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NEWS FROM THE 11TH DISTRICT

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY *by Legislator Thomas F. Barraga*

For a period of ten years commencing in the mid nineteen eighties I had the honor of being the ranking Republican on the State Assembly Education Committee. It gave me the opportunity of not only becoming well versed in all secondary and elementary education issues but the privilege of meeting teachers and school board members from all parts of New York. I never had any doubt that these individuals were completely dedicated and committed to our children and their educational well being. Unlike what one might read on the blogs from people who do not have the courage to sign their own names no one enters the education field, whether teacher or administrator, for the money; if they do they will fail. Although there were times where we disagreed on issues there was never any thought of doing anything that would result in a negative impact on educational outcomes. We all felt that the school building was a place for learning; where teachers as professionals could impart to their students the knowledge they acquired in pursuit of their degrees in education. There was never at that time the need for any discussion or concern regarding a child's safety in a school – it was a given.

Unfortunately and sadly in 2013 that has all changed as we now live in a world where as adults we face the reality and continued threat of fanatical terrorism and our children in schools have become victims and potential fatal targets of the mentally deranged with guns. The educators I know are absolutely appalled by these turn of events. They love the children they instruct and hate the subliminal fear they experience daily that some lunatic will do their students harm. It wasn't supposed to be this way. It is extremely difficult for anyone in the profession, whether teacher or administrator or for that matter myself as an elected representative to come to grips with the stark fact that it is time to place uniformed trained police in our schools. We are not supposed to have to do this; it is just not right but it is reality and absolutely necessary. In many parts of the country uniformed police are already in the schools; some are permanently assigned to buildings while others rotate among elementary schools. No single security measure can be fail safe for any given school but providing law enforcement presence is a step forward in deterring a potential devastating and fatal action against students. In addition, law enforcement officers assigned to school buildings to safeguard children can work with educators against drugs, bullying and negative peer pressure as well as assisting in the prevention of crime on and off campus.

New York State has just passed yet another law dealing with assault weapons and large capacity clips. Assault weapons purchased before January 15th 2013, the day the new law was signed, remain legal in New York and if one owns a ten round clip before the law you can keep it legally if you only load seven rounds. Criminals and the mentally ill do not follow the law.

Our teachers and children must be protected. Placing uniformed law enforcement officers in schools is costly and contrary to the DNA in most educators but in this day and age I have come to the reluctant conclusion that it is absolutely necessary.

We are not here as parents and grandparents to have our hearts broken because of evil especially when we have the ability to aggressively take the necessary steps to deter it.