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Office of Sen. Rodríguez partners with student groups for school safety forum

April 19th event at EPCC to follow up on questions, concerns, and ideas discussed at March 21st forum

El Paso - Senator José Rodríguez and the Senate District 29 Youth Advisory Committee are partnering with UTEP and EPCC student governments to host the second *Students' Forum: Keeping our Schools Safe*, from 6 to 8 p.m. on April 19th at the El Paso Community College Administrative Services Center (Auditorium, Bldg. A, 9050 Viscount).

This is the second of a two-session program to host a productive community conversation around gun violence. On March 21st, students, teachers, parents, and others heard student perspectives on school safety, which were followed by discussions in smaller groups to address the issues raised and possible solutions.

The discussion included questions, concerns, and ideas about: resources for teachers to help students; policy proposals such as raising the age for purchase, risk-based protective orders, universal background checks, and mandatory training; supporting student expression while maintaining school district functions; developing safety policies, including whether to arm teachers; monitoring social media; installing metal detectors or requiring clear backpacks; how law enforcement coordinates with school district officers to prepare for a disastrous event; dealing with student behaviors; dealing with victims of a shooting (both acute trauma care and PTSD/counseling); and spotting warning behaviors early, while also not stigmatizing mental illness.

"As a legislator, I have focused on policies that can directly lead to prevention of some of these horrible events, such as risk-based protective orders, and will continue to do so in the Texas Legislature," Rodríguez said. "It was refreshing, inspiring, and instructive to hear from students on the broad range of questions, concerns, and ideas they had, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue with students."

At the upcoming event on April 19th, student government leaders from UTEP and El Paso Community College will present the results of the discussion as questions for school administrators, teachers, law enforcement, campus security, and health care professionals.

The public, especially parents and teachers, is encouraged to attend the event, which takes place the day before a nationwide day of action, Friday, April 20th, during which students will gather for 17 minutes of silence in honor of the 17 people killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida earlier this year.

What: Part Two of *Students' Forum: Keeping our Schools Safe*

When: 6 p.m. Thursday, April 19, 2018

Where: Auditorium, Bldg. A, EPCC Administrative Services Center, 9050 Viscount Blvd.

For more information: Samantha Romero, 915-351-3500

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and a member of the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Economic Development; Transportation; Veteran Affairs and Border Security; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.