

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation amending the Pennsylvania Crimes Code to establish a safety zone distance near a school, daycare or playground, in which target shooting activities would be unlawful.

As you may be aware, there was recently an incident in my legislative district where a stray bullet struck a window at Resica Elementary School while students were in classes. The bullet struck the outer pane of a second-grade classroom window, but didn't penetrate the inner pane of the double-paned window.

When police arrived minutes later at the school they could hear shots. Students were moved to another part of the school, which remained in lockdown until the shooters were located. Troopers tracked down people who were target shooting with handguns and rifles about a half mile away from the school. Twenty students were in the classroom when the bullet hit the window. Fortunately in this instance, all students were inside the building and no one was injured.

The Monroe County District Attorney's office reviewed the incident and a ballistics test and determined that no criminal negligence existed. The test, conducted at the Pennsylvania State Police Crime Lab, revealed the bullet came from one of the firearms being used for target shooting by the group in question.

School district officials invited parents and faculty to the school to discuss the incident the next day. Parents were shocked to learn from state police that a gun could be legally discharged as little as 50 yards from the school.

While there is a restriction on the possession or use of a firearm on school property, and there is a safety zone for hunting with a firearm near a school, daycare or playground, there is no restriction in state law on target shooting near a school, playground or daycare center. Such restrictions on the discharge or use of a firearm generally fall under local ordinance.

I believe there needs to be a defined safety zone for target shooting activities near schools, daycares and playgrounds in state law. We must have the ability to enforce these safety measures to better protect our children, especially in the areas outside of the school where they may be more vulnerable.

My legislation would set a defined safety zone distance for target shooting within or through an area of 150 yards around any school or day care center, or any attached or detached playground of a school or daycare center, in which it would be illegal to discharge a firearm while target shooting. This is the same as the safety zone under the Game Code for firearm hunting near a school or daycare.

A violation under this section will be a summary offense carrying a fine of \$200-\$500, with second or subsequent offenses within two years carrying a fine of \$500-\$1000. I believe it is more than reasonable to expect the same responsibility of safe conduct by

target shooters that we expect of our hunters, especially for activities near schools, day care centers and playgrounds.