



Policy Memo 1: A New Approach to School Safety

Can a nation be truly healthy when it allows its children to be slaughtered helplessly in their schools? If children are dying, our democracy is failing us. The research has been done, the framework of a solution is known, but our politicians lack the political will to get the job done.

For years I have worked on domestic security issues for Business Executives for National Security, studying this issue carefully while serving as a Task Force Member on Domestic Security. My proposal, A New Approach to School Safety, is based on that experience. A link to the [BENS Report on Domestic Security](#) can be found at the end of this policy memo.

Of course, school safety begins with the toughest gun control laws imaginable. That is a given. However, I believe school safety requires a far more ambitious national effort. We need a national plan for school security, and here is my proposed approach.

- 1 School Safety is a National Issue.** First, school safety is not a local issue, it is a national security issue. When our children are at risk, the future of our nation is at risk. And because school safety is a national security risk, we need to integrate school safety into a national plan.

- 2 Guns Do Kill.** Certainly – and it must be said -- effective gun control laws are an essential part of the solution. There can be no excuse for weapons of war to be anywhere near a public school, if in public at all. Those who would seek to harm our children, and hence the future of our nation, will find other weapons despite our best efforts. That is why we must adopt a comprehensive plan to protect our children now.
- 3 National Standards for School Safety Training.** Local first responders will always be the front line in school safety, but we cannot rely on local resources alone to properly finance and facilitate the training of public safety officers. We should establish a *national school safety training academy and program*, modeled after the FBI's Quantico training Academy, so that local police and public safety officers can receive a national standard of training that is consistent between city and rural districts, rich and poor districts, and tailored to the unique circumstances that school shootings present. Regional academies based on this program will ensure ongoing training out in the field, a consistency of training within the region, and will also create opportunities for the development of regional relationships that will serve everyone well when police in nearby towns come to each other's support. This will ensure that every American child receives a consistent and high standard of safety. Equally important as proper training on safety, is proper training on to ensure school officials are training to properly identify and support students in crisis.
- 4 Include School Safety in the National Fusion Center System with an emphasis on the sharing of critical and timely information.** At the same time, we need to integrate our school districts more effectively into our nation's growing domestic security framework. Across the nation there are now nearly 80 state Fusion Centers, funded in part by Federal and State resources, established to bring together law enforcement officials and intelligence experts from the national, state, local and tribal communities. Their objective is to promote information sharing to reduce the risks of threats such as terrorism and criminal activities, and their capabilities could have been crucial to preventing a tragedy like Parkland. But while they could, they have not played a role in school security and that is just

tragic. Given what we know about the failure to share information at both the federal and state levels in this recent school shooting -- the FBI's failure to share its tip information with Florida state and local police and the failure of Florida's Department of Children and 911 systems to share their information -- state fusion centers need to incorporate school safety into their design and function.

- 5 Protect, but with Technology, Not Moats.** We don't have to turn schools into fortresses since technology can provide more discreet security. All schools should be protected with the newest security technology for surveillance, screening and alert. But local school districts do not have the funds for this type of investment, and so this effort requires the immediate financial help of the Federal government acting through the Department of Homeland Security. What more essential function can there be for the federal government than to protect the nation's children?

My long-term involvement in national security issues gives me valuable perspective on confronting this critical issue. Only a new, smart and comprehensive approach to school safety will keep our children safe, and our nation's future, bright. Nothing could be more important.

Note that while I am for a comprehensive national plan, I want to make certain my tough stance on gun controls is properly understood and my view that campaign finance reform is a critical ingredient in arriving at common sense, actionable solutions:

Additional Points:

- 1** We need the most modern and strict gun control laws possible. Tough background checks must include mental health screening. We need to severely restrict, if not eliminate, the sale of automatic weapons. We need to stop the sale of military grade weapons technology, closing all the loopholes that make gunshows a gathering place for violent extremists and those who seek to harm our children.

- 2 We need to fight the influence of the NRA. PAC money has poisoned our democracy and I am fighting for a ban on all PAC contributions to politicians. Special interest PAC money gives groups like the NRA too much influence in our government. If we let special interest groups like the NRA control Congress through the power of money, we will not be able to keep our children safe.

BENS Report on Domestic Security:

[https://www.bens.org/file/Domestic-Security-Report_Feb2015.p
df](https://www.bens.org/file/Domestic-Security-Report_Feb2015.pdf)