

ANDRES OPPENHEIMER

## Kudos to Gables' Mayor Valdes-Fauli for proposing a ban on semi-automatic weapons

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Bravo! The mayor of Coral Gables has decided to challenge Florida laws and call for a ban of all semi-automatic weapons in his city.

In the wake of the Parkland high school tragedy, in which a 19-year-old with a semi-automatic AR-15 rifle killed 17 people and left many others wounded, Raul Valdes-Fauli is not proposing taking baby steps, such as Florida Gov. Rick Scott's suggestion to ban sales of semi-automatic weapons to anyone under 21. Scott's proposal still would allow many people over 21 to buy what essentially is a weapon of war and mow down innocent people anywhere.

The mayor of Coral Gables says he will request the Coral Gables City Commission on Tuesday to pass an ordinance banning the sale or use of all semi-automatic weapons in his city, whether you are 18 or 80.

Under Florida's extremely lax gun laws, cities cannot pass stricter gun regulations. The state law further says that if any municipality modifies state gun laws, there could be a civil fine of up to \$5,000 "against the elected or appointed local government official" responsible for the change.

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In an interview Monday, Valdes-Fauli told me that he doesn't care about the personal fine. "If that helps prevent the death of one of Coral Gables' children, I would happily pay it," he told me.

He said the city attorney certainly will object to his gun-safety measure. "I'll tell him that we should go ahead anyway. Other city mayors should do the same," he added.

Coral Gables, an upscale community of about 51,000 people located southwest of downtown Miami, has not known gun shops, but has had many gun shows, Valdes-Fauli said.

"I'm not in favor of outlawing all guns," Valdes-Fauli said. But as things are now, "we are basically allowing all guns, and put them in the hands of anyone who wants them."

The Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms, but doesn't protect the right to buy a machine gun, or a missile. Just as the First Amendment's protects free speech, but doesn't give a license to people to libel others.

Nikolas Cruz, the gunman who carried out the massacre at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, would not have been able to kill so many people in so little time if instead of having an AR-15 rifle — in effect a machine gun — he only had a knife, or a hand gun.

President Trump and the National Rifle Association (NRA), which gave more than \$50 million in campaign contributions to the Trump campaign and Republican candidates — plus, for anti-Hillary Clinton ads in the 2016 campaign — wants to arm teachers to prevent new mass shootings. It may be the NRA's effort to sell more guns: Even if only 20 percent of America's 3.5 million teachers are armed, that could amount to the sale of 700,000 new guns.

Trump says that more weapons in schools would help prevent new massacres, because the shooters would be afraid of being killed by armed teachers.

But Valdes-Fauli rightly counters that arming teachers is a terrible idea. "Teachers have a complicated enough job as it is. Can you imagine teachers who are not trained for this, to engage in shootouts with somebody with a semi-automatic weapon while children are running in all directions? It's ludicrous," the mayor told me.

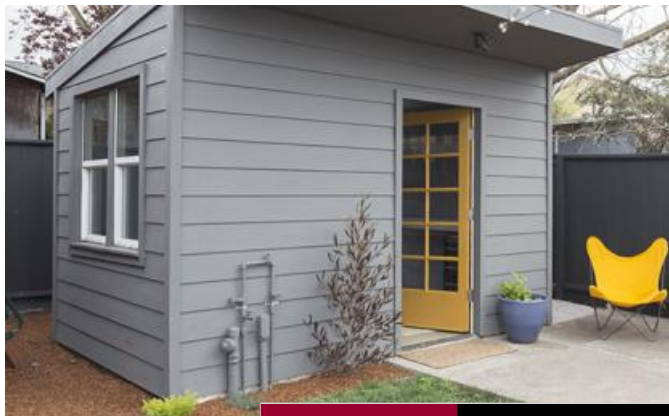
Most teachers agree that Trump's NRA-backed proposal is insane. Putting weapons in hands of teachers will put teachers in harm's way — imagine what would happen if a SWAT team storms into a school and sees an armed adult — and may encourage some troubled students to forcefully take away their teachers' guns and start shooting.

Most teachers are underpaid; many work additional jobs. They can barely cope with current stress levels. Though a Broward Sheriff's officer on duty said Monday that he did not enter the school because he thought the shooting was happening outside, if he and colleagues, indeed, were under-armed or paralyzed by fear, would elementary-school music teachers be any different?

Mayors across Florida, and across the nation, should follow Valdes-Fauli's lead before another tragedy shakes the nation. This madness has to stop.

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