



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on April 5, 2013

NRA's National School Shield Program Needs Remediation

The National Rifle Association's National School Shield (NSS) Task Force unveiled its [final report](#) earlier this week, providing the organization's latest response to last December's Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Former Rep. Asa Hutchinson (R-Ark.), who headed the NRA task force, [presented](#) the 225-page report at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on April 2, as senators nearby on Capitol Hill were debating gun control legislation that includes school safety issues. The eight recommendations at the conclusion of the National School Shield report are a mixed bag that will please, confuse, and anger elements of both the pro-gun and anti-gun sectors of America, as well as folks who fall somewhere in between.



The main feature of the NRA program, and the most talked-about, is its proposal “for the professional training of armed personnel in the school environment.” In addition to increasing the number of Security Resource Officers (SROs) — who are sworn law-enforcement officers — already present in many schools, the task force proposes that schools allow qualified school personnel to be armed. To facilitate this proposal, the NRA offers the expertise of its own instructors and training programs to “those who are designated by school officials and qualified by appropriate background investigation, testing and relevant experience.” The training would entail 40-80 hours of instruction and practice for the selected personnel.

Liberal-left media critics and gun control activist groups immediately pounced on the proposal as dangerous, claiming it would merely put more guns in schools, while the solution, as they see it, is to greatly reduce (or eliminate) the number of guns in private hands. On the other side, pro-gun organizations criticized the NRA's plan as too costly, as well as being insufficient to protect students and school personnel. Gun Owners of America and the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms instead prefer that schools allow teachers and school personnel who have state concealed carry permits to be armed on school premises.

“The armed guard approach would be prohibitively expensive,” said Eric Pratt, director of communications at Gun Owners of America GOA in an [interview](#) with Politix.com's Mary Noble. “At any one time there are 135,000 police on duty in the country, and there are about that many schools. That shows you how huge of a deal it would be.”

Estimates by various critics across the political spectrum have put the cost of the additional SROs in all the nation's schools at [\\$6.6 billion or more](#). “Teachers and principals who are authorized by their state to concealed carry should be authorized to concealed carry in school,” says GOA's Eric Pratt. “As far as the [SRO] armed guard approach, it's not possible to have enough of them to cover any school.”



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Dave Workman, spokesman for the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, agrees. “I recall what happened in Pearl, Mississippi (where) an assistant principal ... ran to his car, grabbed a pistol, and stopped a teenage shooter,” he said.

Pratt, Workman, and others point out that the history of shootings at schools and other gun-free zones has proven that seconds matter. Waiting even minutes for police to arrive may mean terrible carnage and the loss of many lives. Gun-free zones become free-kill zones for the murderers. Even Vice President Joe Biden admitted that no amount of gun legislation would prevent another massacre like the one at Sandy Hook. And putting one or two (or even several) armed SROs on duty — even if it can be afforded — may not be as effective as allowing teachers and administrators with concealed carry permits to be armed at school.

The NSS Task Force report falls short of the more ambitious — and dangerous — proposal put forward at a December 21 press conference by Wayne LaPierre, the NRA’s executive vice president and primary public spokesman. LaPierre said:

I call on Congress today to act immediately, to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every school — and to do it now, to make sure that blanket of safety is in place when our children return to school in January.

We pointed out in [“False Solutions to Gun Violence”](#) that NRA proposal was badly flawed on several fronts. We noted:

If adopted, this NRA proposal would vastly expand the federal government’s involvement in both education and law enforcement, in violation of the Constitution, and make state and local governments even more subservient to Washington, D.C., politicians for funding. Our Constitution nowhere authorizes Congress to appropriate funds for police or schools, and for very good reason: Our Founding Fathers recognized an expansion of federal powers to these areas could, and most likely would, facilitate corruption and tyranny.

The NSS Task Force report does not go as far as LaPierre’s call on Congress “to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every school,” but it, nevertheless, is heavily tilted toward reliance on federal agencies for funding and for providing “best practices” guidelines for state and local school safety efforts.

Here is Number 6 of its eight recommendations:

Federal Coordination and Funding. Either through legislation or executive action, a lead agency should be designated to coordinate the federal programs and funding of local school safety efforts. The Department of Homeland Security should be designated as the lead, supported by the Department of Education and Department of Justice.

That same section goes on to say:

While the focus of this report is to create a means of private sector support for school safety, we note that there are numerous grant programs that are not available to schools. It is recommended that the Department of Homeland Security grants should be open for school security programs such as training, risk assessment and security response planning.

The NRA’s National School Shield program is a prime exhibit of how unconstitutional programs initiated by “progressives” eventually are embraced by “conservatives” who have neither an understanding of, nor a firm commitment to, fundamental constitutional principles. The NSS Task Force



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report is replete, for instance, with praise for the federal COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) program, the brainchild of President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno. Originally (and rightly) denounced by Republicans and conservatives as an unconstitutional federal intrusion into local law enforcement, it has gradually been accepted and promoted by Republicans. As federal programs are wont to do, the COPS program soon spawned several more spin-offs: COPS in Schools (CIS), Secure Our Schools (SOS), School Safety Initiative (SSI), and Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS). The NRA seems to be lobbying for all of these federal proliferations in its National School Shield program.

As just one of many examples of the NRA's apparent affinity for the Clinton/Reno COPS programs, NSS Task Force report states:

It should be noted that because of federal budget constraints and shifting priorities, key school safety programs have declined in funding or have been terminated completely. The SOS program and the School Safety Initiative (SSI), which have been primarily funded by congressional earmarks for the last decade, have not received funding in the past few years. The SOS program, which provided more than \$110 million between 2002 and 2011, ended in 2012. The School Safety Initiative, which gave state and local agencies more than \$53 million in grants between 1998 and 2010 for delinquency prevention, community planning and development, and school safety resources, ended in 2011.

It points schools to additional funding from the federal trough:

Other sources of federal funding outside the COPS program include the U.S. Department of Education Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program, and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants.

Liberty-minded Americans should also take note of the National School Shield's heavy reliance on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Education, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and other federal agencies for drawing up its "best practices" recommendations.

This tendency to look to the federal government for all answers to all problems is not surprising considering the makeup of the NSS Task Force. As previously mentioned, the Task Force was chaired by Asa Hutchinson, who has spent most of his adult life in the federal government: U.S. attorney, U.S. congressman, administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and under secretary for border & transportation security at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Most of the other members and consultants for the Task Force have vitas similarly dominated by careers in the federal bureaucracy. An expansive (and expensive) federal government has been good for them, and they have little fear or loathing of trends that continue in that direction.

"Mental Health" — NRA's Wrong Endorsements, Failed Opportunities

Another troubling area in the NSS Task Force report is the apparent support for dramatically expanding school use of Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs) and "threat assessment guidelines" to recognize and address "Pre-Incident Indicators." The NSS report says:

Each school or district should assign a Threat Assessment Group (TAG) whose is responsible for compiling the social, medical and security factors to recognize the cumulative effect of each and assess the totality of risk factors. The TAG is responsible for recommending to the school administrator the final assessment of risk.



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Accordingly, says the report, “it is recommended that the NSS initiate a partnership with other interested national partners.” Who are those partners? Among those mentioned are the College and University Behavioral Intervention Team (CUBIT) and the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA). A perusal of the websites of these two organizations and their models of “threat assessment” by this writer does little to allay concerns that implementation of this proposal could end up being yet another false solution (like gun-free schools and background checks) on which the NRA will later be forced to reverse course. There seems to be plenty of criticism online already aimed at these groups for lack of due process on college campuses where student political speech and actions that heretofore have been deemed acceptable are now designated as threatening, according to CUBIT and NaBITA models.

Coupled with the National School Shield’s repeated deference to “mental health professionals,” this fosters concern that the NRA is prescribing a “solution” that will greatly empower educators who are hostile to the Second Amendment. NRA members might be advised to ask their leadership:

- With militant anti-gun activists in the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, the American Medical Association, and other organizations creating a crescendo of calls for more gun restrictions, is it wise for advocates of the right to keep and bear arms to place our rights in the hands of these “experts”?
- In an atmosphere of extreme political correctness, where six-year-old Mason Jammer is [suspended](#) from elementary school merely for pretending that his hand was a gun and innocently pointing the “barrel” (his finger) at another student — something hundreds of millions of schoolboys (including this writer) have done for generations — is it wise to give so-called medical and mental health “experts” more power to designate playful actions and words of millions of school children as “threatening”?
- With the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security already exposed multiple times for demonizing military veterans, pro-life advocates, Ron Paul supporters, pro-gun advocates and United Nations opponents as “extremists” and potential “terrorists,” is it prudent for the NRA to propose more power for the vilifiers?
- With the National Education Association (NEA) regularly infecting its public-school teachers, administrators, and counselors (three million members) with virulent anti-gun propaganda, will granting them more “mental health” authority advance the protection of the Second Amendment — or the safety of students and staff?

The “mental health” proposals of the NRA’s National School Shield are not only dangerous for the unwarranted authority they would hand to antagonists of gun rights, they are also disappointing in that they fail even to mention one of the most important missing elements in the raging “debate” over gun violence and school safety. We are referring to the elephant hiding under the doily: the promiscuous prescription of dangerous psychotropic drugs to millions of students.

As we have detailed in *The New American* (see [here](#) and [here](#)), the dirty secret that the Obama/Biden/Feinstein/Schumer forces in Washington and their media allies have been hiding is that virtually all of the mass shootings that are being used as pretexts to call for more gun controls can be laid at the feet of “mental health professionals” the NRA and the Obama administration now seek to further empower. From Columbine to Sandy Hook, America has been strewn with violence and mayhem caused by shooters under the influence of dangerous drugs that are prescribed to — and even forced on — millions of young children and adolescents.



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The NRA is wasting its opportunity to shift public attention from the false focus on guns to the proper target: the scandalous and dangerous pushing of prescription drugs by our educational and medical establishments and the pharmaceutical industry. Among its 225 pages, the NSS report might have dedicated at least a few pages to highlighting and challenging the notion that millions of students should be sent to school each day medicated with Ritalin, Adderall, Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft, Luvox, and other potent drugs that are categorized by the federal government as “Schedule II substances,” the same as cocaine. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the *Physicians’ Desk Reference* (PDR), and copious medical literature point out that the side effects of these drugs can include anxiety, agitation, panic attacks, insomnia, irritability, hostility, impulsivity, akathisia (severe restlessness), delirium, hallucinations, depersonalization, lack of emotion, aggression, and suicidal and homicidal tendencies. Physical side effects include heart attacks, strokes, growth suppression, and brain atrophy.

The NRA’s NSS report spends dozens of pages detailing how schools can be made safer through new building construction and remodeling, as well as policies and practices that limit ingress and egress, erect appropriate barriers, require identification badges, employ more extensive camera surveillance, trim and remove vegetation that limits visibility, replace inadequate locks and hinges, and many other security proposals that may have value. However, it fails to even mention, let alone question, the psychopharmacological policies and practices that are at the root of the ongoing school carnage. It fails to cite any of the many responsible mental health professionals who have been warning of the dangers presented by the prescription drug epidemic in our schools. It fails to mention the many millions of dollars in [perverse financial incentives](#) that the federal and state governments provide to schools that serve as bribes to designate more and more children as having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) — and to keep them designated as such for as long as possible.

Although the NRA rolled out its National School Shield Task Force report with great fanfare, it seems to be hedging on whether to fully endorse it. After the NSS report was released on April 2, a statement posted on the NRA’s Institute for Legislative Action website commended Asa Hutchinson for his work on the project, but [said](#), “We need time to digest the full report.”

What we have presented here should be enough to give many NRA members indigestion and, hopefully, sufficient incentive to contact the NRA and urge them to refocus and get back on track to defending the Second Amendment, rather than trying to placate the Obama/Feinstein forces, who will only use every concession to push for even more draconian restrictions on the law-abiding citizen.

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