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## NRA's response to shootings: An armed officer in each school



MICHAEL REYNOLDS/EPA

**The NRA's Wayne LaPierre  
blamed games and movies.**

### Sees zero need for gun controls

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WASHINGTON — The National Rifle Association Friday called for stationing armed police officers at every school in the nation to shield children and teachers from such carnage as the attack that killed 20

children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., a week earlier. Democrats and gun control advocates immediately denounced the proposal.

At a news conference in the nation's capital, NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre said that school children are extremely vulnerable in a culture that glorifies violence, in video

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# NRA says put armed officer in every school

## ►NRA

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games and in movies. “We as a society leave them utterly defenseless, and the monsters and predators of this world know it, and exploit it,” he said.

More restrictions on gun ownership, LaPierre insisted, will solve nothing. Instead, he said: “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”

The NRA, a powerhouse of a lobbying group on Capitol Hill and in state houses across the country, named former US representative Asa Hutchinson, an Arkansas Republican, to head a National School Shield Emergency Response Program. The law enforcement deployment, the group said, should start as soon as children return from Christmas break.

Reaction to the announcement was swift. Representative Chris Murphy of Connecticut, whose district includes Newtown, called the proposal “the most revolting, tone-deaf statement.”

“While Newtown continues the horrifying work of burying 20 children and six adults, the NRA has the gall to say that the solution to this problem is more, not fewer guns,” Murphy said. “The NRA has now made itself completely irrelevant to the national conversation about preventing gun violence.”

Even some conservatives found the NRA’s statements troubling. In an interview with MSNBC, Michael Steele, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, called the gun group’s press

conference a missed opportunity “to create another conversation at a higher level where the American people are right now.” He called LaPierre’s comments “very haunting and very disturbing.”

By several estimates, Americans own about 300 million firearms, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that some 31,000 people die from gunshots every year. In 2009, the latest year available, 2,793 children died of gunshot wounds, according to the Children’s Defense Fund.

No statistics, however, had galvanized the nation as has the tragedy in Newtown, Conn., when Adam Lanza shot his mother at home, drove to a nearby elementary school and killed 26 people, 20 of them children ages 6 and 7, before killing himself

Democrats in Congress have called for tightening gun laws, including reinstating a now-lapsed ban on assault rifles, limiting the number of rounds that can be contained in gun clips, and widening background checks for gun sales.

Earlier this week, President Obama appointed Vice President Joe Biden to lead a multi-agency task force to draw up proposals that could be taken up by Congress as soon as January. Obama made no specific reference to the NRA during a short briefing Friday afternoon, but again acknowledged the Newtown shootings.

“We’re a week away from one of the worst tragedies in memory,” the president said, “so we’ve got work to do on gun

safety.”

Shifting public sentiment is on the side of gun-control advocates. A poll released Thursday by the Pew Research Center found that 49 percent of Americans believe it is more important to limit gun ownership than to preserve gun rights, compared with 42 percent who thought otherwise. Earlier in the week, a CBS poll showed 57 percent of Americans saying gun laws should be strengthened – a surge of 18 percentage points from the spring.

The NRA, however, has considerable sway in Congress, particularly because of its deep pockets and its ability to quickly mobilize its grass-roots supporters.

In the 2012 election cycle, the group spent \$18.9 million in election advocacy ads and at least another \$1 million contributed directly to office seekers, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, an election finance watchdog group. And it has spent at least \$5.1 million to lobby federal officials during the past two years.

“This group has wielded disproportionate political influence and has fought any meaningful congressional gun control efforts tooth and nail,” US Representative Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, said Friday. “The NRA may as well stand for ‘No Restrictions Allowed.’”

The NRA’s proposal isn’t new. Some schools already partner with local law enforcement agencies that provide school resource officers. About two-thirds of all middle and



EVAN VUCCI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, said Friday that the massacre at a Connecticut school was the product of a culture of violence as antigun protesters (below) interrupted his remarks.**

high schools employ security guards or have police officers assigned to them, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Those numbers, however, do not reflect whether those guards are armed, and some districts, such as Boston's, designate a small number of officers to cover a large number of schools.

There are nearly 100,000 public school campuses nationwide, two-thirds of them elementary schools, and posting an armed officer at each school could be cost-prohibitive for districts with lean budgets that have led to teacher layoffs.

The cost would extend into the billions of dollars, though exactly how much is uncertain without a specific proposal.

"They don't come free; they come at a price," said Francisco Negron, general counsel for the National School Boards Association.

If more guns are allowed on school campuses, they need to be in the holsters of police officers — not teachers or private security forces who may not have adequate training, said Bob Farrace, a spokesman for the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

"We like that the NRA is focusing on school safety, but school safety is a complex issue without simple solutions," Farrace said. "Unfortunately, what followed was an overly simple solution. Having armed guards at every school is not going to help."

In a video released Friday morning, Obama acknowledged the public clamor for action. More than 400,000 people have added their names to a petition that calls for more restrictions on guns.

"We hear you," the president says in the video.

The president said he believes the Second Amendment

protects an individual right to own guns, saying "most gun owners in America are responsible." But Obama said he would support legislation to reinstate the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004, limit the capacity of ammunition clips, and close the loopholes that allow gun sales at gun shows without background checks.

The NRA, which has 4 million members nationwide, has called such measures wrong-headed and ineffective in preventing evil-minded people intent on doing harm.

But on this Obama and the NRA seemed to agree Friday: The country is pervaded by a culture that glorifies violence.

"There exists in this country a callous, corrupt, and corrupting shadow industry that sells, and sows, violence against its own people," said LaPierre, "through vicious, violent video games with names like Bullet-

storm, Grand Theft Auto, Mortal Kombat, and Splatterhouse."

In particular, LaPierre was incensed by one title that he said has been available online over the past decade: "Kindergarten Killers."

LaPierre and others NRA officials did not take questions at their press conference, promising to make themselves available at a later date.

They did not respond as the press conference was interrupted twice by protesters who held huge signs and shouted into a room filled with scores of reporters, some from news organizations across the globe.

"It's the NRA and assault weapons killing our children," yelled one protester before being dragged out of a hotel ballroom.

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