

editor's message



Let Sanity Prevail

Six years ago, in New York City, there was a shootout on the sidewalk alongside the Empire State Building. Two police officers exchanged shots with a gunman who had just killed the boss he blamed for his dismissal at an import company. The assailant was using a .45-caliber semi-automatic handgun. It took police firing 16 rounds to kill him. In the battle, nine bystanders were wounded—all by police bullets.

On the same day that 17 people were killed in the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, an armed intruder interrupted a church service at the Faith City Mission in Amarillo, Texas. One worshipper managed to wrestle the gun away, preventing what could have been another mass shooting. When police arrived, they confronted the hero who was still holding the gun and, mistaking him for the would-be killer, shot him twice. (Fortunately, he survived.)

Maybe arming schoolteachers isn't such a hot idea after all.

Recently, *The Herald-Times* reported on a meeting of the Bloomington High School South student newspaper staff. The editors were struggling to determine what they could do that would be meaningful in response to school shootings. They all agreed the issue was gun control, but they were frustrated.

"I have trouble imagining that something I could do could actually make a difference," student Elizabeth Rickert was quoted as saying in the *HT*.

I believe students can, and are, making a difference. Here are three suggestions local high school editors might consider.

➡ Ask students whose parents own automatic and semi-automatic weapons to urge them to turn the guns in to the Bloomington Police Department. This worked in Australia after the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre in which 35 people were killed. About 1 million weapons have since been collected. I believe our local government would be willing to support such an effort and, as happened in Australia, pay for the guns.

The Aussie government also requires a 28-day waiting period to buy a gun, allowing time for thorough background checks. And to own a gun, applicants must present a "justifiable reason" why they need one. Also two good ideas to support.

The result of these actions in Australia? There hasn't been a mass shooting in the 22 years since the Port Arthur tragedy.

➡ Many high school students will be eligible to vote in November's midterm elections. Many more will turn 18 before the 2020 general election. Organize a petition and ask thousands of students throughout the city to pledge not to vote for any politician who doesn't support strict gun laws. Then send copies of the petition to every politician running for office.

➡ Implore your classmates to take part in local protests. A single protest in Bloomington won't make a difference in Washington, D.C., but being a part of protests all across the country will. Collectively, you have a strong voice.

By now, we know the impetus for real change in our gun laws is not going to come from the top. But if students can maintain the groundswell they began after the tragedy in Parkland, sanity may yet prevail.

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