

NRA-Funded Proposal Calls for Armed Personnel in US Schools

Every U.S. school would have armed, trained personnel under a safety proposal funded by the powerful National Rifle Association and unveiled on Tuesday in response to December's massacre at a Connecticut school.

The proposal of the National School Shield Task Force also includes security accords between schools and law enforcement, an online safety assessment tool for schools, state safety standards and improved federal coordination for school safety.

Asa Hutchinson, the task force's director, said a central element of the proposal would be having a trained and armed security officer or staff member in each school.

"Obviously, we believe they will make a difference in the various layers that make up school safety," Hutchinson, a former congressman, told a news conference held under unusually high security.

"This is not talking about all teachers. Teachers should teach."

Hutchinson said security officers and staffers would need 40 to 60 hours of training that would cost \$800 to \$1,000 each.

The NRA paid for the 225-page study. It was carried out by a 12-member task force that included Ralph Basham, a former head of the U.S. Secret Service.

The proposal also says that limited school funding means that "there is an important role that can be filled by a private non-profit advocacy and education organization."

The National School Shield "is in position with adequate funding and support from the NRA to fulfill this important

national mission.”

The gun lobby’s proposal is in reaction to the Dec. 14 massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, in which 20 students and six adults were killed.

Hutchinson’s proposal was similar to the post-Newtown call by NRA Chief Executive Wayne LaPierre for armed guards in all U.S. schools. The suggestion drew strong criticism from gun control advocates and the biggest U.S. teachers’ union.

The Every U.S. school would have armed, trained personnel under a safety proposal funded by the powerful National Rifle Association and unveiled on Tuesday in response to December’s massacre at a Connecticut the U.S. debate over firearms, which are protected by the U.S. Constitution. No major gun legislation has passed Congress since 1994.

Lawmakers are scaling back President Barack Obama’s ambitions for sweeping gun control measures made after the Newtown killings.

Gun-control advocates say expanded background checks would be the most effective way to reduce gun violence. Opinion polls show that more than 90 percent of U.S. voters and 85 percent of gun owners support it.

While such a measure could pass the Democratic-controlled Senate, it faces long odds in the House of Representatives, where Republicans hold the majority.

The NRA, which claims 4.5 million members, instead wants the federal government to step up prosecutions under existing gun laws.

On the state level, legislative leaders in Connecticut said late on Monday that they had agreed to some of the toughest gun regulations in the nation and expected to adopt them this week.

The proposal includes a ban on sales of high-capacity ammunition magazines, background checks for private gun sales and a registry for existing magazines that carry 10 or more bullets.

Reporting by Ian Simpson; Editing by Leslie Gevirtz

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.