



For Immediate Release
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**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN JOINS NATIONAL TASK FORCE
TO EXAMINE LEGAL AND POLICY BARRIERS TO ENSURING
SCHOOL SAFETY**

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that she has joined other state Attorneys General in a coordinated effort to examine legal issues related to school violence and safety.

After the recent outbreak of violence on college campuses and schools, Madigan and other members of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), will work through a Task Force on School Safety to identify legal and policy barriers to ensuring safe learning environments for students.

“As the chief legal officers of states, Attorneys General have a unique role in working to ensure that all places of learning are safe, secure and free from fear and violence,” Madigan said.

The Task Force will work to identify innovative programs, policies, and legislative initiatives that may serve to fill in the gaps in existing school safety protocols.

“There are a number of critical areas this task force must address, including examining strategies for improving inter-agency communication and training to strengthen response by law enforcement to crisis situations that occur in the educational environment,” said Attorney General Patrick Lynch, Task Force co-chair. “Attorneys General are well-equipped to assist local law enforcement authorities and make recommendations on where our jurisdictions stand in terms of crisis preparedness.”

On May 3, several former Attorneys General now serving in the United States Senate wrote to Attorneys General asking them to assess the state of campus security around the country and make recommendations for improvements. U.S. Senators Joe Lieberman (CT), Mark Pryor (AR), Ken Salazar (CO), and Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) asked Attorneys General to respond to questions surrounding contingency trainings, safety practices, and emergency notification procedures, as well as actions the federal government can take to facilitate emergency planning and law enforcement response on college campuses.

“Unfortunately, this is not a new topic,” NAAG President Thurbert Baker said. “In 1999, Attorneys General issued a national report on youth violence and school safety following a spate of fatal school shootings in Colorado and

Mississippi. Now, we're planning to revisit those recommendations and, hopefully, identify even better measures states can adopt to create safer environments for our children."

Recent statistics indicate that the rate of serious violent crime has fallen and that college campuses are relatively safe places on which students can live and learn. Since the early 1990s, there have been on average 20 murders on campuses each year, out of some 16 million students who attend annually, according to a recent report in *U.S. News and World Report*. However, the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech underscores the need for continued work by Attorneys General, law enforcement, school officials, mental health experts, and other groups to ensure a learning environment that is free from violence.

"We need to develop best practices and explore all possible solutions to protect students from senseless acts of violence," Madigan continued.

Experts in school security, behavioral specialists, educators, students, and other advocates will be invited to meet with Attorneys General to develop a comprehensive report with recommendations to the states in September.

NAAG is the professional membership association of the nation's 56 elected and appointed state Attorneys General.

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