

Dept. of Justice: AG Kaul joins coalition filing brief in support of New York law banning guns in places of worship

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a coalition of 18 attorneys general asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit to reverse a lower court decision that enjoined New York’s prohibition on carrying firearms in places of worship and religious observation. In an amicus brief, AG Kaul and the coalition argue that the prohibition is consistent with U.S. Supreme Court precedent and with a long tradition of similar regulations designed to meet the states’ responsibility to protect their residents from the harmful effects of gun violence.

“Common-sense gun safety measures can help reduce gun violence,” said AG Kaul. “States must be able to adopt reasonable measures to keep communities safe.”

The coalition argues that states have an interest in limiting the possession and use of firearms in locations where people exercise other constitutionally protected rights, where vulnerable populations like children and older adults gather, and where large groups of people meet in confined spaces. Locations like churches, synagogues, and mosques are the heart of many people’s religious exercise. The brief notes that they are also increasingly targets of gun violence, which may dissuade people from attending religious services and otherwise exercising their First Amendment rights.

The brief explains that though the U.S. Supreme Court recently altered the judicial analysis for Second Amendment claims in *N.Y. State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, the court’s decision did not upend the states’ long-standing authority to

regulate the carrying of firearms in certain places. The court reaffirmed in Bruen that the Second Amendment has never given Americans an unrestricted right to carry loaded firearms in all public places. Instead, states may enact a variety of regulations to combat the problem of gun violence, including solutions tailored to local needs.

Joining AG Kaul are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.