

# Evers calls for gun control measures following weekend mass shootings

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Gov. Tony Evers is calling for the state to tighten gun control laws and knocked Republican lawmakers in the wake of mass shootings in Dayton and El Paso over the weekend that claimed 31 lives.

Fielding questions from reporters after a news conference in Wauwatosa Monday, Evers gave his full-throated support to expanding universal background checks to all weapon sales and called on political leaders in the state to “do something proactive.”

“And I say proactive is as simple as universal background checks; that’s what people Wisconsin want,” he said.

The gov also expressed support for so-called red-flag laws, which allow family members or police officers to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from a person deemed to present a danger to themselves or others. He labeled such a measure as “a possibility” but added the caveat that “you’re taking away people’s rights to participate in democracy, that’s something we have to consider.”

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AG Josh Kaul also backed those two proposals, writing in an email to WisPolitics.com that “it is time for the state Legislature to join the overwhelming majority of Wisconsinites in supporting universal background checks and a red-flag law.”

In his inaugural address, Kaul pledged to push for implementation of both measures, and a spokeswoman told WisPolitics.com that the DOJ has been speaking with lawmakers on the issue.

After calling for universal background checks, Evers added that Republican leaders

“haven’t made it happen in the past.”

“The bottom line is our Legislature has avoided this issue totally,” he said. “So whether it’s a special session or not, we need to know that the other side is going to take this issue seriously.”

Spokesmen for Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos were not immediately available for comment.

The gov acknowledged legislation “plays a role” in finding a solution to end gun violence, but he highlighted deeper cultural divides as the root cause. In the Texas shooting, Evers said, the gunman was a white supremacist “that didn’t like folks in El Paso.”

“People need to look inside them themselves to start with, and racism is an issue in this country and in the state,” he said, adding that the mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek seven years ago Monday proved that the issue wasn’t limited Texas or Ohio.

Wisconsin’s gun laws are rated a C-, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

The organization in 2016 merged with a group founded by former Arizona U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, the survivor of a gunshot wound to the head sustained during a mass shooting at a constituent outreach event. It ranked the state as 18 out of 50 states in gun law strength and 39 out of 50 in gun deaths.

In order to improve its ranking, the Giffords Law Center recommends Wisconsin “enact universal background checks, require waiting periods for all firearm sales, and regulate unsafe handguns” among other things. A law mandating a 48-hour waiting period was repealed in 2015 by then-Gov. Scott Walker and the GOP-led Legislature.

So far this biennium, lawmakers have introduced two gun-control measures: one which would prohibit those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence from owning a firearm; and a second which would reinstate the two-day waiting period before purchasing a handgun. Both of those proposals were brought forward in mid-July and are authored and cosponsored exclusively by Dems.

See the scorecard:

<https://lawcenter.giffords.org/scorecard/#WI>

See the bills:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab334>

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