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GOP gubernatorial hopeful Scott Wagner: School shooters should get mandatory death penalty



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer Feb 27, 2018



Pennsylvania Senator and Republican gubernatorial candidate Scott Wagner gestures during an interview January 31, 2018.

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HARRISBURG — Republican gubernatorial candidate Scott Wagner said Monday he will introduce a bill in the state Senate to require a mandatory death sentence for school shootings that result in fatalities.

Wagner, a state senator from York County, said his bill — which would likely face a veto by Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf — would deter school shooters.

Wagner said he does not support more gun-control measures in the wake of the Florida school shooting that left 17 dead.

But he said the incident should be a “wakeup call” — one that leads to a “highly trained, armed security officer” in every school, a focus on mental health and increased mandatory minimum sentences for gun-related crimes.

“If we had an armed security officer in every school, I think we could step back from arming teachers,” Wagner said at the Pennsylvania Press Club lunch in Harrisburg. “But right now we have to protect our children. We have to do something.”

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ALEX GELI | Staff Writer

Some Pennsylvania schools, including some Lancaster County high schools, already have armed school resource officers. Many other schools do not.

Allowing school boards to arm teachers and school staff was the subject of [a bill that passed the Senate last year](#). Wagner supported the measure, as did Lancaster County’s two Republican senators, Ryan Aument of Landisville and Scott Martin of Martic Township.

Martin, in a statement about Wagner’s new bill on mandatory death sentences for convicted school shooters, said he supports “the death penalty being applicable to these massacres.”

“The individuals who look to commit these heinous acts should absolutely know what they face before making pre-meditated plans to destroy so many innocent lives,” Martin said, adding that the Florida shooter’s lawyers stated he would plead guilty if the state wouldn’t seek the death penalty.



"If someone kills one of our children, we will kill them."

Aument did not immediately return a request for comment about the potential death penalty requirement.

The last execution in Pennsylvania was 1999, and Wolf imposed a death penalty moratorium when he entered office in 2015.

Requiring it for convicted school shooters could also be unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that juries must be able to consider factors that might call for mercy, The Associated Press reported.

"If someone kills one of our children, we will kill them," Wagner said at the press club.

On gun control measures such as limiting the sales of semiautomatic weapons, Wagner said "it's not reasonable" to think that would have prevented the Florida shooting.

He went on to cite the failures of the FBI and other law enforcement officials to follow up on tips about the shooter beforehand.



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