



Episode 1,108: Teacher: School “Walkouts” for Gun Control Are Illegal

GUEST: Anonymous Guest

WOODS: All right, so let's talk about your situation here. You are against the walkout that is taking place next week, as we are speaking. And you're afraid that if you were to speak out and it were to be known, that there could be repercussions, it could get ugly, who knows what would happen to you? It's almost as if there's only one point of view allowed in these institutions?

GUEST: [laughing] Go figure, right? Yeah, contrary to popular belief, there are a handful of conservative-minded teachers that work in the public schools, like myself, but not too many. They keep a handful of us around in case something goes wrong, they'll have somebody to blame, I suppose.

WOODS: So all right, tell me about what's going on. Why do you think this walkout is a problem?

GUEST: Okay, well, it's a little bit of a multistep explanation. But the primary reason I think it's a problem is because the walkout itself is illegal activity, and this is something that I haven't seen mentioned anywhere. I'm surprised no right-wing news outlets have even picked up on this. But we are public employees, and so we're prohibited from doing certain things while at school in the workplace, because we're working on behalf of the public. Basically, we're paid by the people in our district.

So before I give you more explanation on why specifically that's so, I guess I have to underscore that, first of all, this is coming on the heels of the terrible tragedy. Everyone knows by now about the shooting that happened down in Florida and the 17 kids that were killed down there. As a result of that, this group called the Women's March Youth Empower is promoting a student walkout, which is going to be on Wednesday, the 14th. For 17 minutes at 10 o'clock in the respective time zones, students are to walk out of school and go out on the school grounds for 17 minutes, one minute to commemorate each of the slain children. And for that reason, it's the students engaging in a political protest on the school grounds. That's basically how they're selling it.

If you look right on their website – I just clicked on “Host Guidelines” for the national school walkout. Basically it says, what are we doing? It says, “A mass school walkout, led by youth, to protest Congress' inaction to do more than tweet thoughts and prayers after school shootings. We need action. We demand Congress pass sensible legislation that would help keep us and our loved ones safe from gun violence at school, and beyond. Since Sandy Hook there have been over 200 school shootings resulting in over 400 people shot since Sandy Hook.”

So this is not just standing outside school to commemorate the fallen. This isn't just standing outside school to promote safety or some other kind of promoting safe kids, as if anybody could really be opposed to that. This is decidedly political in intention. They want to – presumably, this youth movement wants Congress to change laws. So you would agree that that is decidedly a political activity.

WOODS: Yeah.

GUEST: Now, contrary to what they say as far as it being led by students, I have some evidence to the contrary that this is not actually students themselves that are engaging in this, but really it's about liberal, leftist teachers and administrators who work in the schools who are using the students to promote their values and to try to push their particular agenda. In this case, it happens to be proposing a gun ban.

So just for instance, this thing cropped up incredibly fast. I mean, the shooting itself was only a couple weeks ago, and already this thing has gone national. They have nearly 2,000 schools all around America and a few other schools around the world that have signed up to participate in this. So there's a heck of a lot of schools that are participating, and that would be – I don't know how many exact students would be involved in total in this, but this isn't a small thing. This is a really, really large political protest that's happening on the public grounds of public schools, not private schools. We're talking public schools here.

And this isn't just high schools either, but I have evidence where I've looked and – you can go right on their website and go right on their map. You can look up in your own town or your own county which schools have signed up to participate in this. And there's a whole lot of them, so it's not just that, oh well, it's some 17- or 18-year-old high school students that have the political wherewithal to make up their mind to try to make some kind of statement about this. Okay, you could convince me if it were purely high schools, but there's a lot of middle schools that have signed up for this, and that's age – what? 10 through 13? There's even a lot of elementary schools that have signed up for this. There's even entire school districts that have signed up for this. So you're trying to tell me that some 10th- or 11th-grade kid at a high school had the savvy and wherewithal to somehow sign up the entire district for something that this one individual student wanted to engage in? Does that sound realistic to you, Tom?

WOODS: Well, my question is – of course obviously it does seem like something more than just the ingenuity of a bunch of high school kids may be going on here, but has anyone else publicly made the point that you're making right now, as far as you know? That, given that this is political activity and not just an innocent memorial to the fallen, you're not allowed to do it? Or is this just something you've thought of and no one has taken it any further?

GUEST: I don't know that anyone – I haven't seen anywhere else anybody mentioning this particular point, which –

WOODS: Seems like it's the key point, doesn't it?

GUEST: It is rather important, and it would – I think just the nature of the protest itself is a side issue. The most important issue is that you're engaging in some kind of political activity at a public school and to see why there are laws against this kind of activity. It's fairly obvious. There are laws in my state and I'm sure in every state across the country prohibiting

certain things in public school. Of course everyone knows the separation of church and state, so I couldn't just start preaching "come to Jesus" lessons in my classroom. That's a prohibited activity if you think school's supposed to be purely about academics and teaching kids how to think, not what to think, presumably, right?

WOODS: Yeah.

GUEST: So along with the separation of religion and academics, there's also politics are prohibited in being engaged in by all public employees, including and especially public school teachers. And the reason for that is fairly obvious: because while I'm working at a school, I'm being paid by the public. So if you think about it, my salary every year comes from the taxpayers that live in the area in which my school district is situated. So people's property tax money in part goes to fund my salary. So while I'm working at the school during school hours while I'm performing my public duties as a school teacher, I am working on other people's behalf and I'm being paid by them through their tax money.

That includes every minute of the school day, including the 17 minutes of this particular protest. It's not like they're going to suspend our pay for 17 minutes. In reality, it's going to be a bit more than 17 minutes when you take into account the logistics of kids actually moving out of the building, standing outside, and moving back in until you can resume order. We're talking about the better part of a half hour.

But even that is a side issue, the amount of time that it lasts, because I've heard a few other teachers bring this up when I posed some questions about it. And I heard rationalizations like, *Yeah, but it's just 17 minutes*. But I think it's the principle of the thing here, not the amount of time. If this is okay to do for 17 minutes, then why wouldn't it be okay for a couple months from now for them to have another protest that's 30 minutes? And why not another month, we could do another one for an hour? Heck, let's dedicate an entire day to a particular agenda and have the kids out protesting for the whole day. Why not have just a full-on Occupy School type of movement with a tent city outside and students refusing to go to school for an entire week?

WOODS: Yeah, and of course the impression you get at these kind of events is there's only one way to think. There's one way to approach this question, and pretty much anybody who doesn't think this way is dehumanized because they have no representation, no voice. We just assume them out of existence, and we just stand there and bark into a megaphone.

Here's what I want to know. These days after that school shooting but before this walkout, what is the atmosphere in your school like? Now, your school is not in the same state, we'll just say, as the school shooting. You're not in Florida, so you're in one of the 49 other states.

GUEST: Correct.

WOODS: But yet I'm sure the students are talking about it. Is there this sense that people are walking around with a chip on their shoulders that only I have the right way to think about this and because I'm a young person I'm uniquely endowed with a special kind of wisdom and everyone needs to shut up and listen to me, and that wisdom turns out to be like gun control stuff from the 1970s?

GUEST: Well, that's how the left is trying to spin this, that this is outraged teenagers really pushing for the change that their stuffy, conservative-minded parents are too apathetic to bring about, something along those lines. But that's just not the case. In my particular school, there are eight students out of the entire school, eight students out of more than a thousand kids who signed up our school to participate in this. Now, that in itself is problematic because nobody did a survey of the school to ask anybody, including me, whether or not we thought this was a good idea, whether or not we wished to participate in this. It's being done anyway.

And so to answer your question of the prevailing sentiment among the teachers, nearly everybody with the exception of a very few people in the building that I've talked to are unquestioningly in favor of this – which is astounding when you think of it. It's been astounding to me how forgiving people are of compromising things like laws when the laws are not in the best interest, even for liberals that are supposedly all about laws and regulation. I mean, these people never saw a regulation that they didn't like. And now suddenly we have a pesky little state law saying you can't engage in political activity during the school grounds, and they want to kind of just sideline that little detail and go about doing it anyway.

So we actually had a meeting the other day. It was a voluntary meeting for the teachers to basically discuss how to go about responding to the fact that some students signed the school up to participate in this. So it's a problem that – it would be an entirely different story if this were happening on a Saturday and this happened to be at a public park, or it could even be on the school grounds but it's not a work day. It's not when we're publicly employed as teachers; it's just you can come as an independent citizen and participate if you wish or not, whether you're a student or a teacher or whoever. But I think that this group, Women's March Youth Empower, of course doesn't want that because they're not going to get nearly the amount of numbers that they would than when kids are basically mandatory-forced into being in school anyways, so there's your numbers right there.

There's a number of other things that is disturbing about this, but to get back to what I was saying, when we had the meeting the other day, my school principal was mainly – he and some of the other teachers just started mainly talking logistics. Like, okay, so how are we going to go about doing this? How are we going to go about maintaining order and making sure all the kids are accounted for and making sure all the kids are safe? Because these are things we would need to do in the case of like an ordinary fire drill or something. All the students exit the building, they'll need to follow a certain path, they need to return a certain way, and we need to do a strict headcount of all the students to make sure nobody runs off because we're responsible for the children on behalf the parents. That's in part why we get paid, and the parents of the school trusting us to take care of their kids while they're at school.

So these kids are going to go outside. That poses a problem immediately because of supervision. It is supposedly a student movement, but as soon as a kid walks out the door, technically he's truant from school. He can't just run out the side door without basically being truant from school. So what makes it illegal is the fact that now we have to supervise the students. So even if you stand outside – and I brought this up – well, teachers don't say why you're doing it. And the way most of these schools are going to spin the issue is they're going to say the teachers aren't actually participating in the protest. All they're doing is they're out there to supervise the students to maintain student safety while the students are doing it. Well, if you're out there at all for any kind of reason, you're participating. You're enabling it

to happen. I don't care if you're just opening the door for the kids to let them out. That's still facilitating the activity.

WOODS: Well, then let me ask you the question. Are you going to do it given that you might get in trouble if you don't?

GUEST: Well, this is a problem because I fundamentally disagree with this, and I wasn't asked what my opinion was. So if I don't agree to go – and I asked this very question. I said, "Well, what if we don't want to participate in this at all?" Like, if it was up to me, that Wednesday would be just an ordinary school day. I'd just be teaching my classes, business as usual. But because they're making an issue of this now, now I have to do something. This is the whole reason why I'm talking to you, is now I'm forced to take some kind of counteraction because I'm left kind of without any recourse.

If I go outside, then I'm basically participating in a political protest whose purpose I fundamentally disagree with. If I stay inside, then they're talking about, well, there are some students who aren't going to want to go outside, so we're going to need to provide supervision. So they're talking about things like, well, we'll sit them all down in the auditorium and have some teachers watch them. But even if I get assigned to watch students in the auditorium, that's doing something that I wouldn't ordinarily do anyway, and I feel like that's participating as well, whether I'm outside or whether I'm inside, I'm being forced to participate in this thing no matter what. The only recourse I would have would be to like call in sick that day.

But whether I'm participating, whether I'm not participating, do you really think that this group and its – they say it's the – from what I understand, it's like the youth branch of the people that organized the Women's March, and we know what their political ideology is. So even if I do nothing at all, even if I sit in my room with my arms crossed and frown and refuse to budge, it still doesn't matter because the group is just going – I don't know how they're going to report the participation in this, which is another complication. Are they just going to count up the number of schools on their website that said they participated and say this number of schools participated in this? Even though in reality, it wasn't the entire school; it was half the school maybe? Even if it was only one student that walked outside and signed up on behalf of the school, they could still count the whole school?

And if they're even going to get a little bit more savvy with the numbers, they could just count up the total student population. Those numbers are available online. And they could say, "X number of students and teachers participated in this. We all want Congress to ban assault weapons." But nobody ever asked me or anybody else what we actually think about this particular issue. So I object to the fact that I'm basically being forced into and counted in participated in an activity which I was never even asked whether or not I wanted to.

So there's another reason, that a lot of these students – now, we don't know why they would actually be going outside or not if they did, unless you could make some kind of individual survey of every single student at the school and ask them why and whether they were staying outside. And particularly, some of these kids are really young. So what if that Wednesday is a nice, sunny day? Well, you're going to get tons of participation. Probably many of the kids are going to have no idea what this is about. They just want to get out of school for a half hour, go out and enjoy the sunshine, run around a little bit. Why not? School by nature is really boring in general for kids. You mean to tell me that some kid wouldn't seize upon the

opportunity just to get some fresh air and take a break for a little while if you give it him? Of course he would.

So I think it's totally disingenuous to make it out like this is an outraged mass of youth out there that want Congress to do something. This isn't what it is. This is primarily a bunch of leftist agitators, some of whom are school teachers and school administrators who are signing up, using the resources of the state to exploit children into promoting their political agenda. And they're doing it without any of your knowledge or consent. Sure, you may have heard something about it on the news, but I don't think people have put two and two together.

And especially since some of the schools are being sneaky about it, like my particular school. The principal has not sent any written notice out to the parents specifically saying that we will be engaging in this protest at this particular time and date for this particular reason. So the parents may have heard something about it in the media or not. I don't know. But the point is they were never asked. And I don't know about you, Tom, but I'm not in the habit of making decisions on what's best for other people's kids. That's up to the parents to decide for themselves. Some of the parents in my particular time may be just as opposed to the whole idea as I am, and yet their kids are going to be participating in this thing, even though that's something that they may not want.

Now, it just so happens, in my particular town – of course it's a really liberal area. Most of the parents in my town are probably going to be very much in favor of it. But still, that doesn't discount the whole issue. My principal is more worried about the blowback from not letting it happen than letting it happen, because let's say that we put our foot down and the administration or the superintendent really is a stickler for the law and says, "No, we are going to have a school day as usual. I've heard that there's some kind of protest that's been initiated by some kids, but anyone who walks out of the building, you're going to be counted as truant and we're going to follow basic school procedures just the same as if any other kid who ran out of school would." Well, then how's that going to play in the leftist media? You know what the headlines would be, right? "School administrators want kids to die."

WOODS: Yeah, what else would it be? What else would it be? All right, we're going to continue this awesome conversation after we hear from a sponsor I am very proud to feature.

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But let me ask you this: suppose a student in this politically charged environment came up to you and said, "Jim" – they wouldn't call you by your first name, but – "where do you stand on this whole question?" Would you feel like you were in a position to give a straightforward answer?

GUEST: Oh, of course not, because it's prohibited for us to speak about our political views or espouse or promote our political views during the course of teaching our classes. Now, we all probably know that that goes on anyway, particularly in classes like an English class or more of a humanities or history class where more political issues would come up more readily than maybe a science or math class. But still, it says in my teacher's contract that I'm not to discuss these type of things during the school day. So if I generally got asked these type of questions, then I'd sidestep it and I'd say, "I'm not supposed to talk about my personal views. That's my own personal belief or it's my own personal opinion," and that's generally how we handle this.

WOODS: Actually, in a way that protects you in this situation, though, doesn't it?

GUEST: Sure.

WOODS: Because you can honestly answer that I'm not in a position to answer that given my contract with the school.

GUEST: That's right, yeah. So the fact that it's genuinely not a student movement, the fact that it's happening without the consent of the teachers, without the consent of the students, and without the consent of the parents, who are paying our salaries during this time, I think it's just unbelievable that they're just going ahead with this just like it's some ordinary field trip activity and people aren't really thinking about the implications of what's actually happening here. People in my particular district, the taxpayers in my district are paying me to use their kids to promote a political agenda that they may or may not agree with. How does that sit with you, Tom? How would you feel if you were one of the taxpayers in my town and your tax money was going to pay for this?

WOODS: Yeah, I mean, that's the thing. That's the issue right there. But at the same time, we all know there are double standards in the whole education system.

GUEST: Oh, absolutely.

WOODS: There are supposed to be general principles that are observed, but they obviously are bent in one direction or another. What would be your parting words? Presumably there are other teachers out there in your situation. There are students who may, even if this isn't entirely a student-led movement as we're led to believe, still, the students who favor gun control no doubt feel like they have the moral high ground they're probably preening about. So I'm sure there are students who feel intimidated. Any words or thoughts for them?

GUEST: Well, it's a really difficult issue because this is really not about banning guns, in my opinion. It's really an issue of individual liberty. It's about freedom from the government, and if you can just give me a second, I can explain my rationale there. The purpose of this, it says right on the website, "Why are we doing this?" And it has some incredibly vague stated purpose. They're not even specific in terms of what specifically they're advocating. It says:

"We are living in an age where young people like us do not feel safe in our schools. This issue is personal for all of us, especially for those of us who are survivors of gun violence. We are walking out for ALL people who have experienced gun violence, including systemic forms of gun violence that disproportionately impact teens in Black and Brown communities. It is important that when we refer to gun violence, we do not overlook the impact of police brutality and militarized policing, or see police in schools as a solution. We also recognize the United States has exported gun violence through imperialist foreign policy to destabilize other nations. We raise our voices for action against all these forms of gun violence."

What does that mean? They want to end all forms of gun violence. They want to get rid of the military? They want to ban so-called assault weapons? Which, if they understood what that actually meant, that means fully automatic and those are already illegal? They just want to ban scary-looking AR-15s that are so-called semi-automatic? Well, when you get right down to it, virtually every type of rifle and pistol in existence is a semi-automatic weapon, with the

exception – unless you're talking about muzzle loaders and a bolt-action rifle or a pump-action shotgun, or maybe a revolver. I'm not a gun expert, but I wouldn't be surprised if 95% of the weapons out there are semi-automatic weapons.

So I don't think this really has anything to do with safety in schools. I think it has to do with people trying to take their means to protect themselves and their family away from them. And generally how the government works is if you give them an inch, they'll take a foot. If you give them a foot, they'll take a yard, and so on. And they don't give it back once those freedoms are gone.

So for me, it's not specifically about being in favor or opposed to handguns or assault rifles or AR-15s. To me, the issue is really about being able to choose on my own how best to protect myself, how best to protect my family. So the fact that this is going on with other people's kids during the public school day and it's being funded by these taxpayers, who aren't even being asked for their consent, really is disturbing to me.

I wish there were a lot of parents and even school kids themselves who this doesn't sit right with them. I would hope they would speak up and that the actual state laws that are already on the books would actually start to be enforced to prohibit this kind of thing from happening. I don't know if it can actually be stopped. But they're already talking about doing another one for the anniversary of the Columbine shooting, so if this stands, I feel like this is only the beginning. What's the next student protest going to be about? Is it going to be about – name your issue here or there. But this is the reason why they have laws on the books in the states as far as prohibiting any type of political activity, is that once you let one thing go, then you've got to let everything go.

WOODS: Well, that is indeed the situation, and I mean, it's like the craziness of the college campuses may be seeping into now the lower levels, which is all the more reason people need to be alert to that. We all see what's going on on college campuses, so we want to focus on that, but what's going on in the secondary level is the silent killer, let's say, and so it's very important for people to see what's happening, and this is a very high-profile example of precisely what's happening.

GUEST: And the fact that it's happening with kids that are so young. You could argue about the teenagers, but I looked up a few of them last night. I mean, Castlebay Lane Elementary School in Porter Ranch, California; Madera Elementary School in El Cerrito, California. You've got Chehalem Elementary School in Beaverton, Oregon. There are schools all over the country that are middle schools and elementary schools for kids that go right down to pre-kindergarten. You mean to tell me some five-, six-, seven-year-old child has any kind of an understanding of even what an assault weapon is, never mind whether or not to ban it? It's completely absurd.

WOODS: Yeah, but what they are learning is the idea there's one approved kind of thought, and that is the lesson they want to convey there, is that the kids understand from the beginning there is one approved way to think and one way to think that the unspeakables may think. We don't even tell you about those people or try to explain their point of view because they don't really have a point of view. They're necessarily perverse because they differ from us. Terrible, terrible. But best of luck getting through these particularly ideological times. Thank you, Jim.

GUEST: Thank you, Tom.