

PREVENTING MASS SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

There are plenty of recommendations on how to prevent mass school shootings, from many well-intentioned individuals. In my opinion the best ideas have come from Florida Governor Rick Scott. At the cornerstone of his program is the mandatory presence of law enforcement officers—either sworn deputies or police officers—in every public school. In soccer and hockey, you strategize and practice to keep an opponent from getting a shot at the goal, but someone will invariably get thru and take a shot at the goal; thus, the goalie. Same for schools. I suggest this is, by far, the best way to prevent these horrible mass killings. All other suggestions/methods may well be helpful, but for me, I want a goalie in schools. And that goalie needs to be a sworn sheriff's deputy or a fully trained, certified police officer.

Some other proposals ideas are way off the mark, e.g., banning the sales of “assault” rifles. Yes, an AR-15 (which is not an assault rifle; so labeled by anti-gun lobby to stir emotions) was used in the last shooting. But, for those of us with a longer memory, the weapon(s) used in the deadliest school shooting—Virginia Tech, with 32 killed—were two handguns. Of the 156 mass shootings since 2009, a semi-automatic rifle was used in 7% of the events. In the case of shootings by men 21 and younger, 1.3% were committed with semi-automatic rifles. A handgun is the most common weapon used. And even if the sale of semi-automatic rifles was banned, there are hundreds of them in existence. A black market would be created, fed by importation of more of these. Drop this idea and focus on useful methods.

Looking at mental health type proposals, a lot of issues will have to be addressed; for example, is someone with obsessive compulsive disorder-- who shows no aggressive, violent tendencies-- a threat ? Absolutely we need to disarm anyone who has shown violent tendencies, or even remotely indicated they may commit violence. But, even if disarmed, they may be able to borrow or steal a weapon. But the proposals I've seen to date are on the mark reference disarming those showing violent, homicidal tendencies. That's a no brainer.

Banning all firearms is so ludicrous it's hardly worth discussing. Folks, there are over 300,000,000 firearms in the U.S. If they were to magically become illegal, do you think those with evil intent are going to turn over their weapons? And you think law abiding citizens are going to leave themselves defenseless.

Many of these proposals are sound and will assist in this effort, e.g., bullet-proof doors, remote lockdown capability, maybe even smoke dispensers. But nothing, in my experience will deter or stop a determined gunman other than another determined gunman. Proffering advice such as improving parents in good in itself; but hardly an answer to this issue. Stating that putting armed law enforcement officers in schools will not be beneficial is so wrong we needn't spend time on it. Ask anyone who has been responsible for defending a building or a large complex from an armed threat. The goal is what Governor Scott said he would establish: Put a trained law enforcement officer in every school. It is not guaranteed to stop a determined, smart shooter, but it's by far, the best chance we have.

(P.S.: The US Army defines an assault rifle as a selective fire weapon chambered for a cartridge of intermediate power. If applied to any semi-automatic firearm regardless of its cosmetic similarity to a true assault rifle, the term is incorrect).

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