



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 11, 2013

South Dakota Adopts Law Allowing Armed Teachers at School

In what activists called a victory for common-sense gun control reform, South Dakota became the first state since the massacre in a Newtown “[gun-free zone](#)” to adopt a law explicitly allowing trained teachers to carry weapons at school. Experts and supporters said the new law will help protect children and school staff in the state from potential mass-murderers. Gun rights activists, meanwhile, hope the measure signals a trend toward reasonable laws, as opposed to the wild assaults on the Second Amendment [being sought by Obama](#) and his allies.



South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard, a Republican, signed the bill into law on March 8, earning widespread praise from across the country. While the governor said he did not think many schools would take advantage of the option to allow specially trained teachers or volunteers to be armed, he was quoted in media reports saying it was important that the choice be available. The law will go into effect July 1 of this year.

“I think it does provide the same safety precautions that a citizen expects when a law enforcement officer enters onto a premises,” Gov. Daugaard [told](#) the *New York Times*, referring to the myriad safeguards in the new law aimed at ensuring proper training for armed teachers and other personnel. The governor also said that the new measures were more restrictive than those in other states that already allow guns in schools.

The South Dakota law [states](#): “Any school board may create, establish, and supervise the arming of school employees, hired security personnel, or volunteers in such manner and according to such protocols as the board may believe to be most likely to secure or enhance the deterrence of physical threat and defense of the school, its students, its staff, and members of the public on the school premises against violent attack.” Personnel authorized to carry firearms on campus are to be known as “school sentinels,” according to the legislation.

The new law, which was backed by the National Rifle Association and other gun-rights groups, allows school districts and local law enforcement decide whether to have armed “sentinels” on school property to protect students. The measure also specifically ensures that no teacher or staff member can be required to carry a gun, and that school boards do not have to adopt the program if they choose not to. Education officials expressed mixed reactions, with some supporting the law and others speaking out against it.

Republican State Rep. Scott Craig, a pastor who sponsored the legislation in the South Dakota House of Representatives, [told](#) the *New York Times* he hoped the measure would shift the nationwide debate surrounding school safety. “Given the national attention to safety in schools, specifically in response to



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tragedies like in Connecticut, this is huge,” Rep. Craig said, adding that, hopefully, “dominoes will start to fall, people will see it’s reasonable, it’s safer than they think, it’s proactive and it’s preventive.”

Riding a tidal wave of support after the Newtown tragedy — some two dozen states have introduced similar legislation since the massacre — South Dakota lawmakers were able to overcome some minor opposition to the plan. Analysts and experts across the country have been [pointing out that so-called “gun-free zones” are really just “magnets for mass-shooters,”](#) calling on policymakers at all levels to adopt common-sense, constitutional plans to ensure that children are not defenseless targets at schools.

After the shooting in Connecticut, proponents of safer schools argued that banks, government officials, celebrities, and other potential targets are all protected by guns and armed personnel. School children throughout most of America, meanwhile — President Obama’s daughters not included, of course — are typically “protected” by signs reading “gun-free zone.” As countless commentators have pointed out, would-be mass-murderers are unlikely to be deterred by “gun-free zone” restrictions.

During debate in South Dakota, proponents of the law repeatedly emphasized that no school district would be forced to implement a sentinel program, and that no teacher could be forced to carry a weapon without their consent. The certification training needed to become a “sentinel” is reportedly rigorous as well, helping to ease fears among well-intentioned anti-gun forces. Both houses of the legislature [passed the bill overwhelmingly](#).

“There’s certainly not a one-size-fits-all approach to keeping our children safe in schools,” said spokesman Andrew Arulanandam with the NRA, which supported the bill and lobbied for it in the state legislature. “It’s incumbent upon state and local governments to formulate and implement a plan to keep students safe.”

Of course, South Dakota is not the first state to allow armed teachers. For over a decade, Utah, for example, has allowed school staff to keep and bear arms in case the need should ever arise. Some school districts in Texas also allow armed teachers at school, and Gov. Rick Perry recently called for arming more during a Tea Party forum.

In fact, according to a [review of state laws](#) by NBC News, 18 states already allow adults to carry a loaded weapon on school property, generally provided they have written permission. Some states like Hawaii and New Hampshire, meanwhile, have no laws prohibiting properly permitted individuals from carrying firearms on campus. Still, according to the *Times*, South Dakota is believed to be the first state with a law specifically authorizing teachers to carry weapons.

At the federal level, activists and liberty-minded lawmakers are also working to repeal the 1990 “Gun Free School Zones Act.” Following the lead of constitutionalist former Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) has re-introduced the “Citizens Protection Act” (H.R.133) in Congress that would end the controversial and unconstitutional federal statute purporting to criminalize possession of firearms on campus under most circumstances.

Rep. Steve Stockman (R-Texas), meanwhile, introduced another bill, known as the “Safe Schools Act” (H.R. 35), which would also repeal the federal “gun-free zone” statute. Lawmakers and proponents of the measures argue that school staff should be able to defend children with deadly force if needed — without fear of prosecution. Critics of the federal infringements point out that not only is the 1990 statute unconstitutional, it makes children and schools easy targets for lunatics, terrorists, and mass-murderers. Unsurprisingly, virtually every mass shooting in recent decades has occurred in a so-called “gun-free zone.”



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As the Obama administration and certain extremist Democrats at the state and federal level continue to wage a relentless assault on the right to keep and bear arms, pro-gun rights forces are fighting back hard. Dozens of bills to [nullify unconstitutional federal restrictions on the Second Amendment](#), for example, have been introduced in states nationwide, with many [including criminal sanctions for federal agents](#). Even [cities and counties are using nullification](#) to stop the attack on gun rights.

A handful of states, however, have gone the other way. In January, for example, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo was able to ram through the so-called “NY SAFE Act,” one of the most extreme assaults on the rights of law-abiding gun owners anywhere in America. The statute purports to require registration of semi-automatic rifles, limit magazine sizes, and much more.

However, the statute is already under tremendous pressure, and more than a few analysts predict it will eventually be defeated. The courts are [demanding that the governor prove its constitutionality](#), promising to enjoin it unless the state makes its case. More lawsuits continue to be filed, and more than a few appear promising to legal experts.

Dozens of counties, meanwhile, have already passed resolutions against the attack on gun rights — the majority, in fact, [according to analysts tracking the anti-NY SAFE Act measures](#). Sheriffs and other law-enforcement officials, who were not exempted from the draconian restrictions, are [speaking out](#) as well, expressing concerns about the constitutionality and wisdom of the bill.

Of course, citizens have also vowed to defy the measure in what has already been dubbed [potentially the largest act of civil disobedience in state history](#). Well over 100 weapons companies, meanwhile, have [pledged to stop doing business with all New York government agencies](#) unless and until the unconstitutional assault is stopped.

With the latest law passed in South Dakota, analysts say it has become clear that the coordinated assault on gun rights launched after the Newtown massacre is beginning to falter. Since the tragedy, as *The New American* [reported](#), teachers have been flocking to get firearms training. Indeed, some commentators have been saying for months that the anti-Second Amendment movement may be on the verge of a crushing defeat that could render it irrelevant for decades to come.

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