

On campus, limit guns to professionals

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First of all, I would like to point out that I am neither a registered Republican nor Democrat but registered as "No Party Affiliation" or what many call an independent voter. It is, therefore, in that vein that I wish to be heard.

As a concerned university president and grandfather of five school-age children, I believe weapons should not be allowed on school grounds unless carried by a licensed law enforcement officer. However, once again our nation is grappling with a horrific incident that occurred on property where individuals were aspiring to achieve their academic dreams through the pursuit of knowledge. And, once again, I am shocked by what I am seeing and hearing about this tragedy.

As the president and chief executive officer of one of the largest private, not-for-profit universities in the United States with nine campuses throughout Florida and Puerto Rico, I — and my staff — place the highest priority on the safety and security of our students, faculty, staff and visitors on our campuses. We have established excellent working relationships with law enforcement and other first-responder agencies.

Furthermore, we've put emergency plans in place, and we continually update and practice the procedures we have to be ready in the event a crisis situation arises. We are one of the safest campuses in the nation, and we take security with the utmost seriousness. As such, we have a complete security system with one key integral component: we do not allow any weapons on any of our campuses unless they are in the possession of a licensed law enforcement officer. Thus, we believe our campuses are safe.

That being said, there is only so much we can do; and as we have seen countless times, tragic incidents continue to occur. These incidents rattle me to my core. Every time a school shooting occurs, I am saddened, as no student should have to pay for an education with his or her life, and no parent should have to grieve the loss of his or her loved one whom they expected to be in the safe confines of an educational institution. Yet, too many innocent people on our K-12, community college, college, and university campuses across the country have paid a terrible price for simply attending class.

Some may argue that if faculty or students were allowed to carry weapons, there could be safety in the classroom through the threat of action by those of greater reasoning. This, too, is an erroneous assumption and could lead to even greater injury and loss of life by confusion and ambiguity of law enforcement officers by not immediately identifying the real perpetrator.

I am calling on all educators and those who love education to join with me and work with all of those in authority to prohibit any weapons on educational grounds unless they are carried by licensed law enforcement officers. While there are many options open to us, the one option that is not viable is to do nothing and remain silent.

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