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Hanover School District Votes to Bring Guns into Classrooms

Last night while many in the nation remembered the lives of 20 first graders and six educators killed in Newtown, Connecticut four years ago, the Hanover school district (El Paso County) instead voted to introduce guns into their classrooms.

Colorado statutes (18-12-105.5 and 18-12-214) prohibit firearms in the classroom, but do allow for security personnel to be armed. Hanover is choosing to bend that waiver by reclassifying some teachers and staff as security personnel. The proposal was made in June by school board member Michael Lawson, himself an NRA firearms instructor.

Lawson raised concerns about marijuana grow operations and the presence of drug cartel activity in the area. School board president Mark McPherson noted there was only one grow operation within 5 miles and cartel discussions were just rumors. A survey indicated that parents and personnel were strongly divided on the issue.

The school board was also split, as the vote was 3-2, with McPherson, a retired Army officer among the dissenters. McPherson said "We are authorizing teachers to pull a weapon and kill a human being. I cannot support that."

Kenneth S. Trump, president of the National School Safety and Security Services, a school safety consulting firm, has said that "School districts considering arming teachers and school staff with guns would take on significant responsibility and potential liabilities that I firmly believe are beyond the expertise, knowledge-base, experience, and professional capabilities of most school boards and administrators."

Trump also stated that "Suggesting that by providing teachers, principals, custodians, or other school staff with 8, 16, 40, or even 60 hours of firearms training on firing, handling, and holstering a gun somehow makes a non-law enforcement officer suddenly qualified to provide public safety services is an insult to our highly-trained police professionals and a high-risk to the safety of students, teachers and other school staff." He posed a significant list of questions as to policies, procedures, liability, inspections, training, risks, weaponry, misplaced weaponry, and insurance, most of which do not appear to have been addressed by the Hanover school board.

“Teachers are in the classroom to teach, their full attention and consideration should be towards educating their students,” said Eileen McCarron of Colorado Ceasefire and a retired educator. “Throughout the day, teachers are in close proximity to students,” she continued, “in addition to accidents we are placing loaded weapons inches from individuals who have far less restraint than adults. The idea of having teachers carrying loaded guns in the classroom is ludicrous.”

It is Ceasefire’s opinion that principals are hired to administer schools, and teachers are hired to educate in the subjects of their expertise. Asking staff to continue in their myriad of educational responsibilities while also being armed and vigilant can have lethal and regrettable consequences. We believe the Hanover school district should reconsider its decision.

Colorado Ceasefire, an all-volunteer statewide organization, has been fighting for freedom from gun violence since 2000. Ceasefire initiated and was instrumental in the enactment of the 2013 Colorado firearms laws, which included universal background checks, a high capacity magazine ban, and domestic violence firearms relinquishment.

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