



Governor Corbett's Last Chance: Signing a Pro-gun Bill into Law

By [Bob Adelman](#)

October 30, 2014

On Tuesday, one week before the election which will determine whether Pennsylvania's Republican Governor Tom Corbett (shown) gains a second term, [he signed into law](#) a state-wide "preemption" law that ensures that all gun laws across the state's 2,639 counties and municipalities cannot be more restrictive than the state allows. In its announcement of Corbett's signing of the bill, the National Rifle Association (NRA) urged its members to "thank Governor Corbett for being a steadfast advocate of your Second Amendment rights and for signing [the bill] into law."

The NRA might better have asked its members to show their appreciation by voting for him next Tuesday: He'll need every vote he can get.

Corbett is carrying a mountain of baggage into the election that has caused him to trail his Democrat challenger, former secretary of the state's department of revenue, Tom Wolf, by as much as 20 percentage points until very recently.

In 2009, during his second stint as the state's attorney general, Corbett convened a grand jury to investigate child sexual abuse by former Penn State assistant coach Jerry Sandusky. But it took nearly three years to gain a conviction, for which Corbett received massive criticism. It didn't help matters any that along the way Corbett's staff approved a \$3 million state grant to Sandusky's Second Mile charity for children which, according to the findings of the grand jury, served as a repository for potential sex-abuse victims.

Next, Corbett's efforts to expand jobs in the state have proved to be dismal. From January 2011 when he took office and June, 2014, Pennsylvania added 125,000 new jobs, ranking it 47th in the nation.

He appeared to waffle over how to expand natural gas drilling to take advantage of the massive Marcellus Shale lying beneath the state and how to generate additional revenues in the process. Initially he opposed instituting a natural gas extraction tax, holding that the state's already high corporate income tax rate was severe enough. However, in his second year as governor, Corbett signed into law the Marcellus Shale Law, subjecting natural gas drillers to pay an "impact fee."

Under the terms of that bill, Corbett also managed to outrage environmentalists and citizens in local municipalities by requiring them to allow those drillers unlimited access to the shale in all zoning districts at any time of day or night. The bill also required industrial and agricultural

zoning districts to allow wastewater pits and gas processing plants to be constructed there as well.

Further, the bill prohibits civilians from knowing the contents of the fracking fluids used in the drilling process, giving that information only to doctors providing emergency medical treatment and forcing them to sign a document after treatment that swears them to secrecy about those contents. While the bill didn't arrive at Corbett's desk until it had been passed by the state legislature, Corbett has been criticized for it anyway.

It didn't take long for mayors of larger cities in the state to start criticizing Corbett's new gun law, holding that he eliminated their abilities to pass gun laws that they felt would help them fight crime.

Corbett's troubles were summed up nicely in Cato Institute's recently released "Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors":

Governor Corbett fell from an "A" on the last Cato report to a "C" on this one mainly because of his support for a huge tax increase on transportation. The increase passed in 2013, and will raise more than \$1 billion a year from Pennsylvania motorists.

At present, about the only thing working in Corbett's favor — aside from signing this gun bill — is something called the Pennsylvania "cycle." Ever since 1950, Democrats and Republicans have alternated occupying the governor's mansion every eight years. A victory by Tom Wolf, a Democrat, would break that cycle. Pennsylvania has also voted against the party of the sitting president (Obama is a Democrat) in 18 of the last 19 gubernatorial races (dating back to 1938). Further, the Pennsylvania "cycle" has had Pennsylvanians voting against Democrats in 16 of the last 17 races with a Democrat in the White House. Finally, the last incumbent to be defeated for re-election was Democrat William Bigler in 1854!

The latest polls show Corbett closing the gap to 10 points, up from over 20 as recently as early August. But Corbett may have run out of time, even if every gun owner in the state goes to the polls to vote for him on Tuesday. Concluded Real Clear Politics: "Republicans do seem to be coming home for Corbett in the closing days of this election, helping [him] to halve what was once a 22-point gap. But that's probably not enough to help him get it done [on Tuesday]."