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Bipartisan Attacks on the Second Amendment

The House of Representatives recently passed legislation that would expand the national background check system to require almost everyone selling firearms, including private collectors who supplement their incomes by selling firearms at gun shows, to perform background checks on the potential buyers. The bill has a section purporting to bar creation of a national firearms registry. However, the expanded background check system will require the government to compile lists of those buying and selling guns. In other words, it creates a de facto national gun registry.



Similar to the experience with other types of prohibition, making it more difficult to legally buy a gun will enhance the firearms black market. Criminals, terrorists, and even deranged mass shooters will thus have no problem obtaining firearms.

It is no coincidence that the majority of mass shootings take place in “gun-free zones,” where shooters know their targets will be unarmed. This shows that any law making it more difficult for Americans to own and carry firearms makes us less safe. If Congress really wanted to reduce the incidence of gun violence, it would repeal the Gun-Free School Zones Act. This law leaves children easy prey for mass shooters by mandating that public schools be “gun-free zones.”

A nationwide system of gun registration could be a step toward national gun confiscation. However, antigun bureaucrats need not go that far to use the expanded background check system to abuse the rights of gun owners. Gun owners could find themselves subject to surveillance and even harassment, such as more intensive screening by the Transportation Security Administration, because they own “too many” firearms.

Republican control of the White House and the Senate does not mean our gun rights are safe. Republicans have a long history of supporting gun control. After the 1999 Columbine shooting, many Republicans, including many who campaigned as being pro-Second Amendment, eagerly cooperated with then-President Bill Clinton on gun control. Some supposedly pro-gun Republicans also tried to pass “compromise” gun control legislation after the Sandy Hook shooting.

Neoconservative Senator Marco Rubio has introduced legislation that uses tax dollars to bribe states to adopt red flag laws. Red flag laws allow government to violate an individual’s Second Amendment rights based on nothing more than a report that the individual could become violent. Red flag laws can allow an individual’s guns to be taken away without due process simply because an estranged spouse, angry neighbor, or disgruntled coworker tells police the individual threatened him or otherwise made him feel unsafe.

President Trump has joined Rubio in wanting the government to, in Trump’s words, “take the guns first, go through due process second.” During his confirmation hearing, President Trump’s new Attorney



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General William Barr expressed support for red flag laws. California Senator and leading gun control advocate Dianne Feinstein has expressed interest in working with Barr to deprive gun owners of due process. It would not be surprising to see left-wing authoritarians like Feinstein work with right-wing authoritarians like Barr and Rubio on “compromise” legislation containing both a national red flag law and expanded background checks.

My years in Congress taught me that few politicians can be counted on to protect our liberties. Most politicians must be pressured to stand up for freedom by informed and involved pro-liberty citizens. That is why those of us who understand the benefits of liberty must remain vigilant against any attempt to erode respect for our rights, especially the right to defend ourselves against private crime and public tyranny.

Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This article originally appeared at the [Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity](#) and is reprinted here with permission.



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