



## OPINION EDITORIAL

**Senator Craig Estes**

Texas State Senate District 30

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State Senator Estes (R-Wichita Falls) released the following opinion editorial in support of Harrold ISD policy to allow teachers and staff to carry concealed firearm on school grounds.

### **I support Harrold ISD**

As their State Senator, I have watched the Harrold ISD school board, administrators, faculty, and staff come together to improve the school for the benefit of the students. The actions they have taken have always been with the best interests of the students in mind. I have no doubt that their recent decision to allow qualified, licensed teachers to carry concealed handguns in the classroom comes from that same commitment to the best interests of the students and community they serve.

Personally, I applaud the Harrold ISD School Board and the superintendent for their focus on school security and visionary approach toward student safety, and I believe other school districts should carefully review and consider this option. That is not to say every school district should allow their teachers to carry guns, but that each school district should make the decision they believe is in the best interests of their students, parents, staff, and community.

State law grants our school districts the option to allow teachers and other school personnel to carry concealed firearms on school grounds, and I will oppose any attempt to take away these rights from our locally elected school boards.

The state can set accountability standards, teacher requirements, even a school start date, but lawmakers in Austin cannot honestly guarantee the safety of the children in our public schools. Posting a "gun free zone" sign at the door does not stop a madman, and we should not be so naïve to believe that a law can keep a school gun free when criminals do not follow the law.

I am not surprised, but no less disappointed, that the editorial boards have begun to gang up on Harrold ISD. I imagine it is easy for the editorial writers to question and even laugh at the decision of a small, isolated school district. But if a tragedy strikes this community like we have seen in too many other parts of the nation, the editorial writers

will not be the ones looking into the eyes of a parent and trying to explain why they didn't do everything possible to protect these students and staff.

The security of the students is the primary concern, but this is not just about security for the students, but security for teachers and staff who often come to work early and stay late. While intended to keep guns out of schools, the gun free zone also creates unarmed victims for those not deterred by a sign.

My good friend Suzanna Hupp, a former legislator and survivor of the 1991 mass murder in Killeen, Texas, reminds us that a gun doesn't guarantee safety against evil, but it sure changes the odds.

Harrold ISD school board members and administrators are responsible for the health and welfare of the students in their charge. That is a duty delegated by the state and a responsibility demanded by the parents. I trust that the leadership at Harrold ISD has made the right decision in their best interests, and I trust that if the parents and community agree with the editorial boards then Harrold ISD will be the first to know.

*State Senator Craig Estes (R-Wichita Falls) is Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs, and Coastal Resources, and represents Senate District 30 comprised of Archer, Baylor, Clay, Cooke, part of Collin, part of Denton, Grayson, Jack, Montague, Palo Pinto, Parker, Shackelford, Stephens, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, Wise, Wichita, and Young counties.*

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