



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 3, 2016

Background Checks for Ammo Buyers Coming in California

Last Thursday California's Lt. governor, Gavin Newsom, [announced](#) that his ballot measure offered last fall — which includes background checks to buy ammunition, along with a host of other restrictions on gun owners — has already gathered 600,000 signatures, more than enough to put it on the ballot in November. Said Newsom, who is running for governor in 2018, "What makes guns dangerous is ammunition. Yet we don't do background checks on ammo."



What he failed to mention is that a gun is an inanimate object, just like ammunition. If danger exists, it's with the person holding it. But that doesn't matter to Newsom, who added that background checks on ammunition would stop sales of ammunition to criminals and others who are prohibited from owning firearms.

Such a claim also fails to recognize that — as Emanuel Kapelsohn, vice president of the International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors, expressed it — criminals aren't likely to abide by the new law:

I'm very skeptical of this approach. It's a great idea in theory but do we think that gangbangers will go into a gun store and provide ID to get their ammo, or just go out on the street?

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Proponents of the measure agree that a black market is likely to spring up upon passage of the law, and that buyers will go to nearby states such as Nevada and Arizona to stock up. In addition, just as citizens can use 3-D printers to make firearms, they can also reload their own ammo at home.

Newsom stretched the truth so far about the mass shootings his measure is supposed to limit that Politifact ruled his statements "mostly false." In October Newsom rolled out the calumny that "there's an average of 92 shootings a day in this country.... California can set the tone for the rest of the nation with these common-sense public safety provisions. We will lead the nation. We'll be the only state in America where background checks on point-of-sale purchases of ammunition." Needless to say, there aren't 92 mass shootings a day in this country.

He followed up with another stretch in an e-mail sent in December promoting the measure: "So far in 2015 there have been more mass shootings than days." Researchers at Politifact wondered where he got his information when, based on congressional analysis of FBI data, from 1999 through 2013 there were about 21 mass shootings each year in the United States, not 300. Wrote Politifact: "We wondered: Did mass shootings in America somehow skyrocket from about 20 annually to more than 300 overnight? Or [was] Newsom ... using a definition of this kind of crime that reflects a different view of reality?"

Turns out he did have a different view — much different. When researchers asked for his source, they learned that he used a website that reported there had been 353 mass shootings in the United States so



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far that year. They also learned that its definition of mass shooting was vastly different from that used by Congress: It counted gang-related crimes and robberies, shootings by residents in their homes, and suicides.

Said David Kopel, a professor at Denver University:

The problem with the way Gavin Newsom is using this pseudo data is it's out of context and is done in such a way [that] is calculated to cause confusion. When people hear the term mass shootings, I think what they think of are things like the San Bernardino attacks or the Newtown crime.... By that definition, the number is far, far smaller.

The Florida office of Politifact wasn't nearly as polite as Kopel:

Politicians or others who want to make a point about guns choose a set of data and a definition that reinforces the point they want to make. People who want more gun control tend to choose more expansive definitions.

In addition to requiring that buyers of ammunition go through a background check, Newsom's measure would also mandate that anyone selling ammunition must pass a background check, as well, and get licensed to do so. It would also establish a process to recover guns from people prohibited from owning them because they now have a criminal record; it would require individuals whose guns were lost or stolen to report that to law enforcement; it would compel the state of California to notify the federal government when someone is added to their database of people barred from buying or owning a firearm; and it would force individuals owning magazines capable of carrying more than 10 rounds to either turn them in, sell them to a licensed firearm dealer, or transfer them out of state.

John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, weighed in on what Californians are about to do to themselves: "The question is, Who are you stopping from owning a firearm or getting hold of ammunition? In this case it is law-abiding poor ... who won't be able to afford the cost of ammunition which will rise with the cost associated with [enforcing the new legislation]."

In October, when Newsom introduced his measure, he challenged the NRA to fight him: "I'll say this to the NRA ... that you can intimidate politicians. We've seen them [do that]. But you can't intimidate the public. That's why we're bringing this directly to the public."

Members of the public are taking up that challenge. Brandon Combs, president of California's Firearms Policy Coalition, said: "If Gavin Newsom wants to declare war on law-abiding gun owners and Second Amendment rights, we're certainly going to bring the fight to him." Amy Hunter, a spokeswoman for the NRA, added, "California illustrates the true gun-control agenda, which is the ultimate confiscation and banning of [private ownership of] firearms. If Gavin Newsom gets his way, [California] will be the next Australia." She added:

His ballot initiative proposal does nothing but prohibit access to the most effective methods of self-defense, with no measurable positive effect on stopping crime or improving public safety.

They can't repeal the Second Amendment so they're trying to chip away our rights until there is nothing left.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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