



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 12, 2013

NRA's A-Rated Senators Caving on Gun Control

With [S. 649](#) likely Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's last chance to pass gun control legislation in this session, Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) [has been working hard](#) to bring the National Rifle Association into the discussion on how to make the bill palatable to those opposed to the background-checks. On the other hand, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) had been working on an effort to stop the legislation by filibustering it.



But Paul's effort was thwarted on April 11 when the Senate invoked cloture by a 68-to-31 vote (8 more "yea" votes than needed to invoke cloture), allowing the bill to proceed. Shortly before the vote, Senators Paul, Mike Lee (R-Utah), and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) released a joint statement saying, "The effort to push through legislation that no one had read highlights one of the primary reasons we announced our intention to force a 60 vote threshold."

The 68 senators who voted for allowing the anti-gun bill to proceed included 13 Republicans and nine Democrats with "A" ratings with the NRA. The "A" rated Republicans who joined Democrats in voting to invoke cloture included Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.); Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), Tom Corburn (R-Okla.), Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), John Hoeven (R-N.D.), Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) — and, with an "A+" NRA rating, Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Manchin had been working for weeks with the NRA to soften some of the language in the bill to make it more acceptable to his colleagues for when a vote is taken on the bill itself. With the help of lawmakers possessing "A" ratings from the NRA, the bill will now proceed to that up-and-down vote.

Ruby Cramer, who has been watching developments closely, reported at [Buzzfeed.com](#) that Manchin was banking on the NRA to go along with changes, giving enough political cover for pro-gun senators with A ratings from the NRA be able to vote for it without damaging their perceived support for gun rights. Cramer quoted Manchin's communications manager, Jonathan Kott, as saying that Manchin "always talks to the NRA and has a great relationship with them, especially back in his state [of West Virginia]. Those lines of communication will always be open."

After working with another allegedly pro-gun senator, Republican Pat Toomey from Pennsylvania, Manchin [announced a "bipartisan compromise"](#) on April 10 that could open the door for passage of the controversial measure. Said Manchin:

Today is the start of a healthy debate that must end with the Senate and House, hopefully, passing these commonsense measures and the president signing it into law.

The events of Newtown, truly the events at Newton, changed us all. It changed our country, our communities, our town and it changed our hearts and minds.

When he was asked about whether he was worried about his A rating with the NRA, Manchin replied, "What matters to me is doing the right thing. And I think [this bill] is the right thing." He added:

We're here for a purpose to do things. This is the right thing to do. I would hope that just having a



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score or a rating they would look at it and say, "Did we do the right thing? Did we use common sense? Did we do the right thing to protect lives, protect our children?" I would hope we would get credit for that. I can't help the scoring system.

Toomey, also sporting an A rating from the NRA, stated:

I've got to tell you candidly, I don't consider background checks to be gun control. I think it's just common sense. If you pass a criminal background check, you get to buy a gun, no problem. It's the people who fail a criminal or a mental health background check that we don't want to have a gun.

Within hours of that announcement, however, the NRA released [a letter of unequivocal opposition to S. 649](#), even with the compromise language that it, Toomey, and Manchin, along with Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), had crafted:

S. 649, the "Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act of 2013", introduced on March 21, contains a number of provisions that would unfairly infringe upon the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners. This legislation would criminalize the private transfer of firearms by honest citizens, requiring friends, neighbors and many family members to get government permission to exercise a fundamental right or face prosecution. The NRA is unequivocally opposed to S. 649....

This includes the misguided "compromise" proposal drafted by Senators Joe Manchin, Pat Toomey and Chuck Schumer. As we have noted previously, expanding background checks, at gun shows or elsewhere, will not reduce violent crime or keep our kids safe in their schools.

Given the importance of these issues, votes on all anti-gun amendments or proposals will be considered in NRA's future candidate evaluations.

[Robert Laurie, like Ruby Cramer, has been following S. 649 machinations closely](#), including backroom negotiations between the NRA and pro-gun senators to move this anti-Second Amendment legislation forward. After seeing A-rated senators voting against Paul's cloture, Laurie said: "So much for 'shall not be infringed.'"

Those ratings from the NRA are not to be trusted. Neither are those sporting A ratings who use them as cover to vote against the Second Amendment. For more accurate congressional ratings from a pro-Second Amendment group, this writer recommends [Gun Owners of America](#).

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelmann@thenewamerican.com.



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