

or firearms on school premises represent a safer and more appropriate approach to teaching students about gun safety.

In addition, I prefer the original provisions of Senate Bill 124, which required the teaching of gun safety within the health education program, to the final version of House Bill 791, which allows a county board to implement its gun safety program in conjunction with "a community or civic organization," such as the National Rifle Association. Once a policy is established to require the teaching of gun safety, or any other mandated curriculum, it should be the responsibility of the teachers to conduct the instruction. While it is certainly appropriate to integrate law enforcement officers or other members of the community into this type of instruction, or in the teaching of any subject, the flexibility given to a county board to teach this subject "in conjunction" with another entity goes too far.

Throughout this process, teachers and school administrators have raised concerns about the demands that requiring gun safety education would place on the schools and the teachers. For the most part, however, I believe these professionals would have accepted the responsibility that would have accompanied the implementation of other versions of this and similar bills. Provisions in the final version of the bill, particularly the removal of the gun safety program from the health education curriculum (as embodied in Senate Bill 124) in favor of the establishment of a separate program, the potential involvement of outside entities, and the probability of organizing field trips to shooting ranges, have prompted teachers and administrators to request a veto of this bill.

The goal of teaching children about the inherent danger associated with firearms is a laudable one. I sincerely appreciate the efforts of the sponsors and gun safety advocates to develop a gun safety education program. Unfortunately, the final version of the bill does not create the type of program that should be used in our schools. I look forward to working with the sponsor and the advocates to craft a bill that meets the concerns expressed in this letter.

For the above reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 791.

Sincerely,
Parris N. Glendening
Governor

House Bill No. 791

AN ACT concerning

Education - Public Schools - ~~Firearms Accident Prevention Program~~ Firearms Safety and Accident Prevention Education Program

FOR the purpose of requiring the State Board of Education to establish ~~a certain policy and guidelines for a certain firearms safety and accident prevention program for certain students to be implemented by each county board of education; requiring the program to incorporate a certain national firearms accident prevention program;~~ requiring each county board to implement the program; authorizing a county board to implement the program in conjunction