

A Push for Gun Control

March 9, 2018

Since the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the discourse over how to prevent more shootings has put the gun control debate in the forefront once again. The survivors of the shooting, as well as others in their community, have been protested on the steps of the Florida State Capitol, as well as holding a “March for Our Lives” in Washington D.C.

The protesters are calling for stricter gun regulations, particularly for different models of the AR-15 style rifle used in the Parkland shooting.

On Tuesday February 20, while teens were protesting outside the Capitol and watching from the viewing deck, the Florida State House voted down a provision which would’ve banned semi-automatic guns and high capacity magazines. The vote carried 36 in the affirmative and 71 in the negative.

Despite the rejection in the State House, notable Floridians are proposing other gun control measures.

In a CNN town hall in Jupiter, Florida, Senators Bill Nelson (D) and Marco Rubio (R) both showed support for raising the firearm purchasing age from 18 to 21. President Donald Trump announced he is also in favor of raising age limit. Florida Governor Rick Scott, who has an “A+” rating from the NRA, shared the same sentiments. Scott included mentally ill as those who, under his plan, would be barred from purchasing a firearm.

"No one with mental issues should have access to guns," said Scott. "It's common sense, and it is in their own best interest -- not to mention the interests of our communities. And much of what I'm proposing involves giving law enforcement the ability to stop people from harming themselves and others, while giving them the tools to keep our schools safe."

The Florida Senate decided to propose legislation as well. A bill passed committee to raise the firearms purchasing age to 21, but the same committee also voted down a bill eliminating “assault weapons.” The Senate bill is intended to be amendatory to the failed House bill.

According to The Data Team at The Economist, 58 percent of Americans are in favor of banning semi-automatic weapons. For magazines holding ten rounds or more, 62 percent of respondents are in favor of banning them.

The rhetoric on both sides of the gun argument is heating up, as well.

Leftist director, filmmaker, and commentator Michael Moore took to Twitter to share his thoughts.

“The NRA is a terrorist organization. The media should speak of the NRA in the same way they do ISIS,” said Moore.

NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre spoke at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, and lashed out at those in the socialist movement.

"If they seize power ... our American freedoms could be lost and our country will be changed forever," he said. "The first to go will be the Second Amendment."

On Capitol Hill, Paul Ryan said publicly "we shouldn't be banning guns for law abiding citizens."

Ryan continued.

"We do know there are gaps in the background check system that need to be plugged," he said. "We passed a bill to do that and we think that should get done clearly."

The House did pass a bill attempting to close gaps in the database used when someone purchases a firearm.

Companies have begun distancing themselves from the gun-rights position. Walmart led the way in enacting new policy, as they will no longer sell firearms to anyone under 21. Dick's Sporting Goods announced they will no longer be selling "assault-style weapons." Delta and United Airlines will no longer be offering discounts to NRA members. But FedEx, will continue the discount.

In a recent bipartisan meeting, President Trump signaled a potential shift in gun policy. He has already showed support for a ban on bump stocks, but also said he would be open to raising the firearm purchasing age to 21. In the meeting, Democrat Senator Dianne Feinstein reacted very positively after Trump said he wanted to see an assault weapons ban in a school safety Senate bill. Feinstein's bill bans over 200 weapons ranging from AR-15 style weapons, as well as certain handguns, shotguns, and hunting rifles. In the same meeting, Trump shot down an idea from Republican Steve Scalise which would've created a national reciprocity for concealed carry permits.

After lots of backlash, Trump took to Twitter to try and ease the fears of conservatives.

"Many ideas, some good & some not so good, emerged from our bipartisan meeting on school safety yesterday at the White House," he said. "Background Checks a big part of conversation. Gun free zones are proven targets of killers. After many years, a Bill should emerge. Respect 2nd Amendment!"