

STAFF EDITORIAL

In the aftermath of mass school shootings across the country, debates have erupted over the idea of

ARMING TEACHERS



PHOTO BY C. MAULITSEY

After any school shooting, responses tend to follow a routine. First, lawmakers and community leaders offer thoughts and prayers. Second, they propose various arguments for or against gun control, including discussions on Second Amendment rights, mental

health, and domestic terrorism. Finally, the idea of arming educators is brought up.

These discussions rarely address the real-world logistics of actually arming teachers. Would teachers agree to be armed? Will all teachers have a gun? Where will the gun be stored? Will it be locked? Will it be loaded? If not, where will the ammunition be kept? Will it be in a separate,

secure location?

These are some of the questions that surround this controversy. US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos thinks the best solution is to let schools use federal money to arm teachers. DeVos and officials at the Department of Education are considering using Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, part of the Every Student Succeeds Act

March for Our Lives was a gun violence protest held in Greenville, SC on March 24, 2018. Over 2,000 people were in attendance.

(ESSA), a federal education law passed in 2015. These grants are intended to be used for student health and wellness purposes, including protection for disadvantaged students and those with special needs.

District Seven Superintendent Russell Booker has a different opinion than DeVos on the matter.

“I am not in support of arming teachers and school staff,” he said. “I fully support the utilization of trained law enforcement officers (school resource officers) in our schools.”

In “The Economics of Arming American Schools” from “The Washington Post,” estimates suggest that the costs of arming teachers would be enormous. President Trump arbitrarily suggested arming 20 percent of teachers. There are 3.1 million public school teachers in the United States. If 20 percent of America’s teachers had a \$100 training session and a \$500 Glock G17 - the world’s most popular pistol - the total cost would be approximately \$430.8 million. This cost doesn’t account for insurance, whether or not the training program is annual, or the psychological cost of arming teachers. It’s also important to note the undocumented extent to which American school teachers purchase school supplies with their own personal funds.

Besides the expense of the plan, there are numerous practical concerns that could make

schools less safe if there are guns in the classroom. While teachers would be trained before having a gun in the classroom, human error still has to be accounted for.

According to Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott in the article “Can teachers with guns protect students? SC sounds off on school safety” from “The State,” responding in a shooting situation is difficult even with the amount of training that officers undergo.

“...responding to [a] shooting situation, where you could be fired upon, is very different than shooting paper targets on a pistol range,” Lott said. “It’s even a challenge for the officers trained to do it.”

In the event of a school shooting, law enforcement officers called to the scene are going to take down any person holding a gun. How are the officers supposed to tell whether the person is an armed teacher or a shooter if teachers don’t have a distinguishable uniform?

Rather than arming teachers, ESSA grant funds could be used for their intended purposes and go towards funding mental health intervention programs for troubled students or to help people cope with side effects of experiencing a shooting, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety.

Madison Shaw (10) supports the idea of using the grants to improve health and wellness programs in schools.

“I think it is a better idea to improve mental health and wellness than buy guns for teachers because it is more beneficial to the students,” Shaw said. □