



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 20, 2012

Texas Bill Would Assign Certain Teachers as Armed Marshals in Schools

In the wake of last Friday's horrific shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, many Americans are asking how such a traumatic ordeal could have been avoided. Texas state representative-elect Jason Villalba [believes](#) that armed faculty members will make the schools safer, and he will file legislation in the Lone Star State to allow designated teachers to be armed.



Villalba was elected to House District 114 in November. With two daughters in the Dallas Independent School District, he is particularly interested in school safety.

His Protection of Texas Children Act would allow schools to designate members of their faculty as "school marshals" — one armed individual for every 400 students. In a statement, Villalba explained that the marshals could "use lethal force upon the occurrence of an attack in the classroom or elsewhere on campus." These designated individuals would be existing faculty members with concealed handgun licenses, who would provide their own firearms and undergo additional firearms training. Villalba's bill states that only the principal, law enforcement, and district administrators would know the identity of the school marshals.

A press release for the legislation explains:

The Protection of Texas Children Act would provide for an exception to the restrictions on firearms on the premises of Texas public schools and set forth a systematic training regimen, developed in conjunction with law enforcement officials and the Department of Public Safety, for those who would serve as civilian school marshals. Training would be offered by either private licensees (similar to the entities that provide CHL [Concealed Handgun License] training) or by licensed law enforcement officers. The fees and expenses associated with training the school marshal will be paid by the marshal applicant or, at its option, by the ISD [Independent School District]. Funding for training would not be required to be paid by the state. School marshals will be required to maintain and carry school marshal certification at all times that such marshal is serving in such capacity.

According to Villalba, his legislation would put school safety back in the hands of the schools. He told the *Dallas Morning News*,

Unfortunately, law enforcement personnel cannot be everywhere at all times. We need to talk very frankly about how we can protect our children if the unthinkable should occur. By providing our schools with the option to have a trained school marshal to act as the last line of defense, we are empowering ISDs with the ability to protect our children and faculty against those who would seek to destroy human life.

As [noted](#) by the *Texas Tribune*, Villalba's is just one of several proposals out of Texas in response to Friday's tragedy in Connecticut:



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On Monday, Attorney General [Greg Abbott](#) said 78 Texas school districts do not meet state-mandated safety standards to protect students. Land Commissioner [Jerry Patterson](#) and U.S. Rep. [Louie Gohmert](#), R-Tyler, have both [said publicly](#) that the events in Connecticut could have been avoided if school officials had been armed. And at an event in Tarrant County on Monday night, Gov. [Rick Perry suggested](#) that local control should rule — and school districts should decide for themselves whether to allow their employees to carry firearms.

Some Texas legislators are hopeful that efforts to allow concealed weapons in college buildings will be revived once again in the wake of Friday's shooting. "There's very serious concern right now about the safety of our schools, and I think we'll have a very serious discussion about how to improve it, as we should," said veteran state Sen. John Whitmire, chairman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, where the campus-carry bill passed two years ago even though it later failed to become state law.

"I'd be surprised if the campus-carry bill doesn't come up again, and it may pass. To say that [concealed handgun license] holders increase the likelihood of violence on college campuses is nuts," Whitmire continued. "Right now, it's only the bad guys who have guns on campuses — and there's some sentiment that if someone would have had a gun, they could have put a stop to the tragedy."

Bills such as Villalba's are likely to be well-received by some school administrators.

David Thewatt, for example, a district superintendent in the Dallas area, told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that he did not want his school safety procedures to involve a plan wherein staff and students "lock yourself in your closet and hope that an intruder won't hurt you."

DeEtta Culbertson, a spokeswoman for the Texas Education Agency, indicates that Texas does not have a policy on concealed weapons in school.

Texas law currently allows school districts to "grant written permission for employees to carry firearms on campus." [notes Statesman.com](#). "Harrold Independent School District, a district with roughly 100 students along the Texas-Oklahoma border, allows teachers to carry concealed handguns under a so-called 'Guardian Plan' established in the wake of the 2007 shooting massacre at Virginia Tech University."



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