

HOW MUCH IS YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH WORTH?

From Dianna E. Washington, PhD, Chair, Education and Children's Issues Task Force

As the incidence rates of COVID-19 continue to increase and new areas of the country become the daily/weekly "hotspot," Americans are now asking if it is safe for their children to return to school in the fall. Among the various stakeholders in this new educational arena: parents, teachers, staff, administrators, legislators, government officials, and, yes, even the students themselves, there are strong and disparate perspectives.

Just as with masks, social distancing, opening businesses, and churches, and bars, and restaurants there is no one unified approach. There is a multitude of opinion and rhetoric with as many potential solutions as there are school districts across the nation. What we do know is that we are facing a unique and unparalleled challenge. How we respond now could have both immediate and future consequences for generations to come.

For some, the health of the economy is most paramount and outweighs the health and welfare of America's children, teachers, staff, and their respective families. Schools have become the latest tool in the political whack-a-mole game. Open them fully with in-person instruction says the current administration or we will penalize your school by withholding federal funds. The faulty logic seems to be: a) send your child back to school in a climate of uncertainty and conflicting official recommendations and guidelines so, b) you can return to work (safely or not), and c) you too can help in revitalizing the economy, and assist in the re-election of the current administration.

Secretary Betsy DeVos, who heads up the Department of Education, recently jumped into the fray parroting her boss in claiming that children need to return to school in-person in the fall. Furthermore, she remarked that educators and public health officials who vocalized concerns about students and their health were engaging in "fear-mongering and making excuses." Opponents of the White House and DeVos see a lack of leadership from the top with little to no advocacy for the needs of public-school students and teachers. Expected needs for increased funding to supply schools with personal protective equipment (PPE), and supplies for in-school and distance learning are left up to individual states and local districts. As schools try to decide what model of learning they will provide for students in the fall (full reopening, full distance learning, or a hybrid of the two), inequities between wealthy and poorer districts are sure to be evident with probable negative consequences for students and teachers.

This article is the Task Force's first installment on the challenges of education during the pandemic. Look for further installments as we track changes in public policy over the coming semester.

THE 2020 ELECTION—A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH:

WHO LIVES, WHO DIES, WHO DECIDES, WHO PAYS?

From Karen Pataky, Chair, Health Policy Task Force

Since the Electoral College appointed Donald Trump president in November 2016, he has ignored the necessity of managing taxpayers' money prudently by securing three contract bids for each construction contract. The first contract was for "The Wall," a \$400 million contract given to Fisher Sand and Gravel, a small company in North Dakota that had no experience in such projects; to date only 87 miles of wall have been erected. But they did donate millions to the RNC.

"The 2020 Election" continued

Trump's Golf Club properties have gobbled up more millions in taxpayers' money to fund Trump's multiple visits all over America and in Scotland, not to mention the many trips of his sons and daughter who have traveled the world doing business for the Trump and Kushner families. Emoluments, anyone?

But this final year of #45's presidency has been the most cruel and callous. In late January, journalists brought news of a deadly, highly contagious virus initially seen in China, but which had already spread to Europe and the Middle East. By early March, the virus had shown up in California, Washington state, and New York City. Despite warnings from multiple infectious disease specialists, Trump showed little concern. He should have immediately mandated a lockdown and inventoried the stock of ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE), and test kits. He should have mandated the wearing of face masks and the use of social distancing. And he should have invoked the Defense Production Act of 1950 to enable the private sector to rapidly manufacture equipment and test kits.

To prevent the spread of the virus, scientific advisors recommended mass quarantine, wearing face masks, and maintaining social distance (i.e., 6 feet from others on all sides). We began to hear hospital workers' horror stories of patients dying dreadful deaths, and of the shortages of life-saving ventilators, PPE, and COVID-19 tests.

We have no national plan 6 months later, we continue to have equipment shortages, and we know 5.2 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19 while 166,000 have died so far. To prevent more bad news, Trump removed the Center for Disease Control (CDC) from its position of collecting and publicizing health data. Now a private company, selected via a no-bid contract, will be receiving all of the COVID-19 data and no one will have access to it.

Trump's most recent attempt to destroy our democracy is his effort to prevent us from voting him out of office by inactivating the Postal Service. This will thwart our attempts to avoid coronavirus contagion by voting by mail.

We cannot allow Trump to continue his illegal and unconstitutional acts. Or our very lives will be destroyed and our democracy just a memory.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE REPORT

From Ellen McGovern, Chair, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

GUN SAFETY CHAMPION—KAMALA HARRIS, INCOMING VP

The GVP Task Force, along with WNDC members, is so excited about the choice of Senator Kamala Harris, D-CA, as Joe Biden's Vice Presidential running mate. Gabby Giffords and other gun safety groups around the country celebrate Harris as a "gun safety champion." By the time you read your September newsletter and political dispatch, the Democratic team of Biden and Harris will be official! Former Congresswoman Giffords said that Senator Harris has never held back from taking on the gun lobby and fighting for policies that save lives. Giffords goes on to say that Harris is: "a fierce, compassionate, and strong leader who is willing to fight for progress." We join Giffords in saluting Kamala Harris, who will put the safety of all Americans first!

2020 ELECTIONS

The GVP Task Force is working steadily alongside the GOTV Task Force. Don't forget Winning Wednesdays turning into everyday activities, September through November 3! Yes, let's take back the US Senate like we took back the US House in 2018! It can be done. We just need to work together!! House-passed gun safety measures still in the US Senate will ONLY become law when we win back the US Senate! Remind your friends, colleagues, and family members to work for their democracy by joining the Biden/Harris campaign locally, and getting out and voting EARLY.

Continued on next page

GVP Task Force Report continued

VIRGINIA

Governor Northam convened a Special Session of the Virginia legislature. The House and Senate legislators, led by Democratic leadership, addressed criminal justice reform, along with the final budget. Legislators addressed policing initiatives, including police accountability and oversight, and more. Details to follow in the upcoming WNDC Newsletter for October. The GVP Task Force plans to engage VA members on this policing topic since it is so intertwined with gun safety.

MAJOR GUN SAFETY ENDORSEMENTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE U. S. SENATE
IN STATES TARGETED BY THE GOTV TASK FORCE

Below are the candidates for the U. S. Senate in the "targeted" states for the 2020 election identified and supported by the GOTV Task Force. The GVP Task Force reviewed how the major gun safety organizations rated these candidates; in most cases, they "endorsed" the candidates. These "endorsements" are theirs.

Senate Candidates in
WNDC-Targeted States

Barbara Bollier	Kansas
Steve Bullock	Montana
Cal Cunningham	North Carolina
Sara Gideon	Maine
MJ Hegar	Texas
John Hickenlooper	Colorado
Mark Kelly	Arizona
Jon Ossof	Georgia

Endorsements by
Gun Safety Organizations

Brady	Coalition to Stop Gun Violence	Everytown	Giffords
Yes	No	No	Yes
No	No	No	No
Yes	No	Yes	Yes
No	No	Yes	No
No	No	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
No	No	No	No

*Not endorsed by Giffords because of a conflict of interest

Sources:
 Brady: elections.bradyunited.org/candidates
 Coalition: www.csgv.org/2020-endorsements
 Everytown: gunsensevoter.org/endorsements
 Giffords: giffords.org/endorsements

TURN THE SENATE BLUE! SAVE THE DATE!

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

1:00–2:00 pm



The members of the WNDC Gun Violence Prevention Task Force are hosting a virtual fundraising reception with Cal Cunningham, a former state legislator and Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran who is running for the US Senate in North Carolina. His opponent, Thom Tillis, is the GOP incumbent who has voted with Trump 93.3% of the time, including votes against abortion rights, in favor of gun rights, and to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Cunningham has been growing his vote share. A June CNBC/Change Research showed Cunningham with 51% support in the state, with Tillis at 41%. With his victory in November, we can turn the Senate Blue and end Mitch McConnell’s reign as Majority Leader.

Cunningham has been endorsed by Brady Campaign, CWA Local 3611, End Citizens United, Equality NC, Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence, Human Rights Campaign PAC, IBEW, League of Conservation Voters, NARAL, National Organization for Women PAC, North Carolina Assoc. of Educators, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Sierra Club, and VoteVets.

Host Committee in development.

Tickets are

- Honorary Host \$850
- Host \$450
- Supporter \$250
- Friend \$150
- Young Professional \$50

Registration details to come. For questions, contact Ellen McGovern, WNDC Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Chair, at ellen.mcgovern@gmail.com.

SPEAKING FROM JERUSALEM: MAILING IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITARIANISM

*From Elizabeth Spiro Clark, Chair, Public Policy Committee
and Member, Human Rights Task Force*

The August 26 *New York Times* carried a report on Secretary of State Pompeo delivering a speech from Jerusalem to the Republican National Convention. The article quoted the President praising his move of the American Embassy to Jerusalem saying, “That’s for the evangelicals, it’s incredible.” What was incredible about it was not spelled out. Yes, it is a bone to the evangelical base, but what is the bone? The bone is the evangelical belief that “the Rapture,” the “End of Days,” when all true Christian believers—and any Jews who convert—will be taken up to Heaven. The Rapture, according to this narrative, requires that Israelis be in possession of all of Israel. There can be no peace with the Palestinians through, for example, a “Two State” solution.

America’s foreign policy is to be dictated by the religious beliefs of Pompeo and his fellow evangelicals at the top of the Trump Administration. “Dictated” is the key word here. This is not a question of being respectful of others’ different religious beliefs. They want to force their beliefs on all Americans through an authoritarian government. That is why it is not only justified to oppose the reasons Pompeo was speaking on Jerusalem, but our opposition is essential if we want to keep a country with the separation of church and state. We do not want the Pompeos and his like-minded colleagues to be able to tell us what our religious beliefs and actions must be. We must fight for our freedom.

