

Legislative Analysis



SCHOOL BOMB THREATS

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House Bill 5280 as enrolled
Public Act 56 of 2004
Sponsor: Rep. Chris Ward

House Committee: Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security
Senate Committee: Education
Second Analysis (4-12-04)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would prohibit schools from requiring school personnel from entering a school during a bomb threat unless properly trained to respond to such situations.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no state or local fiscal impact.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Unfortunately, bomb threats are an all-too-common occurrence in schools throughout the state. Whether the threats are real or simply a hoax, they nonetheless require a concerted effort on the part of the school district and local law enforcement and emergency response agencies to ensure that the threat, however implausible, is eliminated. In response to a recent bomb threat at a school in the Hartland School District, custodians, at the order of school officials, went through the school unlocking doors to enable emergency responders to search classrooms and other areas. The problem, however, is that a bomb could very easily have been set to detonate once a classroom door opened. The custodians unwittingly placed themselves in a dangerous (and potentially deadly) situation. To avert such a situation from occurring again, legislation has been introduced that would prohibit school personnel from being required to enter a school after a bomb threat unless they have received proper training.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to specify that should a public or nonpublic school close or be vacated because of a bomb threat, school officials would be prohibited from requiring school employees to remain in that school or search the school, unless the governing board of that school has ensured the employees have received appropriate training approved by an appropriate law enforcement dealing with bomb threats.

MCL 380.1305

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to the *School Safety Practices Report* for the 2001-2002 school year by the Center for Educational Performance and Information within the Michigan Department of Education, approximately 82 percent of schools responding to a survey have a written response plan for bomb threats. The report further notes that during the 2001-2002 school year, 40 expulsions (out of a total of 1,588) were as a result of a bomb threat.

ARGUMENTS:***For:***

The bill is necessary to ensure that school personnel do not place themselves and children in harm's way during a bomb threat. Staff members walking through the school to check for students who haven't evacuated the building or to check for the bomb itself could unwittingly detonate the bomb simply by opening a door or turning on a light switch, because of a lack of awareness of particular warning signs and traps that indicate danger is imminent. Responses to a bomb threat at school should be left to the people properly trained to handle such instances not to untrained school personnel.

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