**The Common Good**

**Balancing Rights in Modern Issues**

**Your Name** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Choose**one** scenario from the list in the lesson. If you want to choose a scenario not listed, please contact your instructor for approval.

Your Scenario: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Based on your scenario, research the rationale for and against the proposed action. You will need **at least four** reputable sources total—two in support of and two against the proposed action. Sources could be government websites, interest groups, or even research organizations. You might find sources that detail both support and opposition---just be sure that you have balanced research.   
     
   Be sure to save the author, title, publisher, date, and URL address of each source. You will cite them in MLA style at the end of your essay.

**Citation Format:**

Author last name, First name. “Title of Article.” Website name, Day Month Year, URL address.

**Your Citations:**

Source #1—supports

Source #2—supports

Source #3—opposes

Source #4—opposes

1. Write your essay using the following structure:
   1. **Introduce** your chosen scenario, discussing why it is an issue. Describe the limitation to individual rights or interests that is proposed in the scenario.
   2. Discuss at least two reasons to **support** this limitation. Refer to your research sources to support these reasons.
   3. Discuss at least two reasons to **oppose** this limitation. Refer to your research sources to support these reasons.
   4. **Take a stand**. Conclude with which side has the strongest argument and the reasons why it is more robust, considering your research evidence.
2. Cite your sources using MLA format and list them at the bottom of your essay.

The issue of student safety in U.S. schools has gained increased attention in recent years with the increased concern about violence and possession of weapons on school grounds. One solution that has caused much controversy is the use of metal detectors in high schools. The argument in favor of metal detectors is that they will keep weapons from being brought to school and will keep everyone on school grounds safe. Opponents have questioned the effectiveness of such measures and cited the expense and the harm they would do to the school culture. As school districts all over the country consider implementing metal detectors, both the potential benefits and the arguments made by opponents should be weighed.

Those who support metal detectors in schools argue that the devices have the potential to significantly reduce the likelihood that weapons will be brought onto school campuses. Evidence shows that metal detectors have the potential to be an effective deterrent and discourage students from bringing guns or knives to school. One study found that students were 43% less likely to carry a weapon to school after metal detectors were installed at school entrances. Beyond the deterrent effect, metal detectors have the potential to keep weapons from entering school campuses in the first place and thereby reduce the threat of violence. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system in North Carolina saw a dramatic decrease in the number of firearms found on school campuses after installing AI-based metal detectors, with the number found dropping from 31 to 7 in one year. What that shows is that if used correctly, metal detectors have the direct potential to keep harmful objects from being introduced onto school campuses and thereby prevent violent crimes from taking place.

Another argument in favor of metal detectors is the sense of security they can provide to parents, students, and staff members. A national poll indicated that over 90% of parents believe that schools should be equipped with metal detectors to scan for weapons. The argument in favor of the devices is that they can reassure parents and students that steps are being taken to keep the school grounds safe. With school violence and school shootings being so prominent in the news headlines today, many feel that having security in the form of metal detectors helps to promote a sense of protection. With metal detectors and other security devices in place, they can aid in creating an environment in which the student body will be safer and can learn without the threat of violence.

There are several strong arguments in opposition to the implementation of metal detectors in schools. One of the primary concerns is that the devices have questionable effectiveness. Despite years of extensive use, research has not been able to find much evidence that metal detectors have served to discourage overall school violence. A 15-year study concluded that the implementation of metal detectors had "insufficient evidence" to establish long-term effectiveness in preventing violent incidents. Further, opponents argue that metal detectors only provide a false sense of security since determined individuals will always find a way to bypass security systems or bring in weapons through alternative methods. For instance, even in public settings such as airports, metal detectors have not been effective in preventing all forms of violence such as mass shootings using guns that may not trigger the detectors. Therefore, critics argue that metal detectors should not be considered foolproof but part of an overall security strategy.

Another factor to consider is the cost of installing and operating metal detectors. The expense to the school system in purchasing the equipment, to employ additional security to man the equipment, and to coordinate the logistics of screening all the children can be prohibitive. One school system spent about $19 million over four years to install and operate the security devices. Opponents argue that the money would be better spent on other safety measures, such as mental health programs or additional school counselors to treat the causes of violence rather than the symptoms. The time spent screening children in the morning can also cause delays and interrupt the school day, and have a negative impact on the school climate.

Critics additionally argue that metal detectors have a negative impact on the school atmosphere. Routine screening can make the students feel they are criminalized and not young individuals in a school setting. It has been found that the security measures in schools where metal detectors have been installed actually make the students feel less secure because they reinforce a “prison-like” atmosphere. Alienation can erode the relationship between the school administration and the students and make the students feel they are constantly being watched. Over time, such an atmosphere can hinder the formation of a healthy school atmosphere and impact student performance in school. Additionally, metal detectors have implications in terms of student rights because regular searches in personal belongings can be seen as an invasion of personal space. Civil liberties organizations like the ACLU have expressed concern about the intrusiveness of the measures and argued that they infringe upon the constitutional rights of the students. Additionally, critics argue that the use of metal detectors disproportionately targets minority and poor children and contributes to disparities in school discipline and surveillance.

In conclusion, while metal detectors have some value in the detection of weapons and in ensuring security, the argument against using them is strong. The expense to the school budget, the practical challenges in installing and maintaining them, and the negative impact they have on the school culture suggest that they are not the ideal solution to ensuring safety to students. Instead of using metal detectors as a primary security measure, schools would be better served to look to alternative options, such as improving mental health services, building positive student-staff relations, and developing conflict resolution skills. Ultimately, a balanced response that weighs safety and student well-being equally will be needed to create a secure and supportive school culture.

Westfall, Austin. "North Carolina School District Installs AI-Driven Metal Detectors: 'Proven to Be Very Successful'." Fox News, 30 June 2023, [www.foxnews.com/us/north-carolina-school-district-installs-ai-driven-metal-detectors-proven-successful](http://www.foxnews.com/us/north-carolina-school-district-installs-ai-driven-metal-detectors-proven-successful).

Mudd, Brian. "Q&A of the Day – The Impact of Metal Detectors on School Safety." 1290 WJNO (iHeartMedia), 7 Feb. 2024, <https://wjno.iheart.com/featured/brian-mudd/content/2024-02-07-qa-of-the-day-the-impact-of-metal-detectors-on-school-safety>

Citizens for Juvenile Justice. "Metal Detectors: 'Security Theater,' Not Safer Schools." Feb. 2023, www.cfjj.org/metal-detectors.

Stanley, Jay. "Are Gun Detectors the Answer to Mass Shootings?" American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), 2 Nov. 2022, [www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/are-gun-detectors-the-answer-to-mass-shootings](http://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/are-gun-detectors-the-answer-to-mass-shootings).