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TOP STORY

Arming school teachers will be considered

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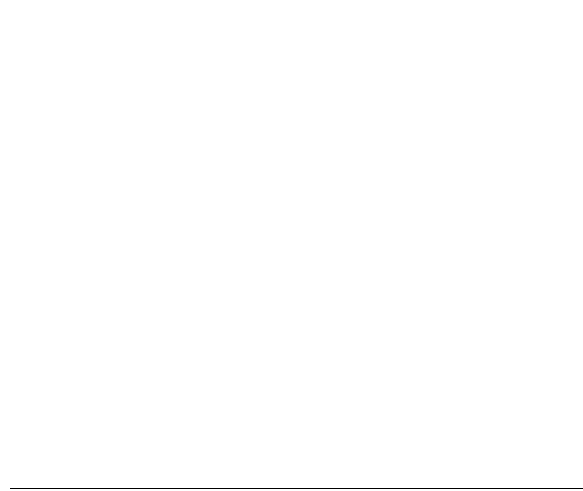


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(The Center Square) – Options for school teachers to be armed, and school systems to allow it, will be considered by Georgia lawmakers.

Republicans proposed a state-funded certified firearms training program for teachers as part of a proposed School Safety Initiative. Lawmakers plan to introduce the proposal during next year's legislative session, saying it builds on previous reforms educators have passed.

The proposed program would be an opt-in measure by the teachers and school system. It would allow local school systems to determine whether teachers should be permitted to carry firearms as a safety measure on campus.



“This legislation and associated state funding will ensure that our school systems and teachers have the necessary resources and training to increase safety across Georgia,” Republican Lt. Gov. Burt Jones said in an announcement. “Systems and individuals will have the option of participating in the training, certification and stipend, and we hope that the General Assembly will support these efforts to build on recent school safety reforms.”

According to a spokeswoman for Jones, teachers will receive \$10,000 yearly for the new stipend if they participate. The proposal would expand other existing school safety grant programs to allow schools to use that money to hire POST-certified security personnel, though a precise amount is as yet undetermined.

POST is an acronym for Peace Officer's Standards and Training.

“We fundamentally believe that firearms in the hands of law-abiding Georgians can save lives,” Jerry Henry, executive director of GA2A, a pro-gun rights group, said in a statement to The Center Square. “That’s why we support lawful weapons carriers exercising their Second Amendment Rights at work.”

Georgia Democrats criticized the proposal.

“Teachers aren't trusted to read certain books in class but they can carry guns to protect themselves and their students?” Georgia House Democrats asked in a social media post. “Republicans continue to show they are extreme and out of touch with reality. They could just do something about guns but that will be too much like right.”

Lisa Morgan, president of the Georgia Association of Educators, called the proposal “a simplistic solution to a complex problem,” suggesting that the state instead use the money to hire more counselors, social workers and school psychologists.

“What I hear all the time is teachers are buried under the weight of increased expectations,” Morgan told The Center Square. “Teachers feel like, ‘OK, I have to be the nurse today. I’m the counselor because we don’t have enough counselors. I have all these responsibilities that have been added to my plate on top of what I’m here to do, which is teach students.’”

“So, the first reaction is, ‘Oh, so now you’re going to add security guard in my job description,’” Morgan added. “It is not a good idea for the health and safety of everyone in our schools to introduce more weapons in our schools, and it is certainly not something that is going to assist with reducing the level of burnout and retaining current educators, and it is not something that is going to assist us in recruiting and attracting new educators to our profession.”