

Biden announces slate of gun control actions, claims ‘public health crisis’

Biden insists proposals don't contravene the Second Amendment.

President Biden on Thursday announced a set of executive actions and legislative proposals on gun control, saying that gun violence is “a public health crisis” and the administration's actions do not contravene Second Amendment rights.

The administration aims to “confront not just the gun crisis but what is actually a public health crisis,” Biden said in his remarks in the Rose Garden. He was joined by Vice President Harris.

“Nothing I'm about to recommend in any way impinges on the Second Amendment,” Biden said. “These are phony arguments suggesting that these are Second Amendment rights at stake from what we're talking about.”

Continuing, Biden said: “But no amendment to the Constitution is absolute ... From the very beginning, you couldn't own any weapon you wanted to own. From the very beginning the Second Amendment existed, certain people weren't allowed to have weapons. So the idea is just bizarre to suggest that some of the things we're recommending are contrary to the Constitution.”

BIDEN TO TARGET ‘GHOST GUNS,’ STABILIZING BRACES IN NEW GUN CONTROL ACTIONS

In attendance were several high-profile gun control activists, including Brady United president Kris Brown, former Rep. Gabby Giffords, D-Ariz., and Fred Guttenberg.

An administration official detailed the actions to reporters on Wednesday. Among them, Biden is asking the Justice Department (DOJ) to propose within a month a rule to stop “ghost guns,” which are “kits” people can buy legally to assemble a functioning firearm that does not have a serial number.

Biden is also asking the DOJ to propose within 60 days a rule on braces used for

handguns, which make them more accurate; to propose action on “community violence intervention”; to publish suggestions for “red flag” legislation; and is asking his administration to issue a report on gun trafficking.

Biden also formally announced David Chipman as the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

A senior administration official Wednesday said that Chipman will respect the Second Amendment while he enforces gun laws.



President Joe Biden speaks about the economy in the State Dining Room of the White House, Friday, Feb. 5, 2021, in Washington, D.C. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

“I’ve seen with my own two eyes what a bullet can do to the human body ... and I’ve fought my entire career to fight this violence and to pass reasonable gun safety measures,” Harris said as she introduced Biden.

“What are we waiting for? Cause we aren’t waiting for a tragedy... We’ve had more tragedy than we can bear,” she said. “The solutions exist... people on both sides of the aisle want action, real people ... so all that is left is the will and the courage to act.”

The Biden administration is also expected to throw its weight behind gun control proposals in Congress.

“Enough prayers, time for some action,” Biden said of Congress. “I believe the Senate should immediately pass three House-passed bills to close loopholes that allow gun purchases, purchasers, to bypass the background checks.”

BIDEN ON THE SECOND AMENDMENT: ‘NO AMENDMENT IS ABSOLUTE’

He also pushed for two gun control laws that would go even further than that.

“We should also ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines in this country,” Biden said. He said “there’s no reason” a person would need a weapon that can hold “100 rounds.”

“We should also eliminate gun manufacturers from the immunity they receive from the Congress,” Biden said, referring to the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), a law that prevents gunmakers from being sued for crimes committed with guns they sell legally.

“This is the only outfit that is exempt from being sued,” he continued. “If I get one thing on my list... give me that one because I tell you what there would be a come to the Lord moment these folks would have real quickly.”



Vice President Harris meets virtually with community leaders on the COVID-19 public education efforts in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, April 1, 2021. (Leigh Vogel/UPI/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

Some of Biden's claims during the press conference are regularly disputed by Republicans, including that gun manufacturers can't be sued and that background checks aren't required at gun shows.

Indeed, the PLCAA only protects against suits for "harm solely caused by the criminal or unlawful misuse of firearm products or ammunition products." This does not count, for example, if a gun is defective or if a gun was knowingly given to a person who is banned from possessing one.

BIDEN TO NOMINATE GUN CONTROL BACKER DAVID CHIPMAN TO HEAD ATF: WH OFFICIAL

Further, the "gun show loophole," as it is known, is not actually about gun shows. All federally licensed commercial dealers, at gun shows or not, must conduct background checks. But federal law permits some non-commercial sellers who don't need to be licensed to sell guns without conducting background checks. These sales sometimes happen at gun shows.

Republicans, meanwhile, have expressed their suspicion of Biden's agenda which goes even further than what he announced Thursday.

"By appointing the anti-gun Merrick Garland as attorney general and nominating David Chipman — formerly a senior staffer at the leading gun control lobby — to head ATF, Biden has made clear his sights are set on restricting the rights of law-abiding gun owners while ignoring criminals and foregoing substantive measures that will actually keep Americans safe," the National Rifle Association (NRA) said in a statement.

"Further, the proposals Biden announced tonight could require law-abiding citizens to surrender lawful property and enable states to expand gun confiscation orders. The NRA will fight this nomination and ill-conceived executive actions," the NRA also said.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., added: "President Biden plans to announce his attempts to trample over our constitutional 2A rights by executive fiat. He is soft on crime, but infringes on the rights of law-abiding citizens. I won't stand for it. And neither will House Republicans. Follow the

Constitution!”

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Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said, “The answer is not to restrict the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens, the answer is to go after violent criminals and come down on them like a ton of bricks.”

Attorney General Merrick Garland also spoke at the event. He said that gun control is needed to prevent further “tragedy” from gun violence.

“We stand here today not at a moment of tragedy but in the midst of an enduring tragedy,” Garland said.

Brady United, one of the highest-profile gun control groups in the U.S., billed Biden and Harris as “the strongest gun safety ticket in history” at an event last fall.

“President Biden’s actions are historic and they will have an immediate impact. These are tangible and powerful policies that will save lives,” Brown said of the president’s executive actions in a statement Wednesday.

Fox News’ Brittany De Lea, Sally Persons and Kristina Biddle contributed to this report.

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