



The Washington Flyer
June 3, 2022

*“Timid men . . . prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous sea of liberty.”
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Phillip Mazzei (1797)*

Texas Shooting Fuels School Safety Debate

In the aftermath of the May 24, 2022, shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, state and federal legislatures have reignited the debate over school safety. Governors across the country are taking different approaches to preventing future school shootings. In Democrat-led states, governors are calling for further restrictions on Second Amendment rights, proposing legislation that would limit the types of firearms citizens can own and raising age limits on purchasing firearms. In [California](#), Governor Gavin Newsom announced his support of legislation that would restrict the advertisement of certain guns and allow Californians to sue gun makers when guns are used to commit crimes. This week, the [New York](#) state legislature considered a package of bills to restrict gun ownership, including expanding the state’s existing Red Flag law and banning private citizens from purchasing body armor. [Pennsylvania](#) Governor Tom Wolf announced his support of Red Flag laws, limiting magazine capacities, and restricting ownership of some firearms. On the federal level, the tragedy in Texas has spurred House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA-12) to propose [sweeping gun legislation](#) including an “assault weapons” ban and a national Red Flag law, which the House will vote on next week. In the evenly divided [Senate](#), Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) has asked John Cornyn (TX) to form a bipartisan group of senators who will negotiate gun legislation, recognizing that the House bill will likely not pass in the Senate. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) has supported a bipartisan solution but has indicated that he thinks the real problem is not enough focus on school safety and helping those who are mentally ill.

In contrast to many bills proposed on the state and federal level aiming to restrict gun ownership as the solution to attacks on schools, many Republican governors have focused on increasing school security and mental health issues plaguing the country. Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy pointed to mental health issues in the community rather than firearm ownership as the main problem facing schools. [Ohio](#) Governor Mike DeWine proposed increased funding for school security, and the legislature has advanced a bill that would allow teachers to be armed as a safeguard against school shootings. [Iowa](#) Governor Kim Reynolds pointed to policy solutions aimed at limiting access to school buildings and training faculty. At the Heritage Foundation, the [School Safety Initiative](#) addresses the root of many violent acts against schools and offers policy solutions to limit these tragedies, including increasing school security, protecting Second Amendment rights, involving the community in young people’s lives, addressing mental health issues, and building strong families and civil institutions to give young people purpose and support in life. Ultimately, these proposals seek to cure the root cause of school shootings by focusing on the breakdown of the family and cultural institutions that once helped shape young people into morally responsible adults.

USDA Mandates Transgender Policies to Participate in Federal School Lunch Program

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently [announced](#) a new effort that “combats discrimination against LGBTQI+ Community” by requiring schools to adopt transgender policies in order to continue participating in the National School Lunch Program. The USDA announced that it would begin to

interpret *sex* in Title IX and in USDA programs to mean sexual orientation and gender identity, keeping with President Biden's "[Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#)." Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack stated, "USDA is committed to administering all its programs with equity and fairness. . . . A key step in advancing these principles is rooting out discrimination in any form—including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity." Under the redefinition of *sex*, schools will no longer be able to separate sex-specific spaces such as locker rooms and bathrooms according to sex. Instead, schools must allow students to use the restroom that aligns with their subjective gender identity to continue participating in the federally funded programs. Many private and religious schools also participate in the National School Lunch Program, and religious schools can assert a religious exemption to such mandates. Schools that wish to seek acknowledgement from the USDA of their religious exemption may, however, be intensely pressured to conform to the Biden administration's redefinition of *sex*, Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Greg Baylor warns. Although the new regulations are purportedly made to expand low-income students' access to food, John Elcessar of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association [points out](#) that "if a school feels like they cannot participate [in the program] because it's in conflict with their mission or values . . . you're taking away a program that's feeding low-income kids." Changes in USDA regulations must go through a formal rulemaking process, which is expected this month.

Republican Study Committee Releases Family Policy Initiative

This week, the [Republican Study Committee](#) (RSC), the largest conservative caucus in the House of Representatives with 158 members, released its [Family Policy Initiative](#) outlining its policy goals for restoring American culture and family life. The initiative is important because the RSC sets legislative goals for Republicans to work towards when they are in leadership positions. Should the House of Representatives flip into Republican control after the November mid-term elections, the RSC proposal would set a blueprint for the party to begin passing legislation that will advance and defend the family and traditional, Judeo-Christian values. The AACS supported the initiative, stating, "The AACS is grateful for the clear expression of the important principles contained in the RSC Family Policy Framework. For far too long, our politics have given short shrift to the essential aspects of family and community building which, until recent decades, have been hallmarks of our unique American republic. A law and culture which encourages strong families has always been and will always be what makes our country free, prosperous, and strong. We look forward to seeing how good policy initiatives developed under this framework will shape the future laws under which American families may thrive." The initiative highlights the cultural deterioration in America, such as low birth rates, low marriage rates, the increase in single parent homes, and the transgender movement and its special targeting of children. Proposed solutions include protecting children from radical ideologies in schools, supporting school choice, affirming the relationship between parents and children, protecting the ability of religious foster care and adoption agencies to serve children in need, and ending abortion. By stating these goals, the Family Policy Initiative will drive important cultural and spiritual issues to the forefront of the Republican Party and encourage members of Congress to take bold action to defend American families.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[CDC Updates COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)