

# **‘Enough prayers, time for some action’: Biden introduces executive orders on gun control**

**WASHINGTON** – The White House believes the United States is enduring a “gun violence public health epidemic,” so President Joe Biden is taking executive action to address it.

Biden spoke from the Rose Garden Thursday morning, announcing new gun control measures that target ghost guns, red flag laws, pistol-stabilizing braces, and other issues.

He said he wants Congress to do more than offer “thoughts and prayers” to the victims of gun violence.

“They’ve offered plenty of thoughts and prayers, members of Congress,” Biden said, “But they’ve passed not a single new federal law to reduce gun violence. Enough prayers, time for some action.”

Because substantial changes to gun laws have always met fierce Republican resistance in Congress, Biden said he asked Attorney General Merrick Garland to prioritize gun violence and help him with concrete actions the president could take without Congress.



President Joe Biden speaks during an event on the American Rescue Plan in the Rose Garden of the White House on March 12, 2021, in Washington, DC. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

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Biden first spoke of regulating ghost guns, which are homemade firearms that often lack serial numbers authorities would use to trace them. They've increasingly turned up at crime scenes, and federal agents have found them in undercover purchases from gang members and other criminals.

There's no federal requirement for ghost gun buyers to undergo a background check, but Biden's actions would change that.

Biden said he'll also tighten regulations on pistol-stabilizing braces. The president said the brace makes the pistol more lethal and "a hell of a lot more accurate." He wants to designate pistols with the brace as short-barreled rifles, which would require owners to have a federal license.

The braces came under scrutiny last month after a gunman allegedly used a braced pistol to kill 10 people at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado.

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That shooting, along with shootings at three Atlanta-area spas that left eight dead plunged the U.S. back into a gun debate that has dominated American politics for years.

Part of Biden's action asks Congress to pass an appropriate national red flag law that would allow family members or law enforcement to petition for a court order temporarily barring people in crisis from accessing firearms if they present a danger to themselves or others.

And he hopes Congress will incentivize states to pass similar laws. Biden praised the House for passing bills that would close loopholes in America's gun legislation.

The gun show loophole allows buyers to purchase a gun from a gun show, where background checks aren't required. The Charleston loophole allows guns to be purchased if the FBI hasn't completed a background check within three business days. And the boyfriend loophole allows physically abusive ex-boyfriends and stalkers with previous convictions to maintain access to firearms.

Democrats control both chambers of Congress, but the slim Senate advantage likely wouldn't be enough to pass the bills that would end the loopholes.

Republicans are expected to oppose many, if not all, of Biden's measures. The party has positioned itself as defender of the Second Amendment and tried to paint the opposition as gun confiscators. Before he went into his plans, Biden dismissed the notion that his measures were a threat to the Second Amendment — calling it a “phony argument.”

While enhanced background checks are generally popular with the American public — even with some conservatives — Congress has so far not been able to find compromise on gun control as a whole, thus the president's reliance on executive action.

“Universal background checks are supported by the vast majority of American people — and I might add the majority of responsible gun owners,” Biden said. “Let me be clear: This is not a partisan issue among the American people. This is a view by the American people as an American issue. And I'm willing to work with anyone to get these done.”

But of all the ideas Biden presented, the removal of gun manufacturers' immunity to lawsuits sits closest to his heart, he said.

"If I get one thing on my list, the Lord came down and said 'Joe, you get one of these,' give me that one," Biden said. "Because I tell you what: There would be a come to the Lord moment these folks would have real quickly."

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Thursday's news conference also served as an introduction of David Chipman, Biden's nominee to direct the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). Chipman is a former federal agent and adviser to the gun-control group Giffords. He spent 25 years with ATF where he worked to stop a trafficking ring that sent illegal guns from Virginia to New York.

Gun-control advocates have long stressed how crucial the director of the ATF is in enforcing gun laws. John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety, lauded Chipman as an "invaluable point person" in the fight against illegal gun trafficking.

Feinblatt also applauded Biden for his upcoming gun control measures.

"Each of these executive actions will start to address the epidemic of gun violence that has raged throughout the pandemic, and begin to make good on President Biden's promise to be the strongest gun safety president in history," Feinblatt said.

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*This story was reported from Atlanta. The Associated Press contributed.*

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