



August 2013

Re: Indiana's Teacher Protection Act & Ongoing efforts in School Safety

Dear Indiana Teacher:

A new school year is upon us bringing with it the excitement of new friendships, academic achievements and always new challenges. Over the past year, enhancing safety within our schools has also been added to the list of crucial issues on which to focus.

It was four years ago that the Indiana General Assembly passed the Teacher Protection Act. This Act provides teachers in our public schools the right to take any disciplinary action necessary to promote appropriate student conduct and to maintain order in the classroom. The act is intended to ensure you are empowered to take disciplinary action as necessary and appropriate under the rules of your school board.

Each year, the statute provides that the Indiana Attorney General's Office send official notice of the Act through the Department of Education so the fear of litigation will not limit or hinder your ability as a teacher to maintain order in the classroom. While the Attorney General's Office was already authorized to defend you from any civil lawsuit filed over a disciplinary action you believed was necessary and appropriate under the circumstances, the clear intent of the law enacted in 2009 was to reinforce annually vital public policy of maintaining order in the classroom so that all students receive the education that our Indiana Constitution guarantees.

It is important you become familiar with the specific policies of your school board as it relates to discipline. There is additional information regarding teachers' rights under the 2009 law available on the Attorney General's website at: <http://www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/2467.htm>. Our attorneys are proud to give public school employees the confidence to know their actions conducted within the confines of their school policies will be supported and defended by their state Attorney General. Teachers who have been served with notice regarding potential litigation concerning their classroom disciplinary actions can contact the Attorney General's constituent-services number at 317.232.6310 to be directly connected with a Deputy Attorney General in the Litigation Division who will evaluate their case.

While the state has legal procedures in place to assist teachers, this year our legislature has taken an important step to provide additional funding for our schools to support the physical safety of students, teachers and administrators. A grant program that provides schools the ability to seek financial support for such efforts has been instituted so that schools can add safety features such as school resource officers (SROs), who can be part of an overall safety plan as we all strive to find solutions to combat violence.

In a survey conducted by the Attorney General's Office last fall and provided to our legislative partners, overwhelmingly, schools and teachers responded that an SRO would be beneficial and helpful in their efforts to maintain safety and quality of learning environment within their buildings. As members of Indiana's Secured School Safety Board, we hope that your schools will seek funding through the application process this summer to bolster all of our efforts in making our schools the safe learning environment that we all expect <http://www.in.gov/dhs/3820.htm>.

Please know the attorneys and staff in the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Education stand ready in our support for teachers, as you serve this most vital role in providing the children of our state the education they deserve.

Sincerely,



Glenda Ritz
Superintendent of Public Instruction



Gregory F. Zoeller
Indiana Attorney General