



86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TEXAS PTA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

SCHOOL SAFETY

Pursue comprehensive school safety legislation, including policies to fund the hardening of school facilities and improve access and utilization of Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) professional development and comprehensive safety and security plans.

BACKGROUND

- Improved school safety will be the result of multiple strategies and could include the strengthening of access points in school buildings, community involvement, child crisis intervention training for officers, school marshal programs and information centers that monitor and disseminate intelligence across agencies regarding threats against school personnel, facilities, and students.
- To meet the needs of each unique community in Texas, it is important to emphasize local decision-making in all school safety solutions. Texas PTA urges school districts to actively engage parents in the decision-making process in improving school safety for their students.
- Neither the Texas Education Agency (TEA) nor Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) have statutory authority for oversight of requirements that school districts develop safety plans, conduct audits of those plans periodically, or that they utilize the Texas School Safety Center's (TxSSC) templates for plans.
- In the wake of two shootings in Texas earlier this year, committees of the Texas House of Representatives and Senate have met in the last few months and have issued reports with recommendations for policy changes to improve school safety.
- A key recommendation from the Senate Select Committee on Violence in Schools and School Security is that students need an easy, anonymous method to report threatening behavior and an intelligence unit is needed to evaluate these threats.
- Texas has the largest number of police officers on school campuses in the country, with 2987 school district police officers in addition to the 117 school districts that allow school personnel to carry firearms. Another 24% of school districts also employ School Resource Officers.
- The School Marshal Program allows districts to identify employees to be trained to protect students from armed intruders. Marshal candidates must already hold a concealed handgun license, complete 80-hours of mandatory training, undergo psychological and background checks, and complete a 16-hour license renewal course every two years.

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