



## Joint Efforts on School Violence

by Todd Smith, Steve Gordon, & Jesse Weathington | Mar 21, 2018 | The Forum | 0 comments



If there is one thing that everyone can agree on at both the federal and state levels, it is that no child should fear for their safety while attending school. Last week, President Trump and Congress acted in different ways at taking on school violence.

The House of Representatives voted 407-10 to pass the Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Act of 2018, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Reps. John Rutherford (R-FL) and Ted Deutch (D-FL). This bill amends and reauthorizes the Secure Our Schools (SOS) grant program which had not received funding since 2011.

The bill creates a grant program to train students, teachers, school officials, and local law enforcement how to identify and intervene early when signs of violence arise, construct anonymous reporting systems, and implement school threat assessment protocols to prevent school shootings before they occur.

Specifically, the STOP School Violence Act can be broken down into four areas:

**Student Violence Prevention Training:** The legislation provides funding for training to prevent student violence against others and self, including training for local law enforcement officers, school personnel, and students. Prevention training would be designed to give students and school personnel the ability to recognize and respond quickly to warning signs of school violence and would include active shooter training.

**Technology to Improve School Security:** The bill provides funding for technology and equipment to improve school security and prevent attacks. This includes the development and operation of anonymous reporting systems, such as mobile apps, a hotline, and a website. Funding may also be used for metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other technologies to keep schools safe.

**School Threat Assessment and Crisis Intervention Teams:** The legislation also contains funding for school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams so that school personnel can respond to threats before they materialize.

**More Coordination with Law Enforcement:** Finally, the STOP School Violence Act provides funding to support law enforcement coordination efforts, and in particular, those officers who already staff schools.

The STOP School Violence Act authorizes \$75 million annually for Fiscal Years 2019-2028 for these programs. The legislation has bipartisan support in both chambers, with a companion bill introduced in the Senate by Utah Senator Orrin Hatch and endorsed by Florida Senators Rubio and Nelson.

In addition to the House of Representatives action on school violence, President Trump and his

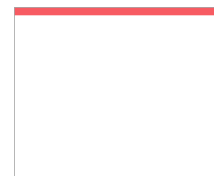
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## Legislature honors Atlanta United



Atlanta United FC has received national praise as it has become one of Major League Soccer's premier franchises, and now that recognition extends to the Gold Dome. This week the state senate and Gov. Nathan Deal honored the team as the official 'Kings of the South.' What that title of nobility entails is not quite clear, but the team that has captured the city's hearts is **RISING...**



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Administration took action by making announcements in numerous areas.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) will assist states to train specially qualified school personnel on a voluntary basis. Specifically, the DOJ programs will enable schools to partner with state and local law enforcement to provide firearms training for school personnel. It will help state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies hire more school resource officers, as well as provide support for situational awareness training to school and law enforcement personnel. The Administration also will support the transition of military veterans and retired law enforcement into new careers in education. The President has also proposed a regulation to clarify that 'bump stock' devices are machine guns under federal law, which will ban the manufacture, sale, or possession of them.

President Trump supports improving the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and announced that he is supportive of the efforts by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) to improve the system. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is calling on all relevant federal agencies to certify within 45 days that they are in full compliance with NICS or have a plan to become fully compliant. The Attorney General has also called on Governors and state Attorneys General to improve the reporting of state and local criminal justice data and other information accessed by NICS. The DOJ will also be helping states to provide more accurate information to databases accessed by the firearms background check system. Priority will be given to projects that improve accessibility of criminal history records, domestic violence convictions and information on persons who are prohibited from possessing firearms for mental health related reasons.

President Trump proposed an expansion and reform of mental health programs. This will include a review to determine if changes are needed to improve coordination between healthcare professionals, school officials and law enforcement. In addition, the Secretary of Education will be establishing a federal commission to address school safety and the culture of violence.

There will be some who think these actions go too far, while others think it isn't far enough. Regardless, the actions taken last week by the Administration and Congress certainly shows that when federal, state, and local governments work together the benefits can be delivered to the constituency.

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