



NC-Sen: Kay Hagan (D) Supports Expanding Background Checks For Gun Purchases

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U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan likes the idea of expanding background checks for gun purchases, but her vote on legislation nearing the Senate floor will depend on the details, her office said Tuesday.

Hagan, a Greensboro Democrat, is also prepared to vote for increased gun trafficking penalties and new school safety measures widely expected to be part of a gun bill.

She's "unlikely to support" a renewal of the 1994 assault weapons ban or limits on gun magazine sizes because of "the impact it could have on responsible gun owners," said Sadie Weiner, a Hagan spokeswoman. - News & Record, 3/27/13

Glad to hear Hagan finally state her position. Hagan was one of the Senators Mayor Michale Bloomberg's Super PAC was pressuring to support universal background checks:

Lawmakers are on recess for the next two weeks, but for 15 senators, there is no escaping New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the upcoming debate over new gun reform legislation.

Mayors Against Illegal Guns, which Bloomberg co-founded in 2006, is launching a \$12 million ad buy this week in 13 key states where it says it "can most influence the upcoming Senate vote" on gun control efforts.

The group's off-year election ad campaign focuses on expanded background checks rather than other gun control measures, such as banning assault rifles or limiting the number of rounds in a magazine,

which face stiff opposition on Capitol Hill. A Quinnipiac University poll released earlier this month found 88 percent support for universal background checks, including 85 percent among gun owners.

Here is a sample spot:

The ads will target Republican Sens. Jeff Flake (Arizona), Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson (Georgia), Dan Coats (Indiana), Charles Grassley (Iowa), Susan Collins (Maine), Kelly Ayotte (New Hampshire), Dean Heller (Nevada), Rob Portman (Ohio) and Pat Toomey (Pennsylvania). On the Democratic side, Sens. Mark Pryor (Arkansas), Joe Donnelly (Indiana), Mary Landrieu (Louisiana), Kay Hagan (North Carolina) and Heidi Heitkamp (North Dakota) will see the ads in their states. - PBS News Hour, 3/25/13

Plus Hagan's silence on the issue was gaining attention in the local press:

U.S. Senator Kay Hagan, and several other Democrats up for reelection in 2014, have recently landed on the radar of several high-profile national news organizations for appearing to hedge on major issues including gun control, gay rights, and the budget.

The New York Times, Washington Post, Politico and Buzzfeed have all reported on Hagan's stances in recent days on the budget, gun control, and marriage equality.

The Times reported on gun control ads running in swing states, sponsored by New York City Mayor and gun control advocate Michael Bloomberg. The ads are intended to put pressure on some of the Senate's most vulnerable Democrats. "The gun issue is particularly problematic because they will need Republican votes to win re-election," The Times reported. - WCNC, 3/25/13

I'll be honest, I wasn't optimistic that an assault weapons ban would pass this congress, even though an assault weapons ban is popular in North Carolina:

North Carolinians support an assault weapons ban by a 51/41 margin and more broadly favor stricter gun laws by a 54/40 spread. Both of those things come despite the NRA having a narrowly positive 45/42 favorability rating in the state. - 2/13/13

But I do believe that universal background checks can become a reality and I'm happy to see Hagan come out in support of background checks at least. Plus given the political climate of North Carolina, it's a move that the North Carolina GOP will attack Hagan for:

Mr. McCrory first ran for governor in 2008 but was beaten by Ms. Perdue, then the lieutenant governor, who became the state's first female governor. As a mayor on the moderate side of his party, Mr. McCrory had bipartisan support and was perhaps best known for revitalizing Charlotte with projects like a light-rail system and the Nascar museum.

His large transition team is being studied for signs of whether he will turn more conservative. It is heavy with Republican politicians and business leaders, including former members of President George W. Bush's administration and former governors. The most controversial figures on the team are the billionaire businessman Art Pope and some of his allies who are connected to the John William Pope Foundation. The group, which is dedicated to conservative and free-market ideas, has given millions of dollars to libertarian and conservative groups, including the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and Americans for Prosperity. - New York Times, 12/11/12