



#ARMMEWITH Respect!

By Shawnta S. Barnes - February 25, 2018

**#ARMMEWITH
A RESPECTED PROFESSION**

**Educators are the experts;
ask us what we need BEFORE
you make suggestions without
ever serving in this profession**

join the movement

In the song, "Respect," originally written and recorded by Otis Redding is the lyric, "All I'm askin' is for a little respect." I want to belt that line like Aretha Franklin did in her cover of the song to anyone who is suggesting I be armed with a gun in my classroom. It doesn't help when the disrespect towards teachers comes from the White House.

I felt disrespected when President Trump suggested teachers receive bonuses for being armed in the classroom. How many times do educators

have to tell people to stop making suggestions without understanding our profession? That's disrespectful. We are the experts. We live and breathe classroom life, so before anyone suggests we should be armed, they need to talk to educators. Making suggestions and decisions without our input or support tears down our profession and adds to the perception that we are just babysitters and not professionals with years of training and expertise.

We already have a teacher shortage problem due to other issues in our profession such as a lack of supplies, crowded classrooms, little funding for mental health services, and salaries lower than other professionals. Now, you want to add taking the life of an intruder to our load. Think about it. You are asking teachers to potentially kill an intruder that may have been a former student. This is not what we signed up to do. We entered college to help improve the lives of our future students, not to take life.

Although this may not be known by most, occasionally students are able to slip into areas and take items that do not belong to them. What if the item was a gun? Instead of decreasing the occurrence of school shootings, we would be providing an opportunity for students to have access to a gun already on campus. This is also a stressful profession. Do you want a teacher under stress to have to make a split second decision with a gun?

Even though it has been legal since 2013 in Indiana for school boards to allow teachers to have guns on campus, I don't want that responsibility. Many times, I am asked what would make me walk away from this profession. Requiring me to be armed would be the day I pack up my desk and walk away. Even if it was an opt-in situation, I still would consider walking away. I'm not comfortable teaching next door to a colleague who is armed.

If you want to elevate our profession and if you want to make schools safer, begin the dialogue with educators because we know what is best for our school environments.