

World News Roundup

Guns

House yet to act

Fla senators 'pass' gun restrictions bill

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., March 6, (AP): In response to a deadly Florida school shooting last month, the state's Senate narrowly passed a bill that would create new restrictions on rifle sales and allow some teachers to carry guns in schools.

The 20-18 vote came Monday evening after three hours of often emotional debate. Support and opposition crossed party lines, and it was clear many of those who voted for the bill weren't entirely happy with it.

"Do I think this bill goes far enough? No! No, I don't!" said Democratic Sen. **Lauren Book**, who tearfully described visiting Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School after 17 people were fatally shot on Valentine's Day.

She also would have liked a ban on assault-style rifles, like many of the students who traveled to the state Capitol to ask lawmakers to go even further to stop future mass shootings. But Book said she couldn't let the 60-day legislative session end Friday without doing something.

"My community was rocked. My school children were murdered in their classrooms. I cannot live with a choice to put party politics above an opportunity to get something done that inches us closer to the place I believe we should be as a state," she said. "This is the first step in saying never again."

The bill now goes to the House, which has a similar bill awaiting consideration by the full chamber.

Earlier Monday, families of the 17 Florida high school massacre victims called on the state's Legislature to pass a bill they believe will improve school security.

Reading a statement outside Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Ryan Petty implored legislators to pass Gov. Rick Scott's proposal to add armed security guards, keep guns away from the mentally ill and improve mental health programs for at-risk teens. Scott also opposes arming teachers.

"We must be the last families to lose loved ones in a mass shooting at a school. This time must be different and we demand action," said Petty, reading from the group statement.



Book

My community was rocked. My school children were murdered in their classrooms. I cannot live with a choice to put party politics above an opportunity to get something done that inches us closer to the place I believe we should be as a state," she said. "This is the first step in saying never again."

The bill now goes to the House, which has a similar bill awaiting consideration by the full chamber.

Earlier Monday, families of the 17 Florida high school massacre victims called on the state's Legislature to pass a bill they believe will improve school security.

Reading a statement outside Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Ryan Petty implored legislators to pass Gov. Rick Scott's proposal to add armed security guards, keep guns away from the mentally ill and improve mental health programs for at-risk teens. Scott also opposes arming teachers.

"We must be the last families to lose loved ones in a mass shooting at a school. This time must be different and we demand action," said Petty, reading from the group statement.

Killed

Petty's 14-year-old daughter, Alaina, was killed in the Feb. 14 shooting, along with 13 schoolmates and three staff members.

If just one more senator voted no instead of yes Monday evening, the bill would have died. Republicans and Democrats alike said there were parts of the bill they didn't like. Democrats didn't like the idea of letting teachers carry guns, even if the bill was amended to water down that proposed program. And many pro-gun rights Republicans didn't like the idea of raising the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21 and to create a waiting period on sales of the weapons.

The Senate amended its bill to limit which teachers could volunteer to go through law enforcement training and carry guns in schools. Any teacher who does nothing but work in a classroom would not be eligible for the program, but teachers who perform other duties, such as serving as a coach, and other school employees could still participate. Other exceptions would be made for teachers who are current or former law enforcement officers, members of the military or who teach in a Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps program.

The bill would name the program for slain assistant football coach Aaron Feis, who has been hailed as a hero for shielding students during the school attack. Republican Sen. Bill Galvano said he got the approval of Feis' family to name the program for him.

Meanwhile, a bill prohibiting domestic abusers and people under restraining orders from owning firearms became America's first new gun control law since the Feb. 14 Florida high school massacre.

"Well done Oregon," Democratic Gov. Kate Brown exclaimed Monday after signing the law on the steps of the state Capitol as some 200 people, including victims of domestic abuse and high school students, applauded and cheered.

State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, whose sister was fatally shot by her boyfriend, and Rep. Janeen Sollman, who fled her home as a child when her father was in a violent rage, hugged as they stood behind the governor.

The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 people has created a wave of young anti-gun activists that has now reached cross-country into Oregon. Students from a high school in the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego traveled 40 miles (65 kms) to stage a gun-control rally in the state capital, Salem, Monday morning.

Violence

"We are empowered youth," they chanted, while holding signs that read "End gun violence, our lives matter," and "Together we can end gun violence."

"We want to promote change. We're tired of the massive number of school shootings and the massive lack of action," said 15-year-old student Eli Counce.

A Democrat who helped overturn local assault weapons bans as a state lawmaker and before being ousted as Ohio's attorney general said in a column published Sunday that he "was in the pocket of the National Rifle Association" to protect his political career and now regrets it.

Marc Dann used his blunt admission on Cleveland.com to urge elected officials to live by their principles as the country debates gun control following the Florida school shooting Feb 14 that killed 17 people.

"The NRA's finely tuned propaganda operation, funded by the manufacturers of assault weapons used in mass shooting after mass shooting, convinced me and hundreds of officeholders and candidates that even talking about gun safety would end their political careers as quickly as a legally acquired AR-15 snuffed out lives last Valentine's Day," Dann wrote. "The threat worked."

NRA spokeswoman Jennifer Baker dismissed Dann's statements as "a desperate attention-seeking ploy by a has-been politician."

Dann said he made "a devil's bargain" to adopt pro-gun positions that made him uncomfortable in order to stay in office and do the other work he viewed as important.

"I was re-elected to the state senate and won an upset victory to become Ohio's attorney general in large part because the NRA and Buckeye Firearms had 'educated' pro-gun voters about my unwavering commitment to the Second Amendment," he wrote. "I soon learned however, that in making a deal with the devil to advance my political career, I had abandoned my principles and sold my soul."

Dann said he supported legislation as a state senator that overturned assault weapons bans in Cleveland and other cities, joined Republicans to overturn GOP Gov. Bob Taft's veto of the measure, and then "as Ohio attorney general, I fought Cleveland's leaders when they sued to overturn the law and reinstate the city's ban."



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara Netanyahu in the Oval Office of the White House on March 5 in Washington. (AP)

Immigration

Trump blames Dems for failing to fix DACA

Uncertain future for 'Dreamers'

WASHINGTON, March 6, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump claimed Monday he was "ready to make a deal" protecting hundreds of thousands of immigrants brought to the country illegally as children, as lawmakers missed an initial deadline for resolving their fate.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that shields nearly 700,000 of the so-called Dreamers from deportation was supposed to expire on March 5, six months after Trump announced he was ending it.

But a US District Court judge issued a nationwide injunction that requires the government to allow recipients to renew their permits to live and work in the country, and the US Supreme Court declined to accept the administration's request to intervene.

Both those developments have taken the pressure off lawmakers.

With Dreamers and advocates stressing that the immigrants remain in legal limbo — weeks after the White House and Congress failed spectacularly to address their fate — Trump insisted he was ready to negotiate a solution.

"It's March 5th and the Democrats are nowhere to be found on DACA. Gave them 6 months, they just don't care," Trump said on Twitter.

"Where are they? We are ready to make a deal!"

With courts unlikely to rule definitively on immigration before summer, and the case expected to head to the Supreme Court after that, Congress is not expected to act before the mid-term elections in November.

Immigration advocates have used the unmet deadline as an inflection point to pressure Congress and the White House.

"March 5 is the deadline Trump gave the Congress to act and they haven't done anything," Bruna Bouhid, a 26-year-old student and Dreamer from Tampa, told AFP as she and others marched from the Washington Mall to the US Capitol.

"We are here to make sure they don't forget about us."

Hundreds of activists and Dreamers descended on Washington to press lawmakers into action. Many in a crowd of chanting protesters blocked traffic near the Capitol, while others demonstrated inside congressional office buildings.

Meanwhile, a Republican congressman said Monday that he's trying to force a vote on legislation offering a three-year extension on protections against deportation for hundreds of thousands of young immigrants.

The election-year effort by Rep Mike Coffman, R-Colo., could be an uphill climb.

Most Republicans don't want to extend the program unless lawmakers also provide billions of dollars to start building Trump's proposed wall with Mexico. And some Democrats may not back what they see as a temporary fix to a problem they want permanently resolved — and that many say should also provide the immigrants with a pathway to citizenship.

Discharge

Under House rules, Coffman will need 218 signatures on a "discharge petition" to force a vote on his bill. Coffman's bill has 31 co-sponsors about evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

Federal agents arrested 23 people on suspicion of being in the country illegally as they served notices of employment audits to over 100 businesses in New Mexico and west Texas, immigration officials said Monday.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents made the arrests over the past week, according to an email from agency regional spokeswoman Nina Pruneda. She said three of the arrested individuals face criminal charges related to illegal re-entry to the United States after deportation or firearm possession or both.

Of the audit notices, 68 were served on businesses across a swath of 18 counties in western Texas.

Businesses were given three days to provide hiring records that deal with employees' immigration status.

Such employment audits and interviews can lead to criminal charges or fines.

The federal "worksite enforcement strategy is focused on protecting jobs for US citizens and others who are lawfully employed, eliminating unfair competitive advantages for companies that hire an illegal workforce, and strengthening public safety and national security," Pruneda said in a written statement.

The Trump administration will not immediately have to award California a grant being withheld over concerns the state is a sanctuary for people in the country illegally, a federal judge said Monday.

The amount of money at issue — \$1 million — was relatively small and was at this point only delayed, not denied, US District Judge William Orrick said. While he rejected the state's request for a preliminary injunction to turn over the money, he also rejected a request by the US Department of Justice to dismiss California's lawsuit.

The judge said the suit raised "weighty and novel constitutional issues" that would benefit from additional argument.

Many cities in the US, and some states, have implemented so-called sanctuary laws encouraging law enforcement to focus resources on local crime rather than detaining people suspected of being in the country illegally.

Defenders of the practices say they improve public safety by promoting trust among law enforcement and immigrant communities and reserve scarce police resources for urgent crime-fighting needs.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has blamed "sanctuary city" policies for crime and gang violence. In July, Sessions announced that cities and states could only receive Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance grants if they allow federal immigration officials access to detention facilities and provide advance notice when someone in the country illegally is about to be released.



Jason Cebreros, 21 (left), of Las Vegas, and Bianca Balderas, 19, of Las Vegas, march past the Rayburn House Office Building with other supporters of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program on March 5, on Capitol Hill in Washington. 'My best friend is a DACA recipient,' says Balderas, 'I'm marching for them.' (AP)



Inslee



Culberson

America

'Gitmo could take more inmates'

The Guantanamo Bay detention center could easily accommodate "a couple dozen" more inmates should the Trump administration decide to send new prisoners to the much-maligned facility, a top US officer said Monday.

Admiral Kurt Tidd, who oversees the military's Southern Command that includes Guantanamo, told Pentagon reporters there is enough staffing and infrastructure in place to increase the prison population from its current number of 41.

"Without any additional resources, probably a couple dozen, but beyond that we would need to increase the size of the guard force," he said, noting that no decision had been made to send more detainees.

President Donald Trump in January signed an executive order reversing his predecessor Barack Obama's ultimately fruitless 2009 directive to shutter the US prison center. (AFP)

Washington OK's net-neutrality: Setting up a likely legal fight with the Trump administration, Washington has become the first state to enact its own net-neutrality requirements after US regulators repealed Obama-era rules designed to keep the internet an even playing field.

"We know that when D.C. fails to act, Washington state has to do so," Gov. Jay Inslee said Monday before signing the bipartisan measure that banned internet providers from blocking content or interfering with online traffic.

The new law also requires internet providers to disclose information about their management practices, performance and commercial terms. Violations would be enforceable under the state's Consumer Protection Act.

The Federal Communications Commission voted in December to gut US rules that meant to prevent broadband companies such as Comcast, AT&T and Verizon from exercising more control over what people watch and see on the internet. The regulations also prohibited providers from favoring some sites and apps over others.

Because the FCC prohibited state laws from contradicting its decision, opponents of the Washington law have said it would lead to lawsuits. Inslee said he was confident of its legality, saying "the states have a full right to protect their citizens."

As he has done frequently over the past year, Inslee took aim at President Donald Trump's administration, saying the decision by the Federal Communications Commission was "a clear case of the Trump administration favoring powerful corporate interests over the interests of millions of Washingtonians and Americans." (AP)

Bumper crop of candidates: Two



A man who was trying to enter an event to hear white nationalist Richard Spencer speak is punched in the face by a protester on March 5, at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. Police say at least a dozen people were arrested Monday. Michigan State allowed Spencer to appear, but the venue was an auditorium at a remote end of campus. (AP)

party leaders less control over who carries the mantle in November.

Conversations with more than a dozen Democratic candidates, party officials and strategists found confidence that a glut of crowded primaries won't damage the party's overall prospects for a big November. Yet Democrats acknowledged the lively nomination fights could result in victories for candidates with little experience, scant scrutiny or political views that are out of step with general electorate.

That's largely because it's the party's left flank that has provided much of the enthusiasm since President Donald Trump's election capped nearly a decade of Democrats' losing more than 1,000 federal and state offices.

"Just any blue won't do," says Nina Tuner, a former Ohio legislator who leads Our Revolution, the spinoff of Sen. Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign. Like Sanders, the group calls for a \$15 minimum wage, free public university tuition and a national health insurance plan.

"People are not just voting for people because they are Democrats," Tuner adds. "They want to vote for people who are fighting for their values."

In Washington, though, there's a hint of worry about what kinds of candidates can win in Republican-leaning areas Democrats may need to regain majorities on Capitol Hill and dent GOP advantages in some statehouses. Even in Democratic strongholds, where partisan control isn't at play, the battles will help determine the direction of the party.

The tensions will get their next test in Texas with primaries Tuesday. (AP)