

Frustrated Democrats call for GOP help on federal gun laws after mass school shooting

Written by Wisconsin Examiner Republich
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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/uvalde-child-crime-scene-getty-s450.png>



"Things like keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, universal background checks, prohibiting ghost guns — these are steps that have broad public support. What we lack is legislative will." – Attorney General Josh Kaul

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Wednesday implored Senate Republicans to work with Democrats to pass bipartisan gun control legislation, following a mass school shooting that took the lives of 19 children and two teachers in Texas.

Tuesday's massacre was the nation's second-deadliest mass school shooting since another at Sandy Hook Elementary a decade ago.

"Please, please, please, damn it, put yourself in the shoes of these parents for once," Schumer said on the Senate floor.

"Maybe that thought — putting yourself in the shoes of these parents instead of the arms of the NRA — might let you wriggle free from the vise-like grip of the NRA."

Schumer acknowledged that it was unlikely that 10 Republicans would join Democrats in

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passing any type of legislation in the evenly split Senate, a sentiment that many in his party also expressed. Sixty votes would be needed to advance gun legislation.

“It’s going to fail,” Sen. Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat, said, according to Capitol Hill pool reports.

Background checks

Schumer, a New York Democrat, took a procedural step to begin debate on two background check bills, with the possibility of calling for votes on the bills.

The two bills he put on the Senate calendar passed the House last year. They are [H.R. 8](#), which “establishes new background check requirements for firearm transfers between private parties,” and

[H.R. 1446](#)

, which “increases the amount of time... that a federal firearms’ licensee must wait to receive a completed background check prior to transferring a firearm to an unlicensed person.”

But the filibuster is a hurdle for Democratic action on guns in the Senate. Two Senate Democrats, Joe Manchin III of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, have already said they have no plans to change their position on amending the 60-vote threshold required by the filibuster.

“I do not think on this issue, there are 10 Republicans that are serious about doing the things that will make us safer,” Booker said.

Less than a week ago, Booker [reintroduced the Federal Firearm Licensing Act](#), which would require individuals to obtain a firearm license from the Department of Justice before purchasing or receiving a firearm.

President Joe Biden spoke Tuesday night about the school shooting from the White House, calling for Congress to pass common sense gun laws, and blaming the gun industry.

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“The gun manufacturers have spent two decades aggressively marketing assault weapons, which make them the most and largest profit,” he said. “For God’s sake, we have to have the courage to stand up to the industry.”

Biden is set to visit the site of the mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas, later this week.

Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat, said “it’s (expletive) nuts to do nothing about this,” following the Texas shooting, according to Capitol Hill pool reports.

Kelly’s wife, Gabby Giffords, is a former congresswoman who survived an assassination attempt when she was shot while meeting with constituents. She now runs a gun safety advocacy group.

Red flag laws

A handful of Senate Republicans have expressed support for “red flag” laws, which have been used to prevent mass shootings, suicides, and deadly domestic violence disputes by allowing courts or law enforcement to temporarily remove a firearm from an individual who is distressed.

Various states have such laws, many passed following the Parkland school shooting in Florida in 2018, but it’s unclear whether there would be enough bipartisan agreement to write red flag provisions into federal law.

[The Biden administration directed](#) the Department of Justice last year to distribute model red flag legislation to states. The District of Columbia and [19 states have red flag laws](#)

Sen. Roy Blunt, a Missouri Republican, said that while red flag laws could be useful, he pointed out that New York has some of the strictest red flag laws and could not prevent the mass shooting on May 14 in Buffalo, New York.

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“I don’t know that there’s any one solution here,” Blunt said, according to Capitol Hill pool reports.

In Buffalo, a white supremacist killed 10 Black people at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood. The attack was based on “The Great Replacement Theory,” a racist conspiracy theory that states immigrants and people of color will lead to the extinction of the white race, [according to the National Immigration Forum](#)

Sen. Rick Scott, a Florida Republican, said he was supportive of red flag laws, and pointed out that Florida has its own.

“People that are harming themselves, threatening to harm themselves or somebody else, they shouldn’t act,” he said, according to Capitol Hill pool reports.

House Majority Whip Steny Hoyer, a Maryland Democrat, [said](#) the House will take up Georgia Democratic Rep. Lucy McBath’s red flag bill in June, which would “prevent those who pose a threat to themselves or others from being able to legally possess a firearm.”

But Sen. Tommy Tuberville, an Alabama Republican, argued that guns were not the problem with the Texas school mass shooting, and it was instead a mental health problem.

“I’m very sorry it happened, but guns are not the problem,” he said, according to Capitol Hill pool reports. “People are the problem, that’s where it starts ... we’ve had guns forever, and we’re gonna continue to have guns.”

Gun rights lobbying muscle

Gun rights groups, such as the National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America, spent a record of nearly \$16 million in lobbying in 2021, campaign finance records show.

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After the 2012 Sandy Hook mass school shooting, where 20 children, ages 6 and 7, and six school staff were killed, [the amount of money spent lobbying by gun rights groups more than doubled](#), from \$6 million in 2012 to \$15 million in 2013, according to an analysis by the campaign finance watchdog Open Secrets.

The NRA spent nearly \$5 million lobbying Congress in 2021, [according to Open Secrets](#). For the first quarter of 2022, the NRA has spent \$650,000 lobbying Congress, [according to Open Secrets](#).

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, did not comment on the Senate floor on Wednesday about whether Republicans would work with Democrats to pass any gun control legislation.

He instead offered his condolences to the Uvalde families and community that lost 19 children and two teachers to gun violence.

He described the shooter as “deranged” and called the act “senseless evil.”

The shooter, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, legally bought two AR-15 style rifles just days before the attack, Texas law enforcement said.

Schumer came back to the Senate floor after McConnell’s speech and asked on the Senate floor if Republicans would join Democrats in passing the domestic terrorism bill coming to the floor for a vote Thursday. The bill would allow for the creation of special offices within the Department of Justice, FBI and Department of Homeland Security to investigate and monitor domestic terrorism.

The bill passed the House, 222-203, with only one House Republican voting with Democrats, Rep Adam Kinzinger of Illinois.

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“Thoughts and prayers are not enough,” Schumer said. “We need action.”

Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat, said he was frustrated that the NRA and Republicans weren’t supportive about background checks, because they used to be in the past.

“I don’t know what the hell has changed, but I’ll tell you what hasn’t changed — mass shootings,” he said, according to Capitol Hill pool reports.

When a reporter asked about legislation for a ban on assault weapons — like the one used in the Texas and most mass shootings — Tester said there was no way that type of legislation would pass when Congress couldn’t pass background checks.

“It ain’t gonna pass,” he said. “Kids got killed yesterday. For Christ’s sake, let’s talk about what can be done, not about what somebody wants.”

by Ariana Figueroa, [Wisconsin Examiner](#)
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