

House Republicans Refuse to Vote on Bipartisan Legislation to Address Gun Violence

Last month, House Democrats held a 26-hour sit in on the Floor of the House of Representatives to demand House Republican leaders hold a vote on legislation to address gun violence. After House Republicans left town without holding a vote, Democrats joined Americans affected by gun violence for a week of action in communities across the nation, holding over 80 events calling for action.

Now, Speaker Paul Ryan and House Republicans have said they will hold a vote this week on weak, National Rifle Association-backed legislation. Instead of closing the “terrorist gun loophole” and working to keep our communities safe, the proposed legislation makes it harder to stop suspected terrorists from purchasing guns by:

- Creating an unworkable probable cause standard which requires the government to convince a court within 72 hours that the buyer “has committed or will commit an act of terrorism” - not that the suspect has ties to a terrorist organization, or that the suspect is likely to use the weapon against Americans, but that he or she will actually commit an act of terrorism or has conspired to do so.
- Allowing a gun sale to go forward if the government does not meet a rigorous probable cause standard within 72 hours; and
- Requiring the government – in addition to showing probable cause – to notify suspected terrorists of its efforts to prevent a gun sale – potentially letting a terrorist know that they are under government surveillance and possibly risking an ongoing terrorism investigation – and, moreover, to allow suspected terrorists to challenge those efforts with an attorney.

The provision is similar to legislation offered by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), which failed to pass the Senate last week and was opposed by some Republicans:

Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME): “[Senator Collins] said she agreed that Mr. Cornyn’s measure set a standard too difficult to meet. ‘If probable cause is found then probably law enforcement could arrest you,’ she said. ‘If you have got that, you are going to be arrested, unless they are leaving you out there in order to catch others.’” [New York Times, [6/17/16](#)]

Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA): “I think the Cornyn approach doesn't give the [Attorney General] the opportunity that an [Attorney General] needs to make a case against someone who is actually a terrorist.” [6/15/16]

Some House Republicans, including Members of the House Freedom Caucus, have expressed their opposition to the proposal as well.

“‘I’ve still got major reservations,’ said Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.), a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus. He said leaders are ‘**just kind of putting bills together that are talking-point, bullet-point oriented, that don’t have substance**’ and are ‘messaging gimmicks.’” [Washington Post, [7/6/16](#)]

“The **House Freedom Caucus plans to oppose the House GOP ‘anti-terrorism’ package**, marking another setback for Speaker Paul Ryan as he tries to muster support for a legislative response to the Orlando massacre.” [Politico, [7/6/16](#)]

House Republicans continue to fail to listen to the will of the American people and hold a vote on commonsense, bipartisan legislation to address gun violence, even though polls show an overwhelming majority of Americans support closing the so-called “terror gap” and expanding background checks.

“A new Quinnipiac University poll released Thursday found that **86 percent of registered voters back such ‘no fly, no buy’ gun legislation, compared with 12 percent that don’t**... More than **nine in 10 Americans (93 percent) also think that background checks should be required** for all gun buyers.”
[CBS News, [6/30/16](#)]

With 91 Americans killed by gun violence every day, Democrats will continue to demand a vote on commonsense legislation to make America safer. Congress must take action to protect our communities by strengthening background checks and enacting meaningful ‘No Fly, No Buy’ legislation.