



State Auditor Yost proposes plan to combat school shootings

Against the backdrop of the recent Florida high school shooting that tragically claimed 17 lives, Auditor of State Dave Yost this week unveiled a three-point plan to improve school safety.

He urged lawmakers to adopt his proposed SECUR Program which he said uses “proven, off-the-shelf technology and tried-and-true tactics to bring the same protection to Ohio’s schools that are in place in most government offices ...”

Phase 1 of the plan calls for the state to partner with the Department of Homeland Security, the Ohio Department of Education, local schools and law enforcement to undertake a comprehensive vulnerability inventory of all state school buildings.

Yost points out that while some schools have excellent safety plans, modern school facilities and armed School Resource officers on site, others have minimal controls and no one able to confront an armed threat. A comprehensive, statewide vulnerability inventory would enable Ohio to send money where it is most needed, and to achieve a statewide minimum floor for security for all school buildings.

The first step would be to establish a working group of security experts, law enforcement and educators to establish a set of objectives for the inventory. Using a uniform inventory instrument, each school building would be assessed and graded by members of a coalition of willing law enforcement agencies across the state.

Phase 2 of the plan calls for use of information obtained through the vulnerability inventory to prioritize projects to bring each school building to a condition with controlled entry point or points, with remote electronic lock systems, and other safety features.

Controlling access to a building is the first step in securing it, followed by ensuring that individual areas inside a building have electronic locks with individual keycard access. Yost points out that these measures are common in many buildings, but not in schools. Video camera systems, monitoring and a means to communicate with first responders would also be a high priority. This aspect of the plan is modeled after a similar statewide project initiated two decades ago for courthouses throughout the state.

Phase 3 of Yosts’ plan calls for the Ohio Peace Officers Training Academy, in conjunction with leading experts, to develop a specialized program designed to give advanced training for current teachers who have served in the military or law enforcement roles to respond to active killer scenarios in a school situation.



According to Yost, a report by the FBI found that the average response time for law enforcement to a school mass killing was 18 minutes. Although many schools are staffed by armed School Resource Officers, not all are, and even those that are may need additional on-site responders.

Under Yost's plan, the Ohio Police Officers Training Academy, in conjunction with other experts and educators, would develop a school-specific advanced training program for teachers and other staff who have backgrounds in law enforcement and the military, and are willing and able to provide a first line of on-site defense. The training would exceed the requirements for a concealed carry license, and include additional training designed to simulate the stress and confusion of a school attack. Continued periodic training would be required.

Yost recommends that no teacher be required to be armed, and that local school district participation should not be mandatory.

Although legislators have already put provisions into state law requiring every school to have a school safety plan, they may consider taking additional steps to improve school safety as constituents demand greater change.