

February 28, 2019

Daily Bulletin: House Republicans Try to Poison Gun Background Check Bill, With ICE

*Good morning, Bulletin readers. For the first time in a generation, the House of Representatives passed a major gun safety bill with **bipartisan support**. We have a closer look at what's in that bill, who voted for it, and what happens next, below.*

The House passed a major gun safety bill for the first time in decades. The legislation would expand background checks to nearly all sales, with exceptions for gifts to family members, loans for hobbyists, and weapons transfers in moments of self-defense.

- **Eight Republicans voted for the bill.** Three of them had **A ratings from the NRA**, six came from districts that voted for Trump in 2016, and at least four came from regions that experienced a mass shooting within the past year. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, a Republican from Pennsylvania who was endorsed by **gun violence prevention groups** during his election last year, was one of the bill's five Republican co-sponsors.
- **Two Democrats voted against it.** Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota and Rep. Jared Golden of Maine voted "no" on the legislation.
- **But one NRA-backed Democrat voted "yes."** In a statement, Sanford Bishop, a Georgia Congressman, called the bill "common sense" and cited overwhelming public support for background checks, including among gun owners. Bishop has received nearly \$50K in all-time NRA direct contributions and had an A rating from the gun group as recently as the 2018 **midterms**.

Republicans amended the legislation with a poison pill designed to pressure swing-district Democrats on immigration. The last-minute change **calls for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to be notified when an undocumented person fails a background check**. Twenty-six Democrats voted for the amendment, which will have little practical effect: As Alex Yablon has reported for The Trace, the databases that are searched during a background check contain more records of unlawful aliens than any other kind of prohibiting document. But only about 1,300 people per year are blocked from buying a gun because of their immigration status. That's compared to 42,000 denied annually because of a felony or serious misdemeanor on their record.

Another bill to strengthen background checks is up for a vote today. The legislation would close the so-called Charleston **Loophole**, which allows a gun seller to release a gun to a customer if a background check has taken more than 72 hours to complete. Gun violence prevention activists say the vote may be close.

ABC NEWS

Supporters of criminal justice reform bill warn of 'poison pills' as legislation heads for Senate floor

By [Jordyn Phelps](#)

December 17, 2018, 2:59 PM

With the Senate set to vote this week on White House-backed legislation that seeks to reform the nation's prison system and sentencing guidelines, supporters are crying foul over a set of amendments they say would effectively gut the bill.

Republican Sens. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and John Kennedy of Louisiana, two of the most vocal critics of the legislation, have introduced amendments that they say would expand explicit exclusions for violent criminals from early release programs, among other changes.

"If advocates of First Step want to protect public safety, they will support all three amendments," Cotton said in an Op-Ed in the National Review published Monday.

But backers of the legislation, known as the First Step Act, say the amendments are actually designed to effectively kill the bill, which they say already excludes violent offenders from early release, and would disincentive prisoners from participating in anti-recidivism programming by giving wardens ultimate veto power in determining a prisoner's fate.

Holly Harris, a conservative strategist who has been pushing for the bill's passage in her role as the Executive Director of Justice Action Network, says the Cotton amendments are "not based in reality."

"This is a person who truly doesn't understand the prison system. There has to be some incentive to participate in this programming," Harris said. "This is not a good faith effort but an effort to destroy the bill."

Criminal justice reform advocate Van Jones, who has been a close ally of the White House on this legislation, said he remains optimistic that ultimately the bill will pass but said the Cotton amendments would deal a blow to the efficacy of the legislation.

"Sen. Cotton is hoping that those amendments will stick and cause some Democrats to bolt from supporting the bill," said Jones. "We will pass this bill, the question is whether some of his amendments will also make it in."

A coalition of groups and individuals from across the political spectrum who back the bill penned a joint letter addressed to [President Trump](#) expressing their strong opposition to the Cotton-Kennedy amendments.

“The amendments proposed by Senators Cotton and Kennedy will weaken what would otherwise be a significant step towards making our federal prisons more accountable and results oriented. Beyond substance, however, they are political ‘poison pills’,” the letter says.

“Right now we have a system of only sticks and people get bitter, we’re trying to get to a system where there are some carrots and people can have some hope,” Jones said.

[President Trump urges Mitch McConnell to pass criminal justice reform bill during lame duck session](#)

Debate on the bill is expected to begin in the Senate Monday night with supporters confident they have the votes needed to advance the bill toward final passage, killing amendments like those from the two conservative GOP senators, according to a senior GOP aide to a bill cosponsor. The White House declined to comment on the attempted revisions to the legislation.

A final vote on the measure is expected mid-week.

The House must then approve the measure, but aides to members in both chambers have been working behind the scenes to ensure the bill's passage. The bill would then head to the president's desk where he has said he would sign it.

The bill's approval would be a notable achievement for President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has been the leading advocate for criminal justice reform within the administration and shepherded the White House's legislative effort.

The issue is a personal passion for Kushner, whose own father spent time behind bars for tax evasion and illegal campaign contributions over a decade ago.

President Trump’s embrace of the legislation is a departure from his tough-on-crime rhetoric.

While the president has gone so far in the past gone as to call for the death penalty for drug dealers, the president has gotten on board with a bill that aims to loosen sentencing guidelines for some nonviolent drug offenses.

“We’re all better off when former inmates can receive and reenter society as law-abiding, productive citizens. And thanks to our booming economy, they now have a chance at more opportunities than they’ve ever had before,” President Trump said in November, announcing his support for the Senate bill.

In addition to giving judges greater latitude in sentencing for some nonviolent offenses, the First Step Act also seeks to beef up anti-recidivism programming for the nation’s prison population. According to Justice Department figures, approximately three out of every four Americans released from state prison ends up back behind bars within five years, and one in four prisoners in the federal prison system.

LGBTQ Nation

Republicans are adding hateful ‘poison pill’ amendments to kill the Equality Act

Some of the amendments are particularly shocking.

By [Daniel Villarreal](#) Sunday, May 12, 2019

Unable to discuss the Equality Act with any intellectual honesty, U.S. House Republicans are trying to add all sorts of “poison pill” amendments to make the sweeping LGBTQ rights bill distasteful to its authors. One amendment, which came from Arizona Rep. Debbie Leskowho, proposed changing the Equality Act’s name to the “Forfeiting Women’s Rights Act.”

The Equality Act would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which would ban discrimination against LGBTQ people in housing, employment, public accommodations, education, credit and several other areas.

Of the poison pill amendments, [The Washington Blade writes](#), “Republicans proposed 28 of those amendments, many of which are anti-trans in nature or seek to broaden the religious exemption in the bill to allow anti-LGBT discrimination.”

Among their proposed amendments are ones making sure that the Equality Act can’t “be construed to grant or secure any right relating to abortion or the provision or funding thereof,” an amendment to keep trans women from competing in women’s sports and another amendment granting public businesses, schools and religious establishments (including charities and universities) the right to refuse service and facilities to LGBTQ people.

Republicans have also added a bunch of other amendments specifically targeting trans children. One amendment seeks to ensure that “parents’ custody of their child is not threatened by them simply questioning their child’s gender identity.” Another says the act cannot “deny a parent the right to be involved in their minor child’s medical care.” And yet another says “nothing in the act shall require physicians [and mental health providers] to affirm and provide treatment for minors who request gender transition treatment.”

Basically, Republicans want to allow religious parents and doctors to refuse transitional medical care to trans teens. This isn’t all that surprising seeing as Trump wants to [refuse medical care to all trans people entirely](#).

Luckily, since Democrats are in charge of the House Rules Committee, these amendments have almost zero chance of actually making it into the final bill. But seeing as Republicans rule the Senate, the Equality Act also has zero chance of becoming law anytime soon.

THE HILL

McConnell warns Dems: No 'poison pills' in funding measure

By [Jordain Carney](#) - 04/26/17 12:00 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) is warning Democrats not to push for the inclusion of "poison pills" in a must-pass funding bill, with only days left to avoid a government shutdown.

"Our friends on the other side of the aisle sent me a letter asking for this bill to reject poison pill riders. I would suggest that if they take their own advice, we can finish this negotiation and produce a good agreement that both sides can support," McConnell said from the Senate floor.

McConnell didn't specify what Democrats want in the funding bill that Republicans would consider a "poison pill" — a provision that would effectively kill the legislation.

But Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) on Wednesday came out against funding ObamaCare's cost-sharing reduction payments in the legislation, telling reporters, "We're not doing that. That is not in the appropriation bill."

Democrats offered to agree to an additional \$15 billion in military funding in the legislation if Republicans agreed to fund the ObamaCare insurer subsidies.

Lawmakers have until Friday night to avoid a government shutdown.

Senate Minority Leader [Charles Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) said on Wednesday that he "hopes" lawmakers will be able to meet the deadline, adding, "I'm optimistic about the chances for a deal."

"So long as we try to operate within the parameters our parties have operated under for the last few spending bills," he said. "Above all, we have to make sure there are no poison pill riders. I hope both sides of the aisle will pursue that now."

Schumer specified that remaining issues include the ObamaCare payments, help for Puerto Rico and extending healthcare for miners that would otherwise expire this month.

The Democratic leader previously demurred when asked during a weekly press conference on Tuesday if Democrats would reject a bill that didn't include help for insurers.

He hinted on Wednesday that lawmakers could include border security funds in the bill, but said it wouldn't be tied to Trump's push for a border wall.

"Democrats have always been for border security. ... We may address border security in this bill as well, but it will not include any funding for the wall, plain and simple," he said.

He said Democrats will also fight any efforts to roll back women's health protections, Wall Street reform, environmental regulations or create a "deportation force."

"I hope we can debate them in regular order, but they should ... hold the government hostage and pass them without debate," Schumer said.