Paulette Jordan

School safety responses

Submitted via email.

*In the past two weeks, we have seen two large student protests at the Statehouse regarding school security and gun violence. But some have criticized these protests, especially on the national level. What is your general impression of the tone and the message of the student protests, particularly in Idaho?*

I am proud and inspired by the student activism that has ignited in our state and across the nation. Our students are most affected by school security. They are the ones we are put at risk when we refuse to work together to find common-sense solutions. Their voices deserve to be heard, and as their representation, it is our job to listen. The tone of their message is angry and urgent. They want sensible, precautionary legislation put in place, and they want it to be a state government priority.

*The demonstrators have, to a large degree, called for gun control. Is there a place for gun control, in any form, as part of a state strategy on school safety? Specifically, are there measures you would support, or measures you would oppose?*

The right to feel secure doesn’t apply to gun owners alone, it applies to all citizens. That’s why our right to carry comes with the responsibility to ensure only the most responsible and stable people utilize this right. The gun laws we already have in place currently support background checks, and we need to be stricter about enforcing these laws. I’m firmly in favor of universal background checks and banning bump stocks. I also believe in gun training and certification for enhanced public and gun owner safety.

*In your view, has the state of Idaho done enough to keep its schools safe? If not, what would be your top priority? What would a school safety plan look like in your administration?*

I believe Idaho has done a great job creating learning environments where our students feel safe. As governor, I would continue to take the steps necessary to improve the areas that need it. Right now that’s addressing the gun safety issue.

*Should the state do more — and allocate more resources — to add school resource officers or other employees to “harden” school sites?*

I do think we need to enhance security in schools, ensuring accountability and effective protection with a school resource officer and updated technology, keeping our kids safe under proper surveillance.

*Should the state do more to encourage or enable schools to arm teachers or other staffers? Do you believe such moves would make schools safer?*

It is not our teachers’ jobs to be security officers. They are paid to be educators, and shouldn’t be forced into shouldering such an immense responsibility. I don’t believe this is the solution to improving school safety.

*To what extent do you believe the school safety issue is a component of confronting issues such as bullying? If so, is there anything your administration would do differently to address the issue of bullying?*

I’m a huge proponent of ensuring all people feel safe and respected. I have zero tolerance for bullying of any kind. However, bullying in schools is not an issue that should overshadow the gun safety debate, they are separate issues that deserve their own attention and solutions. The best way to stop bullying is to address it early, in the home and in schools. We need to employ teachers who are trained in recognizing the signs of bullying and offer programs that help students learn empathy and conflict management. Parents also need to be an example, encouraging tolerance and being an ally for students in need. We can help increase student safety in schools and create an environment that fosters healthy relationship building between our children.