



South Dakota governor signs bill allowing armed teachers in the classroom

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South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard on Friday signed a bill allowing teachers to carry guns in school, making his state the first to enact such a law since the Newtown shooting tragedy.

The bill was pushed by gun-rights supporters who say arming teachers could help prevent tragedies like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 20 students and six educators died. The law, which goes into effect July 1, will allow school districts to arm teachers and other personnel.

But the measure prompted intense debate in the capital, as several representatives of school boards, school administrators and teachers opposed the bill during committee testimony last month. They said the measure could make schools more dangerous, lead to accidental shootings and put guns in the hands of people who are not adequately trained to shoot in emergency situations.

The issue of guns in schools has been a contentious one. The National Rifle Association, several days after the Newtown shooting, proposed installing armed officers or guards in schools across America -- an idea that was met with derision by gun control advocates. Democrats on Capitol Hill in Washington have since moved ahead on gun control legislation, including an anti-trafficking measure that passed out of Senate committee Thursday -- while at the state level, Republican-led states have tried to enhance gun-rights protections.

In South Dakota, main bill sponsor Rep. Scott Craig, R-Rapid City, said earlier this week that he has received messages from a growing number of school board members and administrators who back it. Craig said rural districts do not have the money to hire full-time law officers, so they are interested in arming teachers or volunteers.

South Dakota doesn't stand alone on this issue. For a dozen years, Utah has allowed teachers and others with concealed carry licenses to wear a gun in a public school. A couple of school districts in Texas have been given written authorization to allow guns in schools. And legislatures in other states, including Georgia, New Hampshire and Kansas, are working on measures similar to South Dakota's.

The measure does not force a district to arm its teachers and would not force teachers to carry a gun.

On Monday, the South Dakota House voted 40-19 to accept the Senate version of the bill, which added a requirement that a school district must decide in a public meeting whether to arm teachers and others. Another Senate amendment allowed school district residents to push a school board's decision to a public vote.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/03/08/sd-governor-signs-bill-allowing-teachers-to-be-armed/#ixzz2N9QLp9PB>

South Dakota to allow armed teachers in schools

The US state of South Dakota has enacted a law allowing school districts to arm teachers and other school staff.

The law's backers say it will prevent mass school shootings like a December massacre in Connecticut that killed 26.



Teachers will not be forced to carry guns under the South Dakota law

Amid a push by the White House to strengthen gun laws, the bill reflects a growing divide in the US over whether more or fewer guns keep people safe.

The measure does not force school districts to arm teachers and will not require teachers to carry guns.

But it allows each school district to choose if staff could be armed. It takes effect in July.

Under the **Republican-sponsored bill**, school staff given permission to carry firearms on campus will be known as "school sentinels". The state has given a law enforcement commission the task of establishing a training programme for the sentinels.

Several representatives of school boards, teachers and other staff spoke against the bill in legislative hearings, arguing guns would make schools more dangerous.

But sponsor Representative Scott Craig said this week had heard from a number of school officials who back it.

Mr Craig said rural districts do not have the money to hire full-time police officers.

Source : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21722377>