

**MOST AMERICANS FAVOR 'RED FLAG' GUN LAWS, SURVEY SAYS**

By Katie Lannan – State House News Service

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A new national survey indicates a majority of Americans support the idea of "red flag" gun laws like the one Massachusetts passed last year, and a Republican state representative says the Bay State's approach could serve as a model for national legislation.

After the deadly mass shootings earlier this month in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, President Donald Trump resurfaced the topic of red flag legislation, which allows certain people to petition a court to remove guns from someone who is deemed to be a danger to themselves or others.

Speaking from the White House on Aug. 5, Trump said he has called for red flag laws, also known as extreme risk protection orders, because "we must make sure that those judged to pose a grave risk to public safety do not have access to firearms, and that, if they do, those firearms can be taken through rapid due process."

In a new poll conducted from July 16 to 21, about two weeks before the recent shootings, a total of 77 percent of respondents said they either strongly or somewhat support allowing a family member to seek a court order that would temporarily take away guns from an owner they feel might harm themselves or others. Seventy percent expressed some level of support for allowing the police to seek the same type of order.

The [survey](https://www.americanpublicmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/apm-survey-aug-2019-gun-ERPO-final.pdf) of 1,009 adults across the country was conducted by the APM Research Lab with the public radio reporting collaboration Guns in America and with Call to Mind, an American Public Media initiative focused around mental health.

Because of the timing of the poll, AMP Research Lab said its results were not influenced by the Ohio and Texas shootings or by politicians' calls afterward to pass red flag laws.

Thirteen percent of respondents were "strongly opposed" to extreme risk protection orders initiated by family members, and 14 percent were strongly opposed to orders initiated by police, the survey found.

Support for red flag laws was high across political party lines, with 85 percent of Democrats, 76 percent of independents and 70 percent of Republicans backing family-initiated ERPOs either strongly or somewhat.

Seventy-eight percent of Democrats, 69 percent of independents and 66 percent of Republicans indicated some degree of support for police-initiated ERPOs.

The poll found majority support among gun owners, as well as among non-owners living with someone who owns a gun. Sixty-seven percent of gun owners polled and 78 percent of people living with a gun owner said they supported family-initiated ERPOs.

For police-initiated ERPOs, the poll tracked 60 percent support among gun owners and 57 percent support among people living with gun owners.

The red flag law in Massachusetts, passed in the wake of the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, allows relatives and household members to ask a judge to suspend someone's gun license. If the order is granted, authorities could remove guns from a home.

The policy became law over the objections of the Gun Owners Action League, the local affiliate of the NRA, which called it "a gun confiscation bill with no provisions for mental health evaluations and services for those deemed extreme risks by the courts."

The bill cleared both branches of the Legislature with bipartisan support and was signed into law by Republican Gov. Charlie Baker, who at the time said it "creates a responsible way to help prevent gun deaths and suicides while protecting individuals' second amendment rights."

The Senate vote on the final version was nearly unanimous, with only one senator -- Fitchburg Republican Sen. Dean Tran -- in opposition. In the House, 20 out of 34 Republicans voted for the bill.

One of those House lawmakers, Shrewsbury Republican Rep. Hannah Kane, said in a Sunday broadcast of WCVB's "On the Record" that she thinks "there's finally some political will to understand that you can preserve gun rights and protect people from gun violence."

"I think we're there," Kane said. "I think the question becomes, are we going to let the perfect be the enemy of the good? Are we going to insist on one way or the other? And I think what we really need to do is work towards what the American people have said they strongly want, which is the universal background check, and the concern on the red flag legislation, we've done that here in Massachusetts. It certainly could be a model for what they do."