



Jim Broadway

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Illinois School News Service

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Volume 24, Number 13, February 26, 2018

NRA grip on government now loosening?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

The stylist (Remember when we called them "barbers"?) was just making conversation. "Are you retired?" I said no, not entirely. "What do you do?" I told her proudly. "That sounds interesting," she said, "but, oh, there's so much danger in the schools these days. All those school shootings!"

I assured her (as I shortly will assure you) that the news media exaggerate things a bit and that, in a statistical sense, schools are still the safest place for a child to be. "I don't know much about statistics," she said, clipping away. Then I asked a question while knowing the answer: Do you have a state license?

Yes, she said, she is licensed with the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. Illinois [regulates more professions](#) than just about any other state. Folks who cut hair are licensed (under "barbers"). Folks who *braid* hair for a living are also licensed (under "hair braiders"). Estheticians? They're regulated too.

Perhaps my brain was primed by the reference to school shootings. "You know, if you were a gun dealer you wouldn't need a license," I informed her. "The state of Illinois wouldn't care about how you do your job. You could sell guns out of the trunk of your car, so you wouldn't even need an expensive place of business."

"I don't think that's right," she said. I agreed with her and told her that a [bill might get a vote in the Illinois House](#) this week that would require gun dealers to be regulated. Responding to her next question I said yes, I think it will pass, but it also seems likely that Gov. Bruce Rauner will veto it. "What does that mean?"

I explained the veto process to her and shared my opinion that the votes would just not be there to override a veto of the gun dealer regulation bill. So it would be as if there never had been such a bill. But I also pointed out that the veto could be politically risky for Rauner, since he is up for reelection this year.

She asked if he could lose his job. It's possible, maybe even likely, despite his vast personal wealth. Who might beat him? You know me, I focused on the Democrats, reminding her that the primary is March 20 and that she would have to register to vote (but, again, *not to sell guns*). She promised to get registered.

"Who should I vote for?" I gave her my impressions of the candidates on the Democrat ballot ("Be sure to ask for a Democrat ballot!") then pointed out that, in my newsletter, I had endorsed Chris Kennedy. "I'm voting for Biss," she said. See, that's why no one ever hired me to run their campaign - and then won.

It was the March 14 Florida school shooting that brought gun bills to the surface in the Illinois General Assembly. There are several bills under consideration. One of them reached the public record just last week and came to the attention of the Illinois chapter of the NRA, which *apparently felt a need to lie about it*.

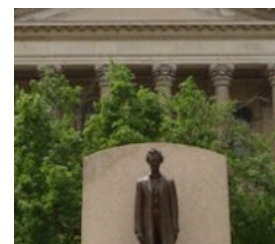
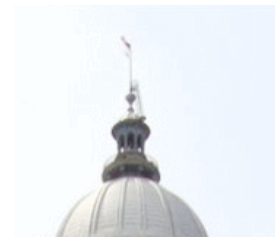
"[Gun seizure language introduced](#)," the organization announced, alleging that an amendment to [SB 559](#) "allows seizure of firearms without due process." Without due process? What would the NRA call a judicial hearing in which petitioners for an order of of protection are (unlike the NRA) subject to perjury charges if they lie?

Gun seizure in an emergency would be possible under the bill, but not without due process. The bill echoes mental health law in which a person determined to be a "danger to himself, herself or another" can come under the jurisdiction of the state, involuntarily, pending the outcome of physical and mental examinations.

SB 559, as amended to create an "emergency lethal violence order of protection," would certainly have *prevented the deaths of 17 students and staff* of a Florida school on Valentine's Day, based on [reports of efforts](#) to get police or the FBI or other officials to contact the youth who later became the shooter.

But Florida does not have a "Lethal Violence Order of Protection Act" that SB 559 would create in Illinois. Instead, Florida has Gov. Rick Scott, who made NRA history in 2014 by [signing five "pro-gun bills" into law](#). How proud he must have been. The Illinois proposal, SB 559, is ready for a passage vote in the Senate at any time.

What about the bill for occupational regulation of gun dealers, the bill that the regulated hair stylist thought would be good state policy? That bill passed the Senate last year and is now on third reading in the House. [SB 1657](#) is controversial; it evoked [3,861 witness slips in favor of it - and 10,698 opposed](#).



Will the House pass it and send it to Rauner? I think so, but just by the bare minimum of 60 votes. Will Rauner veto it if he receives it? Three state departments under his control - Corrections, Agriculture and Military Affairs - filed witness slips opposing it. Jim Kaitschuk, Rauner's former Director of Legislative Affairs, was [recently appointed Executive Director](#) of the Illinois Sheriffs Association, which also opposes SB 1657. Yes, Rauner will veto it.

Sure, you would think a sheriff would like to know who's trafficking in firearms in his county. But Illinois has 102 counties, and most of them are politically red, and the [mostly false tenets of the 2nd Amendment religion](#) are deeply ingrained in the very fiber of the Republican Party's being. Sheriffs do need to be elected.

Not a single GOP vote has been cast for any of these gun regularion bills. (Agriculture?)

There's one more gun-related bill to consider. [SB 337](#) would require gun dealers' places of business (assuming SB 1657 becomes law) to have video recording devices installed at locations (specifically *not* the bathrooms) where firearms would be stored and handled. This is, in effect, a trailer bill for SB 1657.

Parents should be assured that children are safer in school than anywhere else, even considering the tragic shootings at Columbine and Pearl and West Paducah and Sandy Hook and Lakeland. Mass shootings at a school get seared into the public memory, but that doesn't make for statistically valid fears.

[The Washington Post](#) has done perhaps the best job of tracking these things, beginning with the 1966 shootings from the tower at the University of Texas by former Marine, former Eagle Scout, [Charles Whitman](#). Turns out he had a brain tumor impinging on his [amygdala](#), the emotion (fight or flight) center.

Counting Whitman's murderous spree, the Post counts 150 mass shootings (4 or more deaths; public locations; not related to any other crime such as drug deals or robberies) since 1966. Of those, just 20 were committed in schools, including two in Illinois (Montifiore School, Chicago, 1988; Northern Illinois University, 2008). Most of the locations were offices or other places of business - stores, restaurants and bars. Many locations are just called "other."

Of the 1,077 people killed, 176 were children or teenagers (counting the Florida shooting). The [Post's interactive page](#) has a drawing representing each one of the 1,077; hover over one and see basic information. The number of shooters, total, has been 153; two were middle-schoolers; only 3 were women.

Just because your child's chances of being victimized at school are statistically negligible, that doesn't mean those who have died are to be dismissed as negligible. Nor does it mean that gun violence is a rare occurrence. To the contrary, it is an everyday tragedy. [Two dozen children are shot](#) in this country, every day.

[Deaths by firearms \(most homicides\) are many](#). In 2014, according to the CDC, 33,600 Americans were killed with guns. ([See the first table](#).) Death rates varied widely. Black males, for example, were about twice as likely to die from a gunshot as were white males - and about 10 times as likely as females, black or white.

As the Washington Post data demonstrates, the number of mass shootings has accelerated in recent years, as have the numbers of victims in each case. A reason for that may relate to the proliferation of guns. When President Obama took office, the NRA spread the false word that strict gun regulation was on the horizon.

That had the organization's desired effect. The [manufacture and sale of guns](#) of all kinds soared. "Stand your ground" laws were enacted in many states, as were laws (including in Illinois) permitting private citizens to carry weapons concealed.

President Donald Trump believes arming teachers would solve the school-shooting problem. But rational voices deplore that idea, like [Illinois IEA President Kathi Griffin](#). The IEA in recent years has shown a preference for efforts to identify potentially violent students and get them the mental health services they need.

That's enough about guns and school shootings for today. The House and Senate are in session Tuesday through Thursday of this week. Then the [House will be in next week](#), Tuesday through Thursday, and the [Senate will convene](#) without the House on Tuesday through Thursday of the following week.

Then both chambers will take off most of the month of March to attend to campaigns and other matters concerning the party primary elections on March 20. Will they return to the Capitol the week after the elections? Of course not. They'll be so hoarse and worn out from campaigning they'll take off until April 9 or 10.

Bills are starting to stack up in committees in both chambers. So most legislative action will be in committees for a while. The House has [nearly 50 hearings scheduled](#) in the next three days, and the [Senate has nearly 25](#). Next week's calendar will be similar, as will the first week back after the elections.

Deadlines for bills to be advanced from committees will arrive on April 13 and the deadline for chamber of origin bills (Senate bills in the Senate, House bills in the House) to be passed on the floor will follow on April 27, in both chambers. By that time, of course, budget-shaping and other end-of-session chores will begin.

House committees of interest this week will include the House [PK-12 appropriations committee](#), which will meet Tuesday at 3 p.m. in Room 114 to consider budget proposals for the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Education Labor Relations Board. (You may [monitor House hearings here](#).) ISBE, of course, has proposed a \$7 billion-plus hike in education funding for FY 2019; we'll see how seriously that's considered Tuesday afternoon.

The PK-12 committee on [licensing, administration and oversight](#) will convene at 8 a.m. Wednesday, also in Room 114, to hear seven bills and to talk about the teacher shortage. The bills are mainly about credentials and training, but the old GOP

standby issue of limiting "administrative costs" is in [HB 4789](#) this year. And there's a bill ([HB 4870](#)) requiring school districts to allow parents to administer "cannabis-infused" medical products to children for whom they are prescribed.

The [PK-12 committee on curriculum and policies](#) has an interesting hearing scheduled for 10 a.m. Wednesday in Room D-1 of the Stratton Building. Bills mandating full-day kindergarten, computer science instruction and access to spelling bees are posted to be considered, as is [HB 4442](#), a bill on parenting education.

The [House Revenue and Finance Committee](#) is to convene at 9:30 a.m. Thursday in Room 122B with a slew of bills posted and also an important "subject matter" - revenue estimates for FY 2019 - to be discussed. A subcommittee on the "Invest in Kids" voucher program for the wealthy is [also scheduled to convene](#).

The Senate Appropriations II Committee, which is the panel in that chamber that will consider FY 2019 budget proposals for the Illinois State Board of Education, is to [convene at 9 a.m. Tuesday](#) for that purpose. [SB 3364](#), filed recently by Senate Minority Leader Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington) is referenced in the posting.

The Senate Education Committee is scheduled to convene at 1:45 p.m. Tuesday in Room 212 [with sixteen bills posted](#). (The link to [monitor Senate hearing rooms is here](#).) All the bills seem interesting, but a [SB 2892](#), a \$40,000 minimum wage for starting teachers, might have some argument-starting potential.

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