

## **Fire And Fury: Armed Teachers? - Op-Ed by Sebastian Germosen**

Should teachers be armed with weapons? This is the question President Trump has sparked controversy about ever since the Parkland, Florida shooting. The shooting that left 17 dead has left Americans grieving and wondering why an act like that was committed.

The weekend following the shooting, Americans protested the NRA, lawmakers, and Trump, as they begged for changes in gun laws to avoid more school shootings and gun violence. People have heavily criticized the NRA for their lack of involvement or “engagement” in the conversation about changing gun laws, but President Trump has responded with his own idea of arming teachers with weapons in schools as a solution to prevent school shootings. As you might expect, the majority of Americans have expressed their anger and confusion as to why the President would make such an outlandish remark to try to fix the real problem with America. That problem is that our lawmakers and politicians are unwilling to make a change for the greater good of our country, as they continue to ignore the opinions of the majority of Americans and desire for change.

To make progress on Americans’ desire for changes in gun laws, CNN hosted a town hall which would become a historic exchange between survivors of a horrific school shooting and America’s elected leaders. Students, parents, and faculty of Marjory Stoneman Douglas attended this event, as they questioned the leaders and told them that change must happen. Those leaders included Florida’s two US senators, Republican Marco Rubio, Democrat Bill Nelson, Congressman Ted Deutch, Road County Sheriff Scott Israel and a spokesperson for the NRA. Before the event began, it was announced that President Trump declined to attend the event in person or from the White House. Many believed this showed an unqualified President showing his carelessness for his own people and another problem that America faces, which is a President with no intention of making anything “great again.” To begin the Town Hall, Ted Deutch stated that it is too late for talks of getting weapons of war out of communities and also told Senator Nelson that “the folks in our community don’t want words, they don’t want thoughts and prayers, they want action and we owe it to them.” The evening would continue with questions surrounding the topic of gun policy, thoughts and prayers for those who were killed, and a group of politicians who promise to try to make change happen, but they probably won’t. In relation to the debacle of arming teachers, I recently interviewed Br. Patrick McNamara, the US Provincial of the Marist Brothers, who is serving his 3rd non-consecutive term in that position. He recently made a tweet, expressing his disapproval of the idea of giving teachers a weapon in schools. He stated, “Give teachers guns? Really? Now that’s not compassionate listening. No guns for Marist teachers in our schools. Not now, not ever!!!!” I asked him a few questions regarding his tweet, President Trump, and his beliefs on a new gun policy. My first question pertained to Trump’s presidency so far. He stated, “In his first year, the President seems to maintain a very chaotic office and often has not addressed and been sensitive to issues that are Catholic centered. So, I’m feeling disappointed.” His response raises a valid point about our President, due to his decisions on not focusing on religious or domestic problems, but only on economic problems.

When asked why he made the tweet, Br. Patrick stated, “When I watched the ‘listening session’ of the President with the students from Parkland, I was stunned that his first response was about arming teachers. Immediately, I tweeted to my Marist family and friends. I was stunned with the raw emotions those parents and students shared with the President, and truly, they only wanted to be listened to, he could only respond with guns. He had no real feeling about the pain these folks, and the nation is enduring about gun violence.”

I think many Americans, not all, would agree with Br. Patrick and were thinking the same thing when they saw the President talking and “listening” to the Parkland survivors. It was an utter disgrace that instead of introducing a solution for school safety and a plan to prevent school shootings, President Trump can only think of giving teachers what has caused this problem.

Due to his position as US Provincial, my third question asked him if sees any changes in gun policy taking place in the near future. He stated, “A State Representative from our Marist school in Florida called me to assure me that their Governor was interested in changing gun laws especially in concern to greater school safety. I hope so. As a result of all that has happened in our nation, I support competent, trained, professional security personnel at our schools to protect our students. However, I do not support arming teachers, staff, administrators. As professionals, their job is to educate and care for students.”

When asked if he would ever change his decision of arming teachers due to any circumstances, such as a law making it mandatory, he was firm in saying: “I do not believe a law will ever be passed that schools must arm teachers. I repeat, no guns for Marist teachers in our schools.” With his responses, Br. Patrick has given me insight into what the future holds for us: hope that local politicians can step up and fix the problem Americans are facing that the White House can’t, which is making change happen.