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## Fwd: There is no epidemic of school shootings

1 message

**Jason Bauer** <jbauer@panaschools.com> Wed, Mar 28, 2018 at 7:52 AM  
To: Dara Thompson <dthompson@panaschools.com>

April Board Meeting

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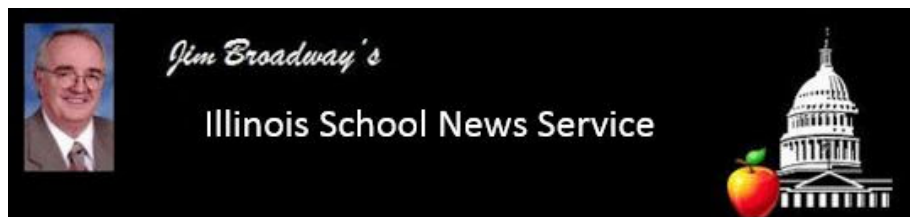
From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Mar 28, 2018 at 2:01 AM

Subject: There is no epidemic of school shootings

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## ***There is no epidemic of school shootings***

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

It is urgent that people understand - especially children and parents and policymakers - that there is no current epidemic of school shootings. You want your children to be in a safe place? Send them to a public school, anywhere, in Illinois or nationwide. They're safer in a school than they are in their homes.

The schools do not need to become "hardened targets." They don't need gun-toting teachers and administrators roaming the halls. That policy has many dangers and other negative consequences - one of which is that it would ignore the fact that children *are in continual danger of being shot*, but not in their schools.

To slap together policy to "protect our children in the schools" would leave them unprotected in locations where they are far more likely to be in danger - in the streets on their way to and from school; in places where children gather, at malls or recreational areas. [Political panderers](#) are *childrens' worst enemy*.

Let's start with the facts. Illinois children attend public schools in about 4,000 buildings statewide. There was a shooting stopped by a [courageous teacher in Mattoon](#) last September. Otherwise, there has not been a random shooting at any public PK-12 school in Illinois since records of school shootings have been kept.

**The severity of the events exaggerates** our sense of danger. School shootings stick in our minds because of the victims they involve - innocent children - and because we seem to hear about one every few months. But we don't. Since 1966, by the Washington Post's count, there have been 21 such shootings.

The Post's criteria are that only true random events are counted (shootings involving people who know each other, or committed in the context of a robbery or other crime, for example, are not counted), and at least four victims most have been fatally wounded to be included in [the Post's statistics](#).

So, in the 52 years since ex-Marine sharpshooter Charles Whitman fired his rifle from a tower at the University of Texas, killing 18 and wounding 30, there have been 13 random mass shootings at PK-12 schools . That is an average of 0.25 per year at PK-12 schools nationwide. But, yes, frequency has edged upward.

There are 100,000 of such schools; there are 180 school days in a year; there are 0.25 school shootings in a year. So, the chances that a school shooting will happen at your child's school on any given day are: *1 in 72,000,000*.

Sure, the [Law of Large Numbers](#) says that, given enough schools and time, there will be a school shooting somewhere, just as surely as it is a fact that "someone" will win the Lottery. But the chance that you will be that person is very, very small, and so is the chance that a shooter will attack your children's school.

**But school shooting victims are just tiny fraction** of the number of children who take bullets. If we are to, as the panderers say, "protect our children," then policy to do that must account for the children who are shot every day, *every single day* in the land where the right to bear arms "shall not be infringed."

The [Brady Campaign](#) - named for Illinoisan Jim Brady, who was shot in the head in the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan - gets its data from the Centers for Disease Control. The CDC reports that 46 children and teens (age 0 to 19) are gunshot victims *on an average day in America*.

They don't all die, of course, but more than 2,700 do, each year. (Compare this with the total of 176 children killed in all mass shootings, in all settings, since 1966.) About 1,600 of the child victims annually are murdered; about 1,000 will commit suicide; more than 100 will die in gun-related accidents; two dozen or so are killed in ["interventions" by police](#); and three dozen gunshot deaths in this age group are of unknown cause.

Policy to "protect our children" needs to account for all that. Letting children buy guns is just stupid. The failure to hold accountable *those who enable children* to possess weapons needs to be remedied. Screening children for aggressive tendencies, and for vulnerability to depression, would help a great deal.

**Bottom line: It's not the schools.** Children are killed by gunfire in other locations. About 1.7 million children live in homes with unlocked, loaded guns. That's where many of them die. To protect them is a great idea, but it will require policy that is designed thoughtfully, with a grip on reality. Policymakers, use your heads.

Are there other reasons to resist "hardening" schools? One would be the effects on children. The process to turn a school into a hardened target would send a *clear and totally false message* to the children, that they are being educated in a place of unusual danger. Is this going to help them prep for the test?

Another reason might be that teachers, who represent most of the staff in a school building, are pretty firmly opposed to being armed, according to a [recent Gallup Poll](#). There's already a teacher shortage, in Illinois and nationally. Do we truly want to give teachers yet another reason to change careers?

**It's always a good idea to find out where the bad ideas are coming from.** As [ISNS reported Monday](#), the push to arm educators in Illinois is coming from an NRA-affiliated group called "[Illinois Carry](#)." But rather than testify about their idea openly in a legislative hearing, they want the IASB lobbyist to do it.

The phone number Illinois Carry's web site offers is that of the Tri-County Trader Sport Group, [located in tiny Enfield](#). They don't have a web site, apparently. They seem to want to avoid the light of transparency, preferring to do their work in the darkness of anonymity. Be careful. You never know what's lurking in the dark.

Illinois Carry seems to have [several supporting organizations](#), including a company offering free shipping if you purchase a "[Sexy Stiletto Switchblade](#)" for the "Automatic Knife Aficionado." Apparently, such trinkets can be bought legally only by those of us with FOID cards. (The rest of you must make do with a Swiss army knife.)

**That's almost enough about guns for today.** Just a reminder, however. Gov. Rauner vetoed [SB 1657](#), a bill to license gun dealers in Illinois. He said implementing the bill would be "costly" and would merely duplicate existing federal law. Both assertions are false, but the veto probably saved him in the primary election.

The process to override the veto of SB 1657 will commence in the Senate after that chamber reconvenes April 10. Can Rauner's veto be overridden? Since that would require Republicans in both chambers to abandon their governor - not to mention the National Rifle Association - you would think not.

But the majority Democrats have a political reason to try for an override. That would create a roll call that would damage Republicans in a general election, even if it did help them in their party's primary. Are members of GOP caucuses smart enough to stay off the list of NRA sweethearts this year? We'll see.

**Let's wind up this newsletter with some more good news.** In spite of the damage inflicted on Illinois universities by the two-year budgetless period for which Rauner must take most of the responsibility, the institutions of higher education have been making news for their performance, particularly in graduating students.

This [graphic of data points](#) on the Board of Higher Education's web site tells a positive story. From the top, Illinois public universities led the nation last year in "completion rates for adult learners," and Illinois private colleges came in second only to Washington, D.C., for that important performance achievement.

The data, released by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center in February, gives more information that high school guidance counselors should share with their students about higher education opportunities in Illinois.

In addition to outpacing the national average in six-year completion rates - nearly 9 out of 10 students in both public and private colleges - the state ranked second only to Kansas in completion rates at four-year institutions among community college students (19.6% versus a national average of 14.7%).

Illinois' public universities took a hit during Rauner's two-year budget drought. [Enrollments generally fell](#) as students, understandably, grew [uncertain about the](#)

[state's commitment](#) to higher education. But there are good reasons to believe the universities are now on a comeback that will not be stalled by politics.

**Don't be confused by the name similarity.** For readers of the journal *Cognitive, affective & behavioral neuroscience*, if you checked out the recent [article on dopamine D2 effects](#) on visuospatial working memory distractor interference, I must confess that *I was not the lead author* of that research report.

No, that writer was my son, Dr. James M. Broadway, Jr., a neuroscientist at the University of New Mexico. I'm very proud of Jim, of course, but if you happen to read the article please share with me what it means.

Have a wonderful Easter break. I'll send you a message next week. - Jim

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