



After Arizona Shooting, Gun Control Advocates Push For New Restrictions

By Michael Beckel
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In the debate about 2nd Amendment rights and gun control, one side -- gun supporters -- typically has the upper hand. Now, gun control advocates are hoping momentum will build for new laws after the assassination attempt against Rep. [Gabrielle Giffords](#) (D-Ariz.) on Saturday in Tucson.

The weapon involved in the shooting was a Glock 19, a variation of a gun standard in many law enforcement departments.

Instead of the standard-issue 15 bullets in the magazine clip, the semi-automatic pistol was reportedly equipped with an extended magazine that could store 30 rounds of ammunition. The alleged shooter, 22-year-old Jared Lee Loughner, was jumped and restrained while trying to reload.

That type of ammunition clip increasingly looks to be the focus of a new legislative push for stricter regulations.

"People are completely outraged that there is a high-capacity magazine attached to a Glock," Josh Horwitz, the executive director of the [Coalition to Stop Gun Violence](#), told [OpenSecrets Blog](#).

"These are offensive weapons," Horwitz continued. "We need to deescalate... 30 rounds is a long time to wait for someone to reload."

But [John Velleco](#), the director of federal affairs for the [Gun Owners of America](#), told [OpenSecrets Blog](#) that lawmakers shouldn't jump to conclusions. He urged caution in lawmakers developing new regulations.

"Authorities don't know all the facts and already politicians like [New York Democratic Rep. Carolyn] McCarthy are blaming the 2nd Amendment, the Tea Party and far right for the actions of a confused and deranged young man," Velleco said.

"There is nothing to suggest that more gun control laws would have prevented this," he continued. "You can't just pass a law every time something bad happens and expect that to solve the problem."

On Monday, Rep. [Carolyn McCarthy](#) (D-N.Y.) -- whose husband died during a 1993 mass shooting on the Long Island railroad -- and Sen. [Frank Lautenberg](#) (D-N.J.) began drafting legislation to ban high-capacity ammunition magazines.

Such equipment was banned for a decade in the United States after President Bill Clinton in 1994 signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act into law. But the prohibition was designed to expire in 2004, and Congress did not renew it.

And earlier today, another gun control advocate in Congress, Rep. [Pete King](#) (R-N.Y.), [announced his plans](#) to introduce legislation banning a person from bringing a gun within 1,000 feet of government officials, including the president, vice president, members of Congress and federal judges.

GUN SUPPORTERS HAVE 'STRUCTURAL ADVANTAGES'

While Horwitz is [registered as a federal lobbyist](#) for the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, his organization has not spent much money -- in fact, zero reported expenditures -- on lobbying during the last few years. If groups spend less than \$5,000 on lobbying during any quarter, they are not required to detail an exact amount.

Overall, [gun control groups spent](#) just \$180,000 during the first nine months of 2010 and employed nine lobbyists, according to research by the [Center for Responsive Politics](#). Their ideological opponents, meanwhile, hired 49 lobbyists and invested \$3.9 million [during the same period](#).

The only gun control groups to meet the \$5,000 per quarter reporting threshold last year were the [Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence](#), which spent \$30,000 through September, and [Mayors Against Illegal Guns](#), which spent \$150,000 through September.

The [National Rifle Association](#), meanwhile, spent [more than \\$2 million](#) during the same period. That's on pace to exceed the \$2.33 million the group spent in 1998, when the Center first began tracking lobbying expenditures.

Four other groups have spent at least six figures on federal lobbying efforts through September:

- [Gun Owners of America](#) (\$690,200)
- [The Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms](#) (\$591,400)
- [The National Shooting Sports Foundation](#) (\$220,000)
- [Safari Club International](#) (\$150,000)

The [NRA's PAC](#) also raised more than \$15.3 million during the 2010 election cycle -- ranking it [among the top PACs in the country](#).

And it spent more than \$12.2 million for the cycle, including a get-out-the-vote blitz called "Trigger the Vote," as [OpenSecrets Blog previously reported](#).

Furthermore, the gun rights organization [directly donated](#) more than \$1 million to federal congressional candidates, 68 percent of whom were Republicans and 32 percent of whom were Democrats. Since 1989, the group has [donated \\$18.2 million](#) to federal-level candidates, with 82 percent of that sum benefiting Republicans.

Additionally, the NRA's PAC spent nearly \$7.3 million during the 2010 cycle on federal-level [independent expenditures](#) -- advertisements and messages overtly supporting or opposing the election of a political candidate. Those expenditures included \$38,950 spent on ads advocating in favor of Giffords' Republican opponent, Jesse Kelly.

The NRA, which didn't respond to *OpenSecrets Blog* for comment on this story, has told other media outlets that regarding the Arizona shootings, "anything other than prayers for the victims and their families at this time would be inappropriate."

Horwitz, of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, argued that gun rights groups such as the NRA and Gun Owners of America enjoy "structural advantages" such as regularly recruiting of new dues-paying members at gun shows across the country.

"We can't go to a gun show," he said. "And there's no such thing as a victim's show."

Nevertheless, he declared that his group and other gun control advocates would be able to harness technology and the internet to organize and channel the outrage.

"I'm very confident that our voice will be heard," he told [OpenSecrets Blog](#). "I've been around long enough to know that spontaneous outrage is the key to legislative success. The question is, can you keep that intensity up long enough to pass legislation?"

MIXED SUPPORT FOR PREVIOUS WEAPONS BAN

New restrictions would likely see an uphill battle on Capitol Hill.

Speaker of the House [John Boehner](#) (R-Ohio) [voted against](#) the 1994 crime bill that included the assault weapons ban that outlawed high-capacity ammunition magazines. [So did](#) Senate Minority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) and nearly a dozen Republican senators still in office, including Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.).

Notably, the bill was first written by then-Sen. [Joe Biden](#), now the vice president. It was also [supported by](#) then-Rep. [Jon Kyl](#) (R-Ariz.), who now serves in the U.S. Senate, and Rep. [Jim Kolbe](#) (R-Ariz.), the man who Giffords succeeded in [Arizona's 8th Congressional District](#).

During the shooting spree, six people were killed, including federal judge John Roll, Giffords aide Gabriel Zimmerman and 9-year-old Christina-Taylor Green. Another dozen were wounded.

Giffords, who was shot in the head, underwent surgery following the attack and remains in critical condition.

Giffords herself is a gun owner and supporter of 2nd Amendment rights. Although pro-gun interest groups such as the NRA and Gun Owners of America [did not rate Giffords highly](#), in 2008, she [signed onto](#) an *amicus brief* in support of gun owners in the controversial Supreme Court case [District of Columbia v. Heller](#), which concluded that the 2nd Amendment protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with service in a militia.