

Gun Classes for Teachers Taking Off Following NRA's Suggestion

Written by **Bob Adelman**

On the heels of the suggestion by the National Rifle Association (NRA) that schools should have armed protection to prevent another Sandy Hook Elementary School-style shooting, numerous groups have announced firearms training programs for teachers, some for free. In Ohio, the Buckeye Firearms Foundation is providing teachers with **free firearms training**. Foundation spokesman Jim Reese said:

We need to examine how we enhance the safety of our children in that environment. The first responder in a situation such as what we had in that school has got to be the teachers. You've got to educate the teacher, and when you look at the folks who stop these things while they're in progress, it typically is someone else who is armed.

Jim Irvine, president of the foundation, **said** that the usual \$1,000 fee for the three-day training, which includes lodging, tuition, and ammunition, would be paid for by the foundation, adding: "What better use for an educational foundation than to help educators protect our children?"

Irvine, who is also an airline pilot and carries a concealed firearm, said that up until the ghastly attack on youngsters in Connecticut earlier in December, "School boards were just in denial. That denial got ripped away in Newtown. The idea [behind providing this training for teachers] is to make it hard to kill a kid." He noted that airline safety improved after pilots were permitted to carry following training. Schools should be no exception.

In Salt Lake City, the Utah Shooting Sports Council **said** it would waive its usual \$50 fee for teachers taking its one-day training class. It will be a pilot program initially involving just 24 teachers but will be expanded after the first of the year to include 200 more. Clark Aposhian, one of the instructors, said:

Schools [should be] some of the safest places in the world, but I think teachers understand that something has changed — the sanctity of schools has changed.

Mass shootings may still be rare, but that doesn't help you when [a] monster comes in.

We're not suggesting that teachers roam the halls [looking] for a monster ... but a gun is one more option if [a] shooter comes in.

He added that his training will be similar to training a school employee on how to use a fire extinguisher in case of a fire.

Utah State Representative Curt Oda, who is also a concealed weapons permit instructor, is offering discounted training for teachers as well, reducing the

normal fee for a day's training from \$70 to just \$20. Oda said:

Seconds count in most situations like the one in Sandy Hook [but] help from law enforcement is minutes away....

Yes, law enforcement [there] did a good job, but when it is your responsibility to defend yourself and others around you, you need to be prepared.

Police do a great job, but 90 percent of the time, they are there to clean up, not to prevent.

In Little Rock, Arkansas, Rock City Lenders **is paying the fee** for teachers who are interested in such training as a way to give back to the community and express in a positive way its grief over the Connecticut shooting. Said Mike Willingham, "We feel like if a person is armed, then that empowers them and [they] don't have to feel like a victim." He added: "Teachers go to the grocery store. They go to different places outside of school ... so they still need to [learn how] to protect themselves." Rock City Lenders said that 50 people have already signed up for the training, which costs \$80.

Proponents of firearms training cite numerous advantages of such training for teachers. Glenn Reynolds, **writing in USA Today**, reviewed some of the lessons learned from the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, noting that "Twenty minutes is forever. Five minutes is forever when violence is underway, but 20 minutes — a third of an hour — means that 'first responders' aren't likely to do much more than clean up the mess."

Reynolds also observed that as more and more people recognize the threat and prepare themselves accordingly, the less crime there is. He cited the FBI's **report** that in 2011, violent crime decreased by four percent from the previous year, including murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults. And that wasn't just a one-year anomaly, either. As Andrew Arulanandam, a spokesman for the NRA, noted, "This is a steady decline in the FBI's violent-crime rates." He added that 25 years ago, very few states allowed concealed carry permits, but today more than 40 states do. The more people carry, the lower crime rates go.

John Lott explained this in his book "**More Guns, Less Crime**," basing his research on years of crime statistics and creating a document which, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, is "helping to redefine the argument over guns and gun control."

And then there's the simple fact that other important institutions — banks, courts, and power plants, for example — are protected with armed security, and so **why not schools?**

Finally, many schools around the country already have armed security officers protecting the students. A Department of Education (DEA) survey which was conducted during the 2009-2010 school year **found** that 23,200 out of the 82,800 schools they surveyed had armed security officers on campus at least

once a week.

Hypocrisy among elected officials on the matter has, as a result of the Connecticut shooting, come fully into the open. Not only does virulent anti-gunner New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg **have armed security personnel** around him at all public appearances, but the president himself sends his girls to a private school **which has eleven armed guards present**. As Awr Hawkins noted, these are not Secret Service personnel: This is standard operating procedure for **Sidwell Friends School**.

This puts into perspective the claims by some anti-gunners that having armed protection at schools would somehow be inherently dangerous. As Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers, **said** when she first heard of the suggestion, such an idea is “irresponsible and dangerous” and that “schools must be safe sanctuaries, not armed fortresses.”

With the increased interest in training teachers in the proper use of firearms to protect their charges, those complaints are starting to appear just plain silly. It's nice to see common sense beginning to gain a foothold over such silliness.

Discussion Questions

- 1- Canada and the U.S.A. have many things in common. Both countries are challenged with many of the same social problems? Do you think that teachers should be allowed to carry and be trained how to use weapons in case of an emergency?
- 2- What are some potential risks of teachers carrying weapons for matters of student protection?
- 3- At the conclusion of the article a school teacher said the following “schools must be safe sanctuaries, not armed fortresses.”

Do you agree?

What are some strategies that can be created or implemented to provide students with a safe atmosphere to learn in?