying that they will be laser focused on implementing the plan to keep their students safe should a crisis happen in their school.

***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.lwvill.org](http://www.lwvill.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. 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.



▪ Most parents, teachers, and law enforcement oppose arming teachers. Many believe that guns in classrooms could be found and obtained by students. Also, the chance that a gun would go off accidentally and harm a student must be a consideration. What would the liability to the school district be in such a terrible accident? Would a teacher be able to shoot her own student, or a former student if needed? Keep in mind that trained 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 who already have guns in their classrooms, there is no uniform policy on required minimum training. How will schools afford adequate training for their teachers.

▪ Teachers know that the chaos created during a shooting makes it hard for the police to know immediately who the shooter is. Teachers wielding a gun may get shot before they have a chance to explain who they are. Or they could shoot a student or another staff member during the confusion. The majority of our teachers do not want the responsibility of carrying a gun in their classrooms. They see their job as one of nurturing students and guiding them to the knowledge they will need to take them into the world. Surveys tell us they won't sign up for this training and will give serious thought to working in such an environment. What impact will that have on our Illinois schools during a serious teacher shortage? And how will that impact future teachers who might just change their mind about careers in education.

### In Review



"Teachers do not want to carry a gun nor do they want to work in a building where others than police carry. I hope IASB would work on getting more funds to provide for more mental health professionals in schools."

.....Mark Bailey, 203 Teacher Assoc.  
Naperville School Dist. 203  
Board Meeting 10/15/18

"When police arrive, how do they know who is the shooter and who are the armed teachers? In the heat of the crisis mistakes happen. Anyone with a gun not wearing a uniform would be suspect."

Retired Teacher  
Southwest Suburbs

"The most dangerous idea is that arming teachers is an effective solution to an active shooter incident. AFT, NEA, and Everytown strongly urge that schools reject attempts to arm teachers and instead focus on proven solutions that intervene to prevent shootings."

Everytown, IEA & IFT  
survey

[Check out #ArmMeWith on twitter](#)

Compiled by a League of Women Voters member who served 25 years on a suburban Illinois school board

## 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.