



Jim Broadway

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Illinois School News Service

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Did you watch the youths' "March for Our Lives"?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

You know, something might actually happen this time. Did you watch the streaming video of Saturday's powerful, emotional children's "[March for Our Lives](#)"? Did it make you cry? Don't lie to me. You either didn't watch it, or you saw it and you cried. [I saw these kids](#), and they were wonderful. Made me tear up.

The children, high school children mostly, many of them with parents and friends, are grieving for other children killed in the schools of America; they're fearful of the future; they're angry that nothing effective has been done after [Columbine](#), after [Sandy Hook](#), after [Parkland](#). The [children are fighting mad](#).

The March for Our lives in Washington drew at least a half-million teens, and events like it were held throughout the country, including Illinois - from [Chicago](#) to Carbondale - children marched and cried and spoke out in ways that should make us all proud. Is what they want reasonable? Yes, as you will see.

What about "the other side" of the story? Are folks who "believe in guns" working to get their message through to the policymakers? Of course. They're even *trying to use the school boards of Illinois as conduits* for that message, and calling out businesses that won't permit guns in their buildings, as you will see.

Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed [SB 1657](#), a bill to license gun dealers, a couple of weeks ago. That may have helped him survive last week's primary election (see more below on this), but it may add to his political pain as he tries to win in November's general election against fellow billionaire JB Pritzker.

Why should Rauner worry? Over and over, speakers at the March for Our Lives rally in Washington pointed out that there are *31 million citizens aged 19 to 25* (who mostly agree with them). The key, they said, is political action, getting all young people registered to vote, to make a difference in the mid-term elections.

What is the agenda of these young people? What do they want policymakers to do? We'll look at that in a moment. First, I want to enjoy a moment from the past, from another turbulent time for the young people of America, a moment recalled because of the thoughtful program conducted by the angry children:

They sang that classic Bob Dylan song, "The times, they are a-changin'." I was just 21, still in the Air Force, when it was released in 1964. The Viet Nam War - later called "Johnson's war" - was heating up. Other men in my generation simply [stayed long in college](#) (or Canada), or [malingered](#), to avoid the draft.

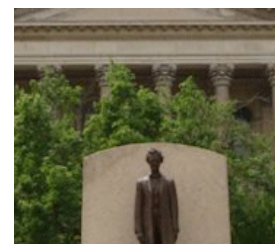
By 1971, the right to vote was given to all citizens aged 18 or older, and by 1973 compulsory military enlistment ended (even for those not wealthy enough, or not [connected enough](#), to dodge it). In the years leading up to those victories for young people, Dylan's [song was an anthem](#), a powerful political message:

*Come senators, congressmen/please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway/don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt/will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside/and it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows/and rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'.*

The threat of political retaliation back then was not subtle, and it wasn't subtle on Saturday either. "Not one more" child should die at a school, the speakers insisted. "We will vote you out," they warned. "Never again!"

Okay, what do the students want policymakers to do? Their agenda is pretty mainstream, actually. Background checks are common policy; the students now just want those requirements to mean something. They want wait periods for gun purchases. They want military assault weapons to be just for the military.

A proposal strongly opposed by the National Rifle Association - requiring someone to be 21 to buy a gun - has some basis in neuroscience. *Listen up, educators.* The prefrontal cortex - *the rational part of the brain* - is not fully developed until about age 25, as the [University of Rochester Medical Center](#) reports.



You've read this here before. The prefrontal cortex is needed for the "executive function," for judgment of actions under consideration and restraint of any that are likely to have negative consequences. Since teens don't yet have this part, they process judgments through their [amygdalae](#) - the brain's *emotional* centers.

Usually, this just results in actions that leave you shaking your head. "What could he have been thinking?" But it also can result in tragedy, as when [Charles Whitman killed 16 people](#), and wounded 30, shooting from a University of Texas tower. Whitman had a brain tumor *impinging on his amygdala*.

What's this about the school boards being asked to carry the NRA message? It's true. The students are standing in the open, looking at the cameras and speaking out for what they want. Meanwhile gun dealers' hope is to sell guns to school districts, but they are hiding that; they *want it to look like the school boards' idea*.

Actually, there's two layers of concealment at work. What the gun dealers want is for school districts to have statutory authority for their teachers and administrators carry weapons. Only the legislature can make that happen, but the gun dealers seem to be afraid of communicating with legislators directly.

Their goal is to have the Illinois Association of School Boards lobby for the authority to arm the educators. But, again, the gun dealers seem reluctant to propose the idea directly to the IASB. Instead, they have composed a "sample resolution" that they want local school boards to approve and then forward to the IASB.

The gun dealer group is called "[Illinois Carry](#)." It claims to have been contacted by "school boards who know how quickly lives can be lost while waiting for law enforcement teams to arrive on scene of a school attack.... They are concerned about how they can best protect their students – within the framework of the law – in the event of an active killer coming into the school." Illinois Carry cares about staying "within the framework of the law."

This may not be the best year for any public education interest group to put its credibility at the Capitol on the line for such an idea. It takes a majority of the House and Senate to pass any legislation, and a majority has already voted for the bill to license and regulate gun dealers, SB 1657. If they can't override Rauner's veto of that bill (and they probably can't), they'll be more interested in making Rauner pay a political price for vetoing it.

The NRA lobby will be lucky if the legislature doesn't find out about - and want to do something about - the fact that its affiliates are trying to stir up boycotts of businesses that don't want weapons carried into their stores and office buildings, restaurants and theaters. Yes, that is actually happening.

[On this page](#), for example, I clicked the button for "Store" and typed "Springfield, IL" as the location. From "Babies R Us" to "White Oaks Mall," at least three dozen businesses were listed. By each there was a button for me to use to "validate that you visited this location, but they lost your business due to their anti-gun stance."

Looks to me like the NRA has a little protection racket going here. Not everything at the Illinois Carry site is objectionable. On [their forum page](#) I found a link to something called "Crazy Quail." It took me to video clips of an interesting computer-driven machine that throws clay targets into the air for shotgun practice.

There are two extremely strong reasons why the Illinois Carry proposal is abominable, but you will have to wait until Wednesday to read about them. Meanwhile, think about this, and let me know what you think.

Now, who got votes from where last week? There's an [interactive web page](#) posted by The State Journal-Register that you should visit if you're curious about the political demographics of the various parts of the state. The article's headline is pretty misleading, but the graphics are nonetheless instructive.

The story tells how JB Pritzker's "key" to victory in the Democratic primary elections was the margins he racked up in the "downstate" precincts (the 96 counties outside of Cook and the collars). He did enjoy strong percentages over Sen. Daniel Biss and businessman Chris Kennedy in those areas - but so what?

The Democratic primary votes are clustered in Cook County - 59% (including Chicago, which is proper). The five collar counties cast another 18.3% and the 96 downstate counties had just 22.7%. It's not that the 96 counties don't ever count. They did give us Rod Blagojevich in 2002. (Thanks a lot.) But Pritzker last week? No.

The numbers to study are on the Republican side. They show how close Rep. Jeanne Ives (R-Wheaton) came to defeating the incumbent billionaire Rauner. With just a tiny fraction of his campaign cash, and practically zero name recognition a few months ago, she nearly took him down. Whew!

Ives is [a true believer](#). She actually believes the [Ayn Rand-like philosophy](#) she tries to sell. She's also mostly honest, trying to live by the code she learned at West Point, never to "lie, cheat or steal - or tolerate anyone who does." She is now a political force on the right in Illinois, a force to be reckoned with.

I think the Democrats dodged a bullet when Ives came up short last week. More than that, she left behind a present, a scathing (and mostly true) denunciation of the governor. You still can [download a copy from her website](#). See the link at the bottom. It's a bit tricky. Don't worry, I'll be reporting on it.

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