

Talking Points for Capitol Hill Visits

National PTA 2018 Legislative Conference



Gun Safety and Violence Prevention

National PTA supports the following bipartisan solutions to address gun safety and violence prevention. National PTA urges members of congress to cosponsor and support the following bipartisan bills:

1. The STOP School Violence Act ([H.R. 4909](#))

- The STOP School Violence Act was introduced in the House by Rep. John Rutherford (R-FL-4) with a bipartisan group of [25 cosponsors](#). Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) are expected to introduce a companion bill in the Senate.
- 80% of school shooters tell someone of their plans and 69% tell more than one person of their plans. Through training about these warning signs and better coordination with law enforcement, we have a real opportunity to stop school violence before it happens.
- The bill would provide state and local governments with grants to train local law enforcement, school personnel, and students in evidence-based practices that improve early intervention to stop school violence before it happens. The bill would also create anonymous reporting systems to centralize the reporting of threats.
- The bill would use existing funds within the Department of Justice to pay for the new grant program.

2. The Gun Violence Research Act ([H.R. 1478](#))

- The Gun Violence Research Act was introduced in the House by Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL-7) with a bipartisan group of [135 cosponsors](#).
- The Brady Center has found that 17,012 American children and teens are shot in murders, assaults, suicides & suicide attempts, unintentional shootings, or by police intervention every year on average.
- National PTA is committed to stopping gun violence through common-sense and responsible firearm policies and by raising public awareness of firearm safety and gun violence prevention strategies.
- However, to achieve this goal and address this epidemic gripping our nation, we need to first understand the causal relationships and the effects that gun violence has on our communities.
- The bill would allow the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct research on gun violence by repealing an old amendment to a bill (commonly referred to as the Dickey Amendment) that prevents HHS and CDC from conducting gun related research.

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3. The Fix NICS Act (S. 2135/H.R. 4434)

- The Fix NICS Act was introduced in the Senate by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Tim Scott (R-SC), and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) with a total of [41 bipartisan cosponsors](#). A bipartisan companion bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX-28) with [5 cosponsors](#).
- Current law prohibits felons, domestic violence perpetrators, and other dangerous individuals from purchasing or possessing a firearm in the United States.
- National PTA supports universal background checks and efforts to strengthen the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) to ensure that a person who should not legally be able to purchase a gun cannot pass a NICS background check.
- National PTA believes this bill is a step in the right direction for improving background checks across America.
- This bill encourages federal agencies and states to create a plan to improve their reporting to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). In return, states that improve their reporting standards would receive federal grant preferences and incentives.
- The bill would also create a Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Initiative to ensure that states have the resources they need to upload domestic abuse history to NICS so that domestic abusers are not able to purchase guns.

Invest in Safe and Supportive Schools

While National PTA supports robust federal investments in several foundational education programs including Title I and IDEA, Congress must invest in the programs below to ensure our children can learn and thrive in school.

1. Adequately Invest in the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program (Title IV-A Block Grant)

- The bipartisan Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program (Title IV-A) provides funding to states and school districts to support safe and healthy students through comprehensive mental health programs, drug and violence prevention programs, training on trauma-informed practices, and health and physical education programs. The grant program also ensures school districts have the resources to support a well-rounded education and the effective use of technology in schools.
- The block grants give flexibility to states and districts on how they want to spend the money to improve the health and safety of their students.

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- If funded adequately, this grant funding would be able to increase school district capacity to provide greater student mental and behavioral health services, foster improved school climates, and school safety through programs and support services that are tailored to meet the needs of their students.
- The Title IV-A Block Grant program was authorized at \$1.65 billion under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). However, the program only received \$400 million, or less than 25% of its authorized funding, in the FY17 appropriations bill.
- Given the limited amount of state and local funding to support these programs, providing inadequate federal funding will force school districts to choose between high quality programs that positively impact students in different ways (ex: choose between school counseling and Advanced Placement programs).
- A school district shouldn't have to choose between providing needed student support services or an enriching curriculum.

2. Fund Statewide Family Engagement Centers at Authorized Amount of \$10 million

- Over 40 years of research shows that family engagement is critical for school improvement and student achievement. Students with engaged families attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in advanced-level courses and have higher graduation rates.
- The Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) competitive grant program is one of the few stand-alone programs from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that was maintained in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Family engagement has always been a bipartisan issue. In 2017, a bipartisan group of 28 Senators and 46 Representatives supported the program by signing on to a Dear Colleague letter.
- The Statewide Family Engagement Centers grant program is NOT a NEW program but an IMPROVED program in ESSA from the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) program in No Child Left Behind.
- We are requesting for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program to be funded at its authorized amount of \$10 million in ESSA which is only a portion of the funding that the PIRC program received when it was last funded at \$39.3 million in FY 2010.
- The FY18 omnibus bill will not be finalized until late March. National PTA is advocating for full SFEC funding in both the FY18 omnibus bill and the FY19 appropriations bill.

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Possible Questions from Members and/or Staff

Members and their staff are likely to have many questions about National PTA's stance on issues related to gun safety and violence prevention. Below are questions National PTA anticipates members and their staff may ask during your Hill visits.

NOTE: If a staffer asks a question that you do not know or are unsure about it is ok to let them know that you are not sure at this moment but you or a member of National PTA's Government Affairs team will follow up with them with an answer after the meeting.

1. **Q: Does National PTA support gun violence prevention? Where does National PTA stand on federal efforts that restrict access to firearms?**

A: National PTA believes school safety is a critical priority and that every attempt must be made to reduce violence, especially incidents involving use of firearms. Parents, educators, community members, and government must prioritize this issue to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. National PTA advocates for preventative measures to educate students, educators, and community members on school and firearm safety. With regards to gun safety policies, National PTA supports the following policy recommendations:

- Restrict Internet gun sales, including kits that can be used to make/modify guns
- Enforce federal and state minimum age requirements for handgun purchases
- Raise the minimum age to 21 to be allowed to buy a handgun from non-licensed dealers
- Allow at least three business days to conduct background checks
- Require non-licensed dealers to conduct background checks and fill out proper paperwork so that guns can be traced
- Increase penalties for the transfer of handguns or semiautomatic assault weapons to juveniles for use in a crime
- Revoke the license of dealers who knowingly sell to minors
- Prevent juveniles who commit violent crimes from buying guns as adults
- Support state and federal funding initiatives for the research of the causes and effects of gun violence
- Outlaw military-style semi-automatic assault weapons (weapons originally designed for military or law enforcement purposes; designed to be fired in full or semi-automatic mode in combat; or designed to accommodate a large capacity combat magazine)

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2. Q: Does National PTA support the Second Amendment?

A: National PTA supports the Second Amendment and recognizes the right to bear arms. Other rights guaranteed by the Constitution, such as free speech and private property, have certain reasonable restrictions to protect the freedom and safety of our fellow citizens and the same principle should apply to the Second Amendment. National PTA encourages Congress to adopt legislation that would help prevent future tragedies like the massacre of innocent children and adults at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School while preserving the lawful use of firearms for sport and personal protection.

3. Q: Does the National PTA support arming teachers and school administrators as a way to prevent school violence?

A: National PTA believes the most effective day-to-day school climate to be gun-free, but defers to local collaborative decision-making to allow for the presence of law enforcement deployed in community-oriented policing.

4. Q: Does National PTA support the banning of bump stocks?

A: Our association has a position statements banning military-style semi-automatic assault weapons, or weapons designed to be fired in full or semi-automatic mode. Additionally, our association restricts internet gun sales, including kits that can be used to make/modify guns.

5. Q: Does National PTA support raising the age to buy assault weapons?

A: National PTA has a resolution to ban semi-automatic assault weapons. Additionally, National PTA supports federal and state minimum age requirements for handgun purchases and raising the minimum age to 21 to be allowed to buy a handgun from non-licensed dealers.

6. Q: What is National PTA's stance on metal detectors in schools?

A: National PTA believes all school environments must be safe, healthy and a welcoming place to learn. The association does not have a position on metal detectors in schools, however our association supports the development of school safety guidelines and that local parent/community safety advisory teams be formed to assist with the development of guidelines which address discipline, safety and procedures for crisis intervention. Lastly, discipline and school safety guidelines must be available for

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parental and community review before adoption by the local school board or the local governing body.

7. Q: What is National PTA's stance on concealed weapon laws?

A: National PTA does not have a position on concealed weapon laws and defer to state PTAs and their state laws on this matter.