



October 5, 2021

The Montana School Boards Association has long maintained membership in the National School Boards Association. Although we have often agreed with NSBA's positions in advocating on behalf of elected school boards, students and families in the Nation's public schools, we respectfully disagree with NSBA's recent decision to request federal assistance to stop threats and acts of violence against public schoolchildren, public school board members, and other public school district officials. NSBA did not consult the Montana School Boards Association before it issued its request.

MTSBA member community elected school boards in Montana have certainly experienced more than their fair share of criticism, including protests of public health measures they have implemented to control the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of students, families and staff. Finding the middle ground and balancing between the strong opinions from multiple sides of any given debate has been a challenge. Our elected leaders and their staff, however, have more than risen to that challenge, going to significant lengths to ensure the right of students, families, staff and other community members to know and have a say in the difficult decisions they have made on these issues.

Has the input of everyone been civil? Unfortunately, not. Have there been occasions when individual behavior has crossed the line and strayed toward implied or explicit threats of violence? Unfortunately, yes. However, the overwhelming majority of those taking part in school board meetings and protests have done so peacefully, respectfully and lawfully.

We cannot speak to what is happening in other states and we are in no position to second guess efforts or needs in those states to protect public safety. In Montana, however, we have full trust and confidence in the civility of constituents, the sincerity and good intentions of those providing input and trusted local law enforcement to address any isolated criminal issues that may arise.