

News Coverage on Message of Necessity for Immediate Vote

Assembly Passes New NY Gun Law; Bill Awaits Cuomo's Signature

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The state Assembly voted to bolster New York's ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo expected to sign a package of tougher gun measures into law as early as Tuesday afternoon.

The Democrat-dominated Assembly passed the bill Tuesday by a 104-43 vote after the state Senate approved it by a wide margin late Monday.

The vote makes New York the first state to enact tighter restrictions on guns after the Dec. 14 massacre in Newtown, Conn.

"What we're saying today is some of these weapons is beyond what we believe to be reasonable for purchase for New Yorkers," said Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh, a Manhattan Democrat who chairs the state chapter of State Legislators Against Illegal Guns.

The gun-control package makes changes and additions to a broad swath of state law, ranging from requiring universal background checks for all gun and ammunition sales, boosting the state's power to confiscate firearms from the mentally ill and increasing penalties for gun-related crime.

The bill includes an immediate ban on semi-automatic rifles, shotguns and pistols with a "military-style feature," such as a flash suppressor or a bayonet mount. Guns that are currently legal but are soon to be banned would be grandfathered in, but their owners would have to register with

the state.

The Assembly's debate stretched for more than 4.5 hours, with various Republicans expressing dissatisfaction with the bill and with Cuomo's decision to allow a vote without the mandatory three-day aging period. Cuomo issued a "message of necessity," which allows lawmakers to vote on a bill immediately after it's introduced.

Assemblyman Steve Katz, R-Yorktown, Westchester County, said the bill—known as the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act, or NY SAFE—said the bill is based on Cuomo's "misguided, egotistic notion that this will advance his presidential aspirations."

"Why are we being bullied into voting on this bill without proper, responsible due diligence?" Katz asked.

Others accused Cuomo of trying to seize headlines by rushing a bill through the Legislature and becoming the first state to act after Newtown.

"Cuomo seized the opportunity to exploit tragedy and put his own personal politics ahead of sound public policy," the National Rifle Association wrote in an alert sent to its members.

Cuomo defended his decision to issue the "message of necessity," which he said was in part to prevent a run on sales of soon-to-be-banned assault weapons, he said.

"It wouldn't make a heck of a lot of sense to announce a ban three days later and generate hundreds and hundreds of sales in the assault weapons in the state when we're trying to ban those sales," Cuomo told reporters late Monday.

He continued: "If there is an issue that fits the definition of necessity in the state of New York today, I believe it is reducing gun violence."

The Senate—controlled by a coalition of Republicans and breakaway Democrats—passed Cuomo's bill, 43-18, after 11 p.m. Monday.

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