

# [***Tennessee governor signs bill allowing teachers and staff to be armed on campus***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BWV-8051-DY7V-G017-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed legislation Friday allowing [*teachers and school staff in the state to be armed*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/23/us/tennessee-teachers-gun-carry-bill/index.html) in school buildings and campuses, according to the General Assembly's website.

State legislators approved the bill Tuesday, which authorizes a faculty or staff member of a school to carry a concealed handgun on school grounds, subject to [*certain conditions*](https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=SB1325&GA=113) including having approval from the principal and others to possess a gun.

"I think we need to be really clear about what the law does -- districts have the right to choose." Lee, a Republican, told [*CNN affiliate WSMV*](https://www.wsmv.com/2024/04/25/governor-says-he-will-sign-bill-arm-teachers-school/) during a news conference Thursday following the end of the General Assembly's legislative session.

"What's important to me is that we give districts tools and the option to use a tool that will keep their children safe in their schools," Lee said Thursday.

CNN reached out to Lee's office for further comment.

The bill puts the [*nationwide debate over arming educators*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/31/us/teachers-guns-school-safety/index.html) back in the spotlight as mass shootings continue not only in American schools but at parades, festivals, places of worship and more. Gun violence is the [*leading killer of children in the United States*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/29/health/us-children-gun-deaths-dg/index.html). So far, 443 children younger than 18 have been killed in gun violence this year, according to data from the [*Gun Violence Archive*](https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/).

Thirty-four states bar teachers and the general public from carrying guns in K-12 schools, according to [*data from Everytown for Gun Safety*](https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/no-guns-in-k-12-schools/).

In Tennessee, school personnel who want to carry a concealed weapon must:

· Get an enhanced carry permit

· Get written authorization from the superintendent, principal and the chief of the appropriate law enforcement agency

· Complete 40 hours of basic training in school policing and 40 hours of Peace Officer's Standards and Training commission-approved training that is specific to school policing each year at the educator's expense

· Complete a background check

· Undergo a psychological exam conducted by a Tennessee-licensed health care provider

The law does not, however, allow people to openly carry weapons "or in any other manner in which the handgun is visible to ordinary observation," and does not allow handguns to be carried in "stadiums, gymnasiums, or auditoriums when school-sponsored events are in progress," nor in meetings where tenure or disciplinary matters are being discussed.

Also, parents would not necessarily know or be notified if their child's teacher were armed - a point of contention for many of the law's opponents.

"A teacher is not allowed to put a rainbow flag on her desk, but she's allowed to carry a gun in this state," Democratic state Sen. Raumesh Akbari said.

After the vote on the bill earlier this week, people were heard chanting, "Blood on your hands" to members of the Legislature.

In a statement issued Wednesday, the Tennessee Education Association said the governor should work on measures allowing teachers to focus on education and ones that don't put students in "greater danger."

The teachers' organization quoted one social worker who said she was an expert in education and not in marksmanship.

Another educator applauded lawmakers for trying to improve safety but said the law won't do that.

"I want nothing more than for my students to get home safely at the end of the day but there has to be a better way to get that done than relying on me to carry a gun," Chris Cogdill, a government and ***politics*** teacher at Jefferson County High School, said.

By Amanda Musa and Jamiel Lynch, CNN

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