



Southern DAILY

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U.S. House approves expanded background checks for gun sales

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill that would expand background checks for gun sales to include firearm purchases at gun shows and over the internet, a measure likely to face Senate and White House opposition.

The bill is likely to face opposition when it goes to the Republican-controlled Senate, however. It would also need President Donald Trump's signature in order to become law.

The White House said on Monday that Trump's advisers would recommend the president veto the legislation because it would apply "burdensome requirements" that are "incompatible with the Second Amendment's guarantee of an individual right to keep arms."

Trump has previously indicated he supported efforts to extend background checks to all gun sales.

"I will be strongly pushing Comprehensive Background Checks with an emphasis on Mental Health. Raise age to 21 and end sale of Bump Stocks! Congress is in a mood to finally do something on this issue - I hope!" Trump tweeted a year ago, after a shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 dead.

Representative Steny Hoyer, the No. 2 House Democrat, told reporters on Tuesday that Republicans had prevented a vote on a background check bill when they controlled the chamber, and that while there were differences among Democrats about how to curb gun violence, the background check bill had broad support.

Republican Harris won't run in new N.C. election

"The carnage that we've seen perpetrated by gun violence over the last decade has heightened the American people's concern, and the bill that we're putting on the floor we believe has the support of 90 percent of the American people," Hoyer said.

From 2009 to 2017, there were at least 173 shootings in the United States in which four or more people were killed, with at least 1,001 total deaths, according to the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety.

Representative Doug Collins, the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee where the background check bill originated, said on Wednesday that the bill was ineffective because it "foolishly presumes criminals who flout existing laws will suddenly submit themselves to background checks."

The House is set to vote on Thursday on a second bill that would extend the time it takes to conduct a background check before a gun sale to 10 days from minutes. "TREMENDOUS"

Trump said before leaving Washington it would be "a very tremendous summit" and stressed the benefits to North Korea if it gave up its nuclear weapons.

"With complete denuclearization, North Korea will rapidly become an economic powerhouse," he said. "Without it, just more of the same. Chairman Kim will make a wise decision!"

In a speech on Sunday, however, Trump appeared to play down the possibility of a major breakthrough, saying he would be happy as long as North Korea maintained its pause on weapons testing.

"I'm not in a rush," he said. "I just don't want testing. As long as there's no testing, we're happy."

North Korea has not held a nuclear or missile test since 2017, but analysts say the two leaders have to move beyond summit symbolism.

"The most basic, yet urgent, task is to come to a shared understanding of what denuclearization would entail," said Gi-Wook Shin, director of Stanford's Asia-Pacific Research Center.

"The ambiguity and obscurity of the term 'denuclearization' only exacerbates the skepticism about both the U.S. and North Korean commitments to denuclearization."

While the United States is demanding North Korea give up all of its nuclear and missile programs, the North wants to see the removal of a U.S. nuclear umbrella for South Korea.



FILE PHOTO: Rifles are displayed for sale at the Guntoberfest gun show in Oaks, Pennsylvania, U.S., October 6, 2017. REUTERS/Joshua Roberts

Global stocks little changed after U.S. trade representative comments but energy gains

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Global stock indexes were little changed on Wednesday after U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said it was too early to predict an outcome in U.S.-China trade talks, though a jump in oil prices lifted shares of energy companies.

Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, (NYSE) in New York, NY, U.S., April 30, 2018. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

Lighthizer also told a congressional hearing that U.S. issues with China were "too serious" to be resolved with promises from Beijing.

Hopes for a resolution of the trade conflict had bolstered stock markets in recent sessions. U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he would delay a self-imposed March 1 deadline to raise tariffs on Chinese imports after "productive" trade talks.

"The general consensus is talks are progressing but it may not be full speed ahead," said Bucky Hellwig, senior vice president at BB&T Wealth Management in Birmingham, Alabama.

Equity investors also were on edge as the second U.S.-North Korean nuclear summit kicked off and tensions flared up between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan.

Oil prices rallied for a second day after an unexpected decline in U.S. crude inventories and after Saudi Arabia appeared undaunted by pressure from Trump on OPEC to prevent steeper price rises.

Brent crude futures LCOc1 rose or 2.1 percent to \$66.58 a barrel, while U.S. crude rose 2.61 percent to \$56.95 per barrel.

The S&P 500 energy index was up 0.9 percent, helping to limit losses in the benchmark S&P 500 index.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 63.38 points, or 0.24 percent, to 25,994.6, the S&P 500 lost 1.86 points, or 0.07 percent, to 2,792.04 and the Nasdaq Composite added 0.84 points, or 0.01 percent, to 7,550.14.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe shed 0.07 percent, while the pan-European STOXX 600 index lost 0.28 percent.

Investors were keeping an eye on the U.S.-North Korean summit in Hanoi. Trump is meeting Kim Jong Un, with the United States pushing North Korea's leader to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

The U.S. dollar benefited modestly from the trade remarks, but investors also were absorbing comments from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, who spoke for a second day before U.S. Congress. Powell has emphasized patience on raising U.S. interest rates.



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Ex-lawyer Cohen assails 'conman' Trump, gives no direct evidence of collusion

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen accused him of breaking the law while in office and said for the first time that Trump knew in advance about a WikiLeaks dump of stolen emails that hurt his 2016 election rival Hillary Clinton.

In a dramatic televised hearing in Congress on Wednesday, Cohen said Trump approved hush payments to cover up extra-marital sexual relationships in violation of campaign finance laws, and signed a personal check for \$35,000 in 2017 to reimburse Cohen for at least one of those payments.

Cohen, 52, was a close aide of Trump for years and his testimony could increase the legal and political pressure on the Republican president, but he did not appear to reveal a "smoking gun" that would sink his former boss.

Cohen told a House of Representatives committee he had no direct evidence that Trump or his campaign colluded with Moscow during the election campaign.

Possible collusion is a key theme of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, which has dogged the president during his two years in office Trump has repeatedly denied the allegation as has the Kremlin. Assailing the president as a "conman" and a "cheat", Cohen said Trump knew ahead of time about WikiLeaks' release of emails in 2016 that undermined Democrat Clinton's presidential bid.

He also said Trump directed negotiations for a real estate project in Moscow during the White House race even as he publicly said he had no business interests in Russia. I wouldn't use the word colluding," Cohen said of Trump's dealings with Russia, adding that there was "something odd" about the president's good relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin

The White House had no comment on Cohen's testimony but Trump earlier on Wednesday accused his former employee of lying.

"He did bad things unrelated to Trump. He is lying in order to reduce his prison time," Trump wrote on Twitter from Vietnam, where he was meeting with North Korean

leader Kim Jong Un. Republican lawmakers at the hearing tried to undermine Cohen, portraying him as an irredeemable liar who had benefited from financial crimes he pleaded guilty to last year, and saying the hearing was an opening gambit in a Democratic push to impeach Trump.

"I don't believe Michael Cohen is capable of telling the truth," said Republican Representative James Comer.

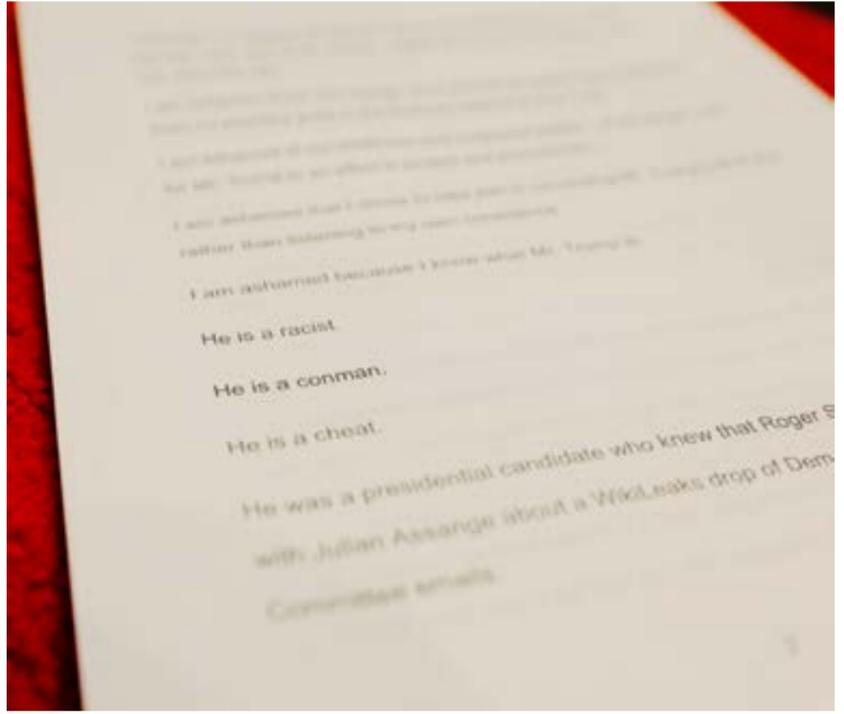
Cohen was mostly calm and contrite under the heated questioning from Republicans, and cautioned them not to make the same mistake he did in protecting Trump.

Michael Cohen, the former personal attorney of U.S. President Donald Trump, is sworn in to testify before a House Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, U.S., February 27, 2019. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst

"I did the same thing as you're doing now, for 10 years. I protected Mr. Trump for 10 years," Cohen told the committee hearing. "The more people that follow Mr. Trump as I did blindly are going to suffer the same consequences that I am suffering."

ALLY TURNED WITNESS
Cohen was one of Trump's closest aides and fiercest defenders, working with him on business and personal deals for a decade.

But he turned against him last year and is cooperating with prosecutors after pleading guilty to tax evasion, bank fraud and campaign finance



A printed page with testimony from Michael Cohen, the former personal attorney of U.S. President Donald Trump, is photographed in New York as he testifies before Congress

violations. Democrats took control of the House after last year's midterm elections and called Cohen to testify.

"I am ashamed because I know what Mr. Trump is. He is a racist. He is a conman. He is a cheat," Cohen said. He said he was directed by Trump in 2016 to make a \$130,000 payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to cover up an extra-marital affair.

That payment could amount to an illegal in-kind contribution by Cohen to the campaign because it exceeded donation limits and was not disclosed in Trump's campaign finance reports, legal experts say.

Trump has denied having sex with Daniels and said the payments to her and another woman who claimed an affair were not illegal.

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Editor's Choice



The motorcade of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un leaves following his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump during the second U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi, Vietnam



FILE PHOTO: U.S. President Donald Trump meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi



U.S. President Donald Trump (not pictured) and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sit down before their one-on-one chat during the second U.S.-North Korea summit at the Metropole Hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam February 27, 2019. REUTERS/Leah Millis



People watch a TV broadcasting a news report on a meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump, in Seoul



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi



People hold signs and take photos near the Metropole Hotel during the North Korea-U.S. summit in Hanoi



Bystanders wait for the motorcade of U.S. President Donald Trump in Hanoi, Vietnam, February 27, 2019. REUTERS/Ann Wang



A policeman stands guard along a road near the Metropole Hotel ahead of the second North Korea-U.S. summit in Hanoi

Colorado Set To Become 12th State Moving To Kill The Electoral College



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Democratic Colorado Gov. Jared Polis's signature is all that remains to include Colorado among the ranks of states prepared to abandon the electoral college system in favor of nationwide popular voting for the next presidential election. Colorado would bring the number of states who have joined the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) to 12, plus the District of Columbia. The NPVIC represents a coalition of states that have agreed to pool their presidential electoral votes for the majority candidate, regardless of individual state outcomes.



People protest outside the Colorado Capitol building in Denver, Colorado on December 19, 2016 to demonstrate against US President-elect Donald Trump on the day the Electoral College votes to certify the election. (Photo/Getty Images)

States have the constitutional right to manage the awarding of electoral votes in national elections, with many states opting for winner-take-all. If states with 270 electoral votes — or the number needed to elect a president — agree to award their votes to the majority-vote holder, it could effectively convert the presidential election to popular vote.

Colorado makes the total electoral votes represented by NPVIC states 181. To reach the required 270, they need a dozen or so more states to pass legislation. So far, no red states have embraced the movement.

Number Of Electoral College Votes

Each State Has



Former Attorney General Eric Holder weighed in on the issue Tuesday on Twitter, supporting the reform measure and linking to a story from The Washington Post about Colorado's pending inclusion

Eric Holder

@EricHolder

Time to make Electoral College a vestige of the past. It's undemocratic, forces candidates to ignore majority of the voters and campaign in a small number of states. The presidency is our one national office

and should be decided - directly - by the voters

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2019/02/26/popular-vote-could-decide-presidential-election-if-these-states-get-their-way/...](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2019/02/26/popular-vote-could-decide-presidential-election-if-these-states-get-their-way/)

20.4K

12:24 PM - Feb 26, 2019

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7,877 people are talking about this New Mexico is poised to join next, with legislation having passed the state's House and pending with its Democrat-controlled Senate. (Courtesy dailycaller.com)

Related

Possible 2020 Presidential Contender Eric Holder Says Electoral College Isn't "Real Democracy"



Eric Holder

Possible 2020 Democratic presidential contender Eric Holder said on Twitter Tuesday that he supports a plan to create "real democracy" by doing away with the Electoral College's process.

"A good reform measure to support," Holder tweeted. "Change the Electoral College by having a state's electoral votes go to the national popular vote winner — not the person who won the state. The candidate who gets the most votes — nationally — is elected. Real democracy."

Eric Holder

@EricHolder

A good reform measure to support. Change the Electoral College by having a state's electoral votes go to the national popular vote winner - not the person who won the state. The candidate who gets the most votes - nationally - is elected. Real democracy. <https://thehill.com/home-news/state-watch/431425-colorado-governor-will-sign-bill-aimed-at-bypassing-electoral-college...>

12.2K

12:45 AM - Feb 26, 2019

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Colorado governor will sign bill aimed at bypassing Electoral College

Holder's tweet included a link to a story from The Hill about Democratic Colorado Gov. Jared Polis's intention to sign a "bill aimed at bypassing Electoral College." Holder has said he'll decide in March whether to seek the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, reported NBC News.



Democratic Colorado Governor-elect Jared Polis speaks at an election night rally on November 6, 2018 in Denver, Colorado. (Photo by Rick T. Wilking/Getty Images)

Holder is not the first voice on the left to call for an end to the Electoral College after President Donald Trump's 2016 victory over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who won the popular vote.

Democratic Tennessee Rep. Steve Cohen introduced a measure in January that would add a constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College. A 2017 Politico story called the Electoral College a "national security threat" and said "[t]he Founding Fathers never anticipated the rise of Facebook and fake news."

If Polis's plan goes through, Colorado will become the twelfth state to become part of the national popular vote interstate compact, according to The Hill.

"I've long supported electing the president by who gets the most votes," Polis told The Hill. "It's a way to move towards direct election of the president." (Courtesy dailycaller.com)

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Robocalls Are Rampant Despite The "Do Not Call" List

FCC Calls For Phone Companies To Stop All Robocalls By 2019

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

In May of 2018, U.S. Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai asked phone companies to use a "call authentication system," or some sort of standard, for getting illicit numbers out of the telephone system. Monday's letter indicated that he's expecting answers on where that's currently at over the next two weeks. Reuters notes that this letter was sent to: AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile US, Alphabet Inc., Comcast, Cox Communications, Sprint, CenturyLink, Charter, and Vonage, among others. The letter also expressed concern over some companies' current efforts (or lack thereof) including: Sprint, CenturyLink, Charter, and Vonage, among others, for not really doing anything to fix the problem. In fact the letter said they don't "yet have concrete plans to implement a robust call authentication framework." So perhaps that call for help several months ago wasn't taken too seriously.

According to a company that blocks and tracks robocalls called YouMail, there were an estimated 5.1 billion sent out last month, which was a 150 percent increase of the already high 3.4 billion that were sent out in April.



The FCC has tried to deter these calls, but it hasn't been as effective as planned. Thus, the need for the authentication system, which the FCC said "digitally validates the handoff of phone calls passing through the complex web of networks, allowing the phone company of the consumer receiving the call to verify that a call is from the person supposedly making it."

The FCC is also demanding that these companies do something to help stop the

problem by no later than 2019:

The FCC

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Nov 5, 2018

Chairman @AjitPaiFCC demands the industry adopt a robust call authentication system to end illegal spoofing by 2019. <https://go.usa.gov/xPpfg>

FCC

Chairman Pai Demands Industry Adopt Protocols To End Illegal Spoofing

The FCC

√@FCC

Chairman Pai sent letters to 14 CEOs of voice providers this afternoon, asking those who have not established plans to implement call authentication to do so without delay or the FCC will take action. The letters are available here: <https://go.usa.gov/xPpfg>
4:05 PM - Nov 5, 2018
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The letter also expressed concern over some companies' current efforts (or lack thereof) including: Sprint, CenturyLink, Charter, and Vonage, among others, for not really doing anything to fix the problem. In fact the letter said they don't "yet have concrete plans to implement a robust call authentication framework." So perhaps that call for help several months ago wasn't taken too seriously.

According to a company that blocks and tracks robocalls called YouMail, there were an estimated 5.1 billion sent out last month, which was a 150 percent increase of the already high 3.4 billion that were sent out in April.

"We need call authentication to become a reality," Pai said. "It's the best way to ensure that consumers can answer their phones with confidence. By this time next year, I expect that consumers will begin to see this on their phones. I am calling on those falling behind to catch up ... If it does not appear that this system is on track to get up and running next year, then we will take action to make sure that it does."



The Federal Communications Commission, as part of a crackdown on the billions of unsolicited robocalls every year, is warning phone providers to implement technology to stop the scammers or face new government rules, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has reported.

"Recently I told the industry, 'Look, we need to adopt call authentication, essentially a digital fingerprint, for every single phone call this year. We need to have it now or otherwise it's going to be regulatory intervention,'" Pai told CNBC's **Jon Fortt**, in a "Squawk Box" interview from the Mobile World Congress trade show in Barcelona, Spain.

Hiya, a startup aiming to reduce telemarketing calls, estimates that Americans got 26.3 billion robocalls last year, a 46 percent increase from 2017. The average U.S. consumer received 10 spam calls per month last year, Hiya's Robocall Radar report shows.

The National Do Not Call Registry is still operational, and the Federal Trade Commission suggests that Americans looking



U.S. Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai is trying to gut net neutrality and has written a letter to phone companies to do something about the billions of spam/robocalls that pester and annoy Americans every month. (Photo/Getty)

overview

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai is warning phone providers to implement technology to stop telemarketing scammers or face new government rules.

Hiya, a startup aiming to reduce unwanted calls, estimates that 26.3 billion robocalls were placed last year, with Americans getting about 10 per month. "Because of the internet, we can get all of these calls from abroad" and they appear to be from a local source, says Pai.

to reduce the number of unwanted calls sign up. The FTC said consumers who still get scam calls can file a complaint.



Pai, whose agency works with the FTC to prevent robocalls, said telemarketing calls are the No. 1 complaint at the FCC and the top consumer protection priority. "We really beefed up our enforcement efforts. The largest fines in the FCC's 85-year history have been imposed on robocallers who have been bombarding American consumers with these scam calls."

The FCC said the enforcement of its

Truth in Caller ID Act, which prohibits the transmission of misleading or inaccurate caller ID information with the intent to defraud, resulted in over \$200 million in fines issued in 2018 alone. On Feb. 14, the agency proposed new rules banning illegal spoofed text messages and international calls.

"Because of the internet we can get all of these calls from abroad [and] they seem to be coming from a local source," Pai said. "We empowered some of the carriers to block calls that obviously spoofed; so the same area code, the next three digits are same. We want to empower them to take action." (Courtesy cnbc.com and (Courtesy complex.com)

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