



United States Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman

Contact: Leslie Phillips
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October 10, 2003

LIEBERMAN SAYS DHS AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHOULD WORK TO PREPARE SCHOOLS FOR TERRORIST ATTACKS **Study Finds Schools Excluded from Terrorism Preparation**

WASHINGTON - Governmental Affairs Committee Ranking Member Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., said Friday the Administration has failed to deliver emergency planning guidance to America's schools and he called on the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Education to take adequate steps to ensure that schools are prepared for terrorist attacks.

"We must take every precaution to ensure that our nation's most valuable resource, our children, are safe in the event of a terrorist attack," Lieberman wrote in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. "I encourage DHS to work with the education community to develop meaningful strategies that will better prepare American schools to understand their role in defending themselves from terrorist attacks, and to devise methods to ensure that this information is more accessible to those who need it."

A recent survey by the National Association of School Resource Officers found that more than 76 percent of school-based police officers feel their schools are not prepared adequately to respond to a terrorist attack, and over 71 percent say their schools' teachers, administrators, security personnel, and support staff have received no terrorism-specific training.

Lieberman wrote that schools are also concerned that proposed cuts to the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS) programs, which fund many school safety officers, will exacerbate the problem.

DHS has teamed up with the Department of Education to provide an emergency planning website but NASRO officials contend that schools are largely unaware of this material.

Attached is Lieberman's letter:

October 10, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Rod Paige
Secretary

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretaries Ridge and Paige:

In our effort to defend our homeland, we must take every precaution to ensure that our nation's most valuable resource, our children, are safe in the event of a terrorist attack. However, a recent report prepared by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) indicates that the Administration is not helping nearly enough to meet this responsibility.

NASRO conducted a survey of 728 police and resource officers based in American schools and found that more than 76 percent feel that their schools are not prepared adequately to respond to a terrorist attack. More than 51 percent of respondents' schools have no specific formal guidelines to follow when there is a change in the National Homeland Security Threat Advisory System. More than 71 percent of respondents surveyed reported that their schools' teachers, administrators, security personnel, and support staff have received no terrorism-specific training. NASRO believes that federal, state and local, education and public safety agencies, as well as elected officials, should include schools in meaningful terrorism and homeland security planning.

The NASRO respondents also indicated that the U.S. Department of Education's recently announced \$38 million in emergency planning grants, to be distributed among 150 local education agencies, is inadequate. This finding is consistent with respondent reports of the significant gaps yet to be addressed in schools' current emergency planning and training. School officers' participating in the NASRO survey are also deeply concerned that proposed cuts to the Safe and Drug Free Schools program and the Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS), which funded many school safety officers, will further exacerbate schools' inability to adequately protect themselves.

In March, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) teamed up with the Department of Education to provide an emergency planning website, part of the Safe and Drug Free Schools initiative, that contains a planning document with the Administration's suggestions on how to best prepare for an emergency. That site is www.ed.gov/emergencyplan. Unfortunately, however, NASRO believes that schools are largely unaware of this website. The association also believes that without updated material, the site is of little or no use to those officers on the front lines charged with protecting our children and teachers.

Additionally, according to a September 25, 2003, Newsday article, the New York City Council, Public Safety Committee expressed concerns that schools are not prepared to handle another terrorist attack. As a result, the City's Police Department School Safety Division plans to create a new anti-terror task force to enhance area schools' ability to protect themselves.

I encourage DHS and the Department of Education to work with the education community to develop meaningful strategies that will better prepare American schools to understand their role in defending themselves from terrorist attacks, and to devise methods to ensure that this information is more accessible to those who need it. To facilitate my own understanding of your efforts, I would appreciate your response to the following questions by October 31, 2003:

- What are DHS and the Department of Education doing to address NASRO's concerns that schools are unaware of the emergency planning website, and that without updated material the site will not be useful to officers on the front line charged with protecting our children and teachers?
- What is DHS doing to address NASRO's concerns that decreases in funding for programs such as the COPS program and Safe and Drug Free Schools, and the subsequent loss of many school safety officers, may expose faculty and student bodies to greater risk?

- What steps can DHS and the Department of Education take to assist schools in training school based law enforcement officers (School Resource Officers), thus allowing them to train the staff and student leaders on a number of issues related to homeland security?
- How can DHS foster enhanced information sharing between law enforcement and schools to allow more access to guidance already created by DHS and Education?
- Does DHS plan to issue guidelines regarding how schools should respond to increases in the threat level under the terrorism advisory system? If so, when do you expect these guidelines to be issued?
- What steps are being taken to address NASRO's concern that the Department of Educator's \$38 million in emergency planning grants is inadequate?

Thank you for your attention to this request. Again, I would appreciate a response to these questions by October 31, 2003.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member

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