



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 13, 2013

Colorado Gun Rights Groups Aim to Recall State Lawmakers

Two Colorado gun rights groups have taken aim at four of their state's Democratic legislators in a [recall effort](#), following passage of what many have described as some of the toughest gun-control measures in the country.

Three of the controversial bills were signed into law in March by Gov. John Hickenlooper, also a Democrat. The new laws require background checks on all gun sales and transfers, charging gun purchasers for the cost of the background checks and imposing a 15-round limit on ammunition magazines. The Democratic majority in both houses passed the bills without any Republican votes.

The governor is also expected to sign a bill the legislature passed before adjourning on Friday that prohibits domestic violence offenders from owning guns. Two other Senate proposals, extending liability for gun violence and banning concealed weapons on campus, were dropped after hundreds of gun rights activists showed up at hearings to testify against them.

Two citizens' groups, Pueblo Freedom and Rights and Basic Freedom Fund, have been circulating petitions to recall four of the lawmakers, including Senate President John Morse, who sponsored a bill that would have made owners, sellers, and manufacturers of guns liable for any harm done with the firearms. Though Morse withdrew the bill when he realized there were not enough votes to pass it, his efforts nevertheless have drawn the wrath of gun rights advocates. Senators Angela Giron and Evie Hudak, sponsors of the magazine restriction, and Rep. Mike McLachlan are the other legislators targeted in the recall effort.

The signature count, which has a May 21 deadline, must equal 25 percent of those voting in the last election (in each legislator's particular district) to force a recall vote. According to the [Denver Post](#), that would mean 7,178 signatures against Morse, far fewer than the 18,692 needed in Hudak's district or the 10,586 in McLachlan's. No effort is being made to recall Hickenlooper, probably because it would take nearly 450,000 signatures statewide to force a recall vote on the governor.

Seven gun-related bills were introduced in January, apparently in reaction to both the killing of 12 and wounding of 58 people in an Aurora, Colorado, movie theater last summer, and the deaths of 20 first-graders and six adults in a shooting spree by a lone gunman at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in December. After the Aurora shooting, Hickenlooper said gun control measures would not have had any effect in preventing the carnage.

"This person, if there were no assault weapons available, if there were no this or no that, this guy's going to find something, right?" he said in an interview with CNN. "He's going to know how to create a





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bomb. Who knows where his mind would have gone?" But on December 12, two days before the Newton killings, the governor told the Associated Press that he had a [different perspective](#).

"I wanted to have at least a couple of months off after the shooting in Aurora to let people process and grieve and get a little space, but ... I think, now ... the time is right," he said. Concerning limits on magazine capacity, the governor stated: "When you look at what happened in Aurora, a great deal of that damage was from the large magazine on the AR-15 [rifle]. I think we need to have that discussion and say, 'Where is this appropriate?'"

About 200 people picketed Hickenlooper in March, when he appeared for a speaking engagement at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction. The governor spoke amid protesters carrying "Recall Hickenlooper" signs and sounding warnings about the gun control measures.

"If we don't stop this now, in another five to ten years there will be no Second Amendment," warned one of the demonstrators. "They're committing tyranny, and that's not part of the American dream," said another.

Not all of the state's gun rights advocates agree with the recall efforts. Dudley Brown, director of Rocky Mountain Gun Owners, told the *Denver Post* that the time and money would be better spent on the 2014 elections.

The Senate president, meanwhile, says he's not worried about the efforts. "If making Colorado safer from gun violence costs me my political career, it's an amazingly small price to pay," said Morse. Though one group, called A Whole Lot of People for John Morse, is raising money and collecting signatures on his behalf, he is the subject of two recall petitions. One of the petitions accuses him of limiting public testimony in the Senate when large numbers of citizens showed up at hearings on gun legislation and were turned away because of time constraints.

"We thought we weren't being listened to by our elected officials, and we thought, 'How can we get their attention?'" spokesman Nick Andrasik of the Basic Freedom Defense Fund told the *Post*. "It seemed that recalling them would be a great way to do that."

Photo of man firing a 5.56 mm rifle at a shooting range outside Colorado Springs, Colorado: AP Images



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