

HAWAII NEWS

Hawaii students plan walkouts: 17 minutes for 17 victims

By [Susan Essoyan](#) · March 6, 2018

Most of the students aren't old enough to vote, so they intend to use their feet to send their message.

"We are striving for safety and peace of mind," said Gabriel Fernandes, a 15-year-old sophomore at Moanalua High School. "It's really needed by this point. It's way past time."

At private and public schools across the state, students are planning to walk out of class for 17 minutes on March 14 in solidarity with the 17 victims of the Florida high school shooting. It will be exactly one month from the date of that massacre.

STUDENT WALKOUTS

Who: Students at public and private schools

What: 17-minute walkout in honor of the 17 victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida

When: 10 a.m. March 14

Where: Some schools are designating areas where students can gather during the walkout. Students who leave campus may be marked tardy or absent.

GUNS IN HAWAII

Hawaii's laws governing firearms are among the strictest in the country.

>> You must be 21 years old to buy a firearm.

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>> All firearms must be registered.

>> Applicants must obtain a permit from the police department before acquiring a gun.

>> There is a 14-day waiting period between applying for and receiving a permit, to allow for background checks.

Source: Hawaii Revised Statutes and county police departments

GUN DEATHS

The rate of gun deaths in Hawaii is among the lowest in the nation.

Rate of death by firearms:

Highest:

1. Alaska
2. Alabama
3. Louisiana

Lowest:

47. **Hawaii**
48. New York
49. Rhode Island
50. Massachusetts

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Some schools are designating specific gathering places on campus for the walkouts, which are set for 10 a.m. The action is part of a national youth movement to end gun violence on campuses.

Hayden Hawkins, a 15-year-old sophomore at University Laboratory School, said his goals are to stand in solidarity with the victims and to prompt action to protect people.

“This whole movement is about inspiring change from a youth perspective,” he said. “We’re not trying to gain anything. We are not politicians. We are not getting paid. We want to make a good change in a nonpartisan way to save people’s lives.”

Superintendent Christina Kishimoto wrote a letter dated Friday to public school parents and guardians telling them how administrators plan to handle the walkouts. The letter was being sent home with students and is also on the Department of Education website at 808ne.ws/2walkout.

“In anticipation of a planned walkout or gathering during school hours, we have advised schools to consider creating a designated walk-out area and encourage students to use the time to share ideas for improving campus safety, security and culture,” she wrote in the letter.

The Department of Education supports students’ constitutional rights to peaceful assembly and free expression, Kishimoto wrote. But disorderly conduct could lead to discipline, and students who leave campus will be marked with an unexcused tardiness or absence. She added that participation in any walkout is voluntary.

Punahou School’s deans at each grade level emailed their faculty members Monday asking them to be prepared with lessons that take into account the possibility of some students participating in the walkout and some students choosing to stay in class.

“We honor our students’ voice in this critical national conversation and are eager to support their engaged citizenship and moral action,” the deans wrote. “We also honor students’ choice not to participate in this action.”

A meeting Sunday at the Keeaumoku McDonald’s called by students at University Laboratory School and Punahou drew students from campuses including Moanalua High, Hawaii Technology Academy and Le Jardin Academy. Students at each school are planning their own events.

“Even though it’s not one organization or one group, it’s still one movement and we all have the same goal, and I think that’s really encouraging,” said Punahou seventh-grader Ezra Levinson, 13, who attended. “Mostly it’s just to say we as students are the ones being affected by this the most, and we as students have had enough of this and we’re ready to do something about it.”

At Kohala Middle School on Hawaii island, Principal Alan Brown said student leaders expressed interest in joining the national walkout and discussed it with administrators. Together they opted to hold a 17-minute assembly at 10 a.m. March 14.

“They’ll come up with an agenda,” Brown said. “They can still consider it a walkout, but it’s a planned thing.”

The youth movement to stop gun violence at schools sprang up in the wake of the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., which killed 14 students and three adults and sent 14 people to hospitals. Nikolas Cruz, 19, has confessed to the crime. He legally purchased the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle he used in the attack.

The deaths have prompted calls for stricter gun laws, including prohibiting sales of all firearms to people under age 21, universal background checks and limits on high-capacity ammunition magazines. Several major retailers announced last week they will stop selling guns and ammunition to customers below age 21.

In Hawaii, state law already specifies that people must be 21 to buy a firearm. The Aloha State’s gun laws are among the nation’s strictest. All firearms must be registered. Applicants must obtain a permit from the police department before acquiring a gun. There is a 14-day waiting period between applying for and receiving a permit, to allow for background checks.

The rate of death by firearms in Hawaii is one of the lowest in the country, with Hawaii placing 47th out of the 50 states in 2016, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state with the lowest rate of gun deaths is Massachusetts, while Alaska and Alabama have the highest rates.

“There is empirical evidence,” Hawkins said. “This is not just emotion-driven. Our gun laws have helped with gun violence.”

Imiloa Borland, a Punahou sophomore, said she is hopeful that her generation will make a difference by speaking up now as well as later at the ballot box.

“I’m going to be able to vote in the 2020 election,” she said. “If we can keep this going in all 50 states, if we can stay at it, if we really keep pushing this, we will see some real change.”

[20180302 Letter addressing Walkouts](#) by [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#) on Scribd



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