

New York lawmaker wants to keep handguns away from unsafe people

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State Senator Kevin Parker, a Democrat from Brooklyn, stands at the podium during a news conference at the Capitol in Albany, New York, in February 2017. Parker wants to require police to scrutinize social media activity and online searches of handgun license applicants, and disqualify those who make violent or hateful posts. Photo by: Hans Pennink/AP Photo

ALBANY, New York — Several terrible shootings have been in the news. Some people wonder if they could have been avoided.

Some of the shooters showed they might be dangerous. Some posted hateful things online. Their posts were ignored, though.

Now, hateful talk on social media might keep someone from getting a gun. It could happen if a new bill becomes a law. A lawmaker in New York is trying to get the law passed. His name is Kevin Parker.

The law would change what happens when someone wants a gun. Police would check what people have posted online. Those who share hateful posts could not get a gun.

Parker said he wants to keep guns away from the wrong people. He got the idea after a shooting in Pennsylvania. The shooting killed 11 people in October. It was at a synagogue, a Jewish place of worship. The shooter had shared posts online against Jewish people.

Does The New Law Go Too Far?

Some people do not want the new law. They say it would take away freedom. U.S. laws allow people to speak freely. The new law would not, though, they say.

Even those who want more gun laws are questioning it. People would have to let the police into their online accounts. Then police would look through Facebook and other places.

Some people would be kept from getting guns. If they said they would hurt someone, they would not get a gun. They would not be able to get a gun if they said hateful things about a race or religion.

Many people worry about being tracked online. Posts are already watched, though. Police and others check them.

Some gun owners said the bill is not needed. They said it goes too far.

Other Options For Better Gun Safety

Steve Wohlleber works at a gun shooting range. He said he does not think the government should be allowed to check people's online posts. The police have other things to do, he said.

The new law would mean more work for police. It could take a long time to get a gun.

David Pucino is a lawyer. He works to prevent shootings. Pucino said that he shares the lawmaker's goals. He thinks that there are better choices, though. One is another bill that would keep dangerous people from having guns.

It is not known if Parker's bill will become a law. He has already met one of his goals, though. That was to have people talk about gun safety.

Quiz

- 1 How would the law change if state Senator Kevin Parker's bill is passed?
- (A) People who put hateful things online would not be allowed to have guns.
 - (B) People who visit synagogues would not be allowed to have guns.
 - (C) People who have guns would not be allowed to use social media accounts.
 - (D) People who have guns would not be allowed to practice shooting them.
- 2 According to the section "Other Options For Better Gun Safety," WHY does Steve Wohlleber think the new law is a bad idea?
- (A) He thinks it would make too much work for police.
 - (B) He thinks it would take away from free speech.
 - (C) He thinks he has a better idea for a new law.
 - (D) He thinks he would sell fewer guns at his gun range.

- 3 Read the selection below from the introduction [paragraphs 1-5].

Police would check what people have posted online. Those who share hateful posts could not get a gun.

Fill in the blank.

In this selection, a "post" is a ____.

- (A) list of class assignments online
 - (B) written statement on social media
 - (C) location where someone works
 - (D) wooden piece used to hold up a fence
- 4 Read the paragraph below from the section "Does The New Law Go Too Far?"

Many people worry about being tracked online. Posts are already watched, though. Police and others check them.

What is the definition of "tracked" based on the context clues?

- (A) sent far away
- (B) drawn around
- (C) looked at closely
- (D) walked behind