

CHAPTER 298

AN ACT designating a certain week in October as "School Violence Awareness Week" and supplementing chapter 36 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. Adolescence and early adulthood are characterized by much higher rates of both perpetration and victimization of violence than other years;
 - b. Adolescents have also been shown to have higher rates than younger children and adults for both minor and serious forms of violence;
 - c. In 1998, students who were ages 12 through 18 were victims of more than 2.7 million crimes at school;
 - d. There were also 60 school-associated violent deaths in the United States during the 1997-98 school year, including 47 homicides;
 - e. Fear of violence in schools affects attendance of students and causes attrition of staff; and
 - f. It is in the public interest of this State to designate a week in October of each year as "School Violence Awareness Week" to provide students, parents, school district and law enforcement personnel with an opportunity to discuss methods to keep our schools safe from violence, to create school safety plans, and to recognize those students in need of help.

C.18:36-5.1 "School Violence Awareness Week"; designated.

2. The week beginning with the third Monday in October of each year is designated as "School Violence Awareness Week" in the State of New Jersey. School districts shall observe this week by organizing activities to prevent school violence including, but not limited to, age-appropriate opportunities for student discussion on conflict resolution, issues of student diversity, and tolerance. Law enforcement personnel shall be invited to join members of the teaching staff in the discussions. Programs shall also be provided for school board employees that are designed to help them recognize warning signs of school violence and to instruct them on recommended conduct during an incident of school violence. The public hearing on violence and vandalism, required pursuant to section 1 of P.L.1982, c.163 (C.18A:17-46) as amended by P.L.2001, c.299, shall be held during this week. The Department of Education shall provide guidelines and information to boards of education for use in planning the activities in observance of the week and such funds as are necessary to pay the costs of the required activities and programs.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 2, 2002.