

2.23 Gun Violence Prevention and Safety – Students and School Staff

Resolution passed 2019; amended 2020; amended 2022

Whereas, one of the purposes of Washington State PTA is to advocate for laws that further the education, physical and mental health, welfare, and safety of children and youth; and

Whereas, firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens nationally, with nearly 1,600 children and teens dying by gun homicide every year; and over 950 children and teens dying of suicide by gun every year; and the rate of firearm suicide is up by 61 percent in the past 10 years; and

Whereas, children exposed to gun violence, crime and abuse are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; suffer from depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder; fail or have difficulties in school and engage in criminal activity; and

Whereas, due to its tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of our youth, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control has declared gun violence a public health problem which must be dealt with using many multidisciplinary strategies and approaches; and

Whereas, recent research strongly supports that safe storage of firearms reduces the risk of suicide, domestic violence homicide, and unintentional injury; and

Whereas, the lethality, and severity of injury to the wounded is greatly increased by the shooters' use of semi-automatic assault weapons, including both pistols and rifles; and

Whereas, possession of firearms on school premises is not permitted by law, except by persons engaged in military, law enforcement, or school district security activities under the direction of a school administrator; and some school districts employ commissioned law enforcement as school resource officers (SROs) or other armed school security personnel; and

Whereas, if a school district chooses to have an SRO program, the school district must confirm that every SRO has received specified training and engage in specific community outreach and accountability actions specified in RCW 28A.320.124.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA encourages its local PTAs, councils, and members, as well as its fellow state PTAs, to support and advocate for legislation and policies that aim to prevent gun violence and reduce youth suicide; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA advocates for legislation and policies that reduce dangerous gun access, including:

- enforce all existing gun violence prevention laws
- strictly regulate civilian ownership of firearms and non-sporting ammunition, including high-capacity magazines holding more than 10 rounds

- restrict dangerous access to all firearms, especially by children and by people with a history of violence including, but not limited to, domestic abusers, violent criminals, and/or people with histories showing a pattern of threatening behavior
- require the best available background checks on all firearm sales
- mandate safety training for firearms ownership
- hold legally accountable those corporations, businesses, and individuals who facilitate dangerous access to firearms
- oppose the defensive arming of teachers and school staff, other than:
 - o properly trained and uniformed school resource officers (SROs)
 - o properly trained persons performing school security activities under the direction of a school administrator with equivalent training and community accountability as SROs; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils advocate for legislation and policies that aim to reduce the likelihood, lethality, and trauma of school shootings, including:

- Prohibitions on the sale or transfer of military-style assault weapons
- Family engagement in, and regular communication about school safety policies and procedures
- Robust education programs to teach students, families, caregivers, and community members about gun safety and violence prevention.