



CALVIN CALLAHAN

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Protecting Kids at School

In April 2016, our area experienced an incident that hit very close to home. During Antigo High School's annual prom celebration, a former student shot two students as they were exiting the dance. Fortunately, there were Antigo police officers in the parking lot, and they were able to mitigate the threat and prevent additional violence.

Following my election to the State Assembly in 2020, I began looking into ways to prevent such scenarios from happening again. I found many products and services that help detect and prevent these situations from escalating. Traditional metal detectors provide moderate security, but other, more technologically advanced products could provide a more robust defense.

Vendors like ZeroEyes and Omnilert offer products that monitor school grounds for firearms utilizing preexisting camera systems. ZeroEyes currently operates in school districts in over 30 states and, with the assistance of artificial intelligence, can identify brandished firearms in seconds and notify school officials and law enforcement.

The quick identification of firearms and follow-up notification of school officials and law enforcement pave the way for a timely and appropriate response. Effective law enforcement response to threatening situations can only happen when they possess accurate information regarding the threat. Early detection provides this information to ensure the response meets the threat level.

With the realization that there are tools available to help schools detect and mitigate violent threats, I set to work on finding a way to encourage the adoption of these tools. I authored Assembly Bill 542 (AB 542) along with some of my colleagues.

The proposal invests \$4 million into a grant program that local school boards can access. Under the bill, districts would apply for the grant through the Office of School Safety at the Department of Justice. Applications could only be submitted with the liaison and involvement of local law enforcement.

After consultation, the school board and law enforcement would decide what tools to adopt to help proactively detect firearms on school grounds.

AB 542 recently passed the State Assembly with nearly unanimous bipartisan support. I was pleased to see my Assembly colleagues recognize the opportunity that these tools provide.

Before schools can access these tools, the proposal still needs approval from the State Senate and Governor Evers.

Prior to consideration by the full Senate, the Senate companion legislation, SB 523, must receive approval from the Senate Education Committee chaired by Senator Jagler (R-Watertown).

If you, too, believe these tools are worth investing in, I encourage you to contact your State Senator and share your thoughts. You can find out who your Senator is by calling 1-800-362-9472.

Representative Callahan represents the 35th Assembly District, which includes all of Lincoln and Langlade Counties, as well as portions of Marathon, Oconto, Oneida, and Shawano Counties.