

# The Salt Lake Tribune

## Senate witness: Utah gun law ‘successful model’ to protect schools

By Thomas Burr January 30, 2013

---

Washington » At a Senate hearing on gun violence, a Denver University professor cited Utah’s law allowing teachers to carry concealed weapons as a "successful model" for protecting children.

The Utah law has been in place for many years, and "we’ve never had a single problem," testified David Kopel, an adjunct professor at the Denver school and an analyst with the libertarian Cato Institute. "Quite notably, we’ve never had an attack on a Utah school."

Kopel made his point Wednesday as one of a panel of witnesses addressing the Senate Judiciary Committee about potential gun control laws in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., massacre where 20 children and six educators were killed by a lone gunman. Utah law specifically says a concealed-firearm permit holder can carry a loaded and hidden gun into public schools.

The National Rifle Association’s chief executive officer, Wayne LaPierre, didn’t mention Utah’s law during his comments, though he continued to press for more armed security in schools.

"It’s time to throw an immediate blanket of security around our children," LaPierre said. "About a third of our schools have armed security already — because it works."

Earlier, former Rep. Gabby Giffords, herself a victim of gun violence that has stunted her speech, told the Senate Committee to be "bold" and "courageous" in acting to stem gun violence.

"Violence is a big problem," Giffords said. "Too many people are dying; too many children. We must do something. It will be hard but the time is now."

Giffords, who was shot in the head while holding a congressional event in her hometown of Tucson, Ariz., said lawmakers "must act."

"Americans are counting on you," she said.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, on which Utah Sens. Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee sit, is the first congressional panel to take up the issue of gun control after the Newtown shooting. In a nod to the controversial nature of the subject, scores of people waited in

line to see the hearing, likely the most packed hearing since the health care legislative debate.

Giffords' husband, former astronaut Mark Kelly, added that he and Giffords own guns and don't plan to relinquish them. That said, there are ways to reduce the access to guns to those who cause violence in our communities, he added.

"When dangerous people get dangerous guns, we are all the more vulnerable," Kelly testified. "Dangerous people with weapons specifically designed to inflict maximum lethality upon others have turned every corner of our society into places of carnage and gross human loss."

Hatch and Lee are expected to question the witnesses as the hearing continues Wednesday.