

The Focus of Pullman & Comley's Recent Superintendents' Forum Was School Security and Whether School Districts Should Hire Armed, School Security Personnel

Education Law Notes

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In a recent article, the *Washington Post* estimated that since the shooting in Columbine, there has been an average of ten shootings a year in American schools. That brings the total to 190 -- and counting. What are the solutions? Nationwide, students have embraced gun control activism. A retired U.S. Supreme Court justice has advocated for the repeal of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Connecticut General Assembly has approved a bill that bans bump stocks (the bill awaits signature by the Governor). Some communities have responded by hiring armed, school security personnel, while others are currently exploring that option. Chris Drezek, who is the Superintendent of Schools in Enfield, spoke at Pullman & Comley's "Superintendent's Legal Issues Forum" on May 3, 2018 and explained how his school district, in the aftermath of Sandy Hook, became one of the first districts in Connecticut to hire armed, school security personnel. The Forum members were greatly appreciative of Chris' detailed recollection of the specific challenges that he and his community encountered, and the numerous side issues that arose and how they were resolved.

Our second speaker at the Forum was Jack Zamarly, currently Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent-elect in Monroe. This March, Jack and Superintendent John Battista were asked to follow through on a Monroe Board of Education initiative to look into hiring armed, school security personnel. Jack reminded us that it was the Monroe School District that was able to lend the neighboring Newtown School District use of one of its elementary schools following the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012. This year, an organization known as NICHE.com, recognized the Monroe Public School District as the safest in Connecticut. Jack shared with the Forum members the PowerPoint presentation that he and John have been using when they have met with Monroe community groups. Jack explained his Board of Education's approach to what they call the four tiers of school security: behavior, technology, structural, and law enforcement.

The superintendents in attendance at the May 3, 2018 Forum also heard from Brenda Bergeron, an attorney employed by the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection ("DESPP"). Brenda has been involved in drafting the School Security and Safety Plan which needs to be submitted by each school district, each year. Here are helpful links to material Brenda shared with the assembled superintendents:

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WESTPORT
203.254.5000

WHITE PLAINS
914.705.5355

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School security and safety plan template

School security and safety plan standards

School security FAQ

School Security and Safety Plan 2018 Cal. Year Review

School district plan

Down the road, her agency is looking to simplify the filing process by making the documents and filing digital.

In closing, as Jack Zmary pointed out, there is no 100% solution; it's more about 100, 1% solutions.

Tags: School Safety