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O'Rourke's 'hell yes' vow to take away rifles worries U.S. lawmakers pushing for gun limits

HOUSTON (Reuters) - Former U.S. Representative Beto O'Rourke did not hesitate during Thursday night's Democratic presidential debate when asked whether he would confiscate assault-style weapons from Americans.

"Hell yes, we're going to take away your AR-15, your AK-47," he said, instantly creating a viral moment - and potentially a fresh headache for lawmakers trying to persuade reluctant Republicans to pass new gun limits in Washington.

Opinion polls have found that tackling gun violence is increasingly a top priority for voters. The discussion on the debate stage in Houston, however, saw O'Rourke and other Democratic candidates endorsing ideas that go beyond any legislation under serious consideration in Washington.

U.S. Senator Chris Coons, a Democrat, and U.S. Senator Pat Toomey, a Republican and the co-author of legislation that would require background checks for all gun purchases, both expressed concern that O'Rourke's declaration could harm the bill's prospects.

"I don't think having our presidential candidates, like congressman O'Rourke did, say that we're going to try to take people's guns against their will is a wise policy or political move," Coons said on CNN on Friday, adding that he fears the debate video clip will be used to scare gun owners for years to come.

Republicans in the Democrat-controlled U.S. House of Representatives and other party leaders, who were at their annual retreat in Baltimore on Friday, immediately seized on O'Rourke's comments to portray Democrats as having a "radical agenda," as Vice President Mike Pence said

"Leading candidates for the highest office in the land talking about taking firearms away from law-abiding citizens," Pence said of the debate. "The American people deserve to know this president, this vice president and these House Republicans will always stand for the Second Amendment right to bear arms."

The National Rifle Association (NRA), chimed in on Twitter, accusing O'Rourke of changing his position on confiscation and saying he would leave "law-abiding Americans defenseless."

O'Rourke has made gun safety the centerpiece of his campaign since late August, when his hometown of El Paso, Texas, was the site of a racially motivated mass shooting that killed 22 people inside a Walmart store.

Other Democratic contenders have also prioritized new gun limits in the wake of several mass shootings this summer, including incidents in Gilroy, California, Dayton, Ohio, and West Texas, underscoring how gun safety has been transformed from a politically risky topic to a core Democratic talking point.

O'Rourke responded to Coons on Twitter on Friday, praising his work on background checks but insisting it is not enough. "The time for letting status quo politics determine how far we can go is over," he said.

BACKGROUND CHECKS VS. WEAPONS BANS

Several candidates on Thursday called for renewing the ban on assault weapons, including former Vice President Joe Biden, who boasted he had helped pass an earlier ban in 1994 despite opposition



Former Rep. Beto O'Rourke delivers his closing statement at the end of the 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Houston, Texas, U.S. September 12, 2019. REUTERS/Mike Blake

from the NRA. That law expired in 2004.

Biden also reiterated his proposal for a federal voluntary buyback program to purchase privately owned guns. U.S. Senator Cory Booker highlighted his plan to require licenses for gun ownership, another idea that has support in polls but virtually no chance of passing the Republican-controlled Senate. Gun control advocacy groups like Giffords and Everytown for Gun Safety have deliberately focused their strategic efforts on broadly popular proposals like background checks, rather than more controversial measures like weapons bans or buyback programs.

The executive director of Giffords, Peter Ambler, rejected the assertion that O'Rourke's comments would lead to a backlash against the background checks legislation.

"On universal background checks, the question is asked and answered: America wants this to happen," he said on Friday in an interview in Houston, where he attended the debate alongside gun violence victims. Ambler argued the key takeaway from the debate was that the entire Democratic field has embraced gun safety as a major campaign



issue. But he also made clear that Giffords is not calling for an assault weapons ban, let alone confiscation.

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Allies play hard to get on U.S. proposal to protect oil shipping lanes

DUBAI/PARIS (Reuters) - The United States is struggling to win its allies' support for an initiative to heighten surveillance of vital Middle East oil shipping lanes because of fears it will increase tension with Iran, six sources familiar with the matter said.

Washington proposed on July 9 stepping up efforts to safeguard strategic waters off Iran and Yemen where it blames Iran and its proxies for tanker attacks. Iran denies the charges.

But with Washington's allies reluctant to commit new weaponry or fighting forces, a senior Pentagon official told Reuters on Thursday that the United States' aim was not to set up a military coalition but to shine a "flashlight" in the region to deter attacks on commercial shipping.

Because of fears of confrontation, any involvement by Washington's allies is likely be limited to naval personnel and equipment already in place - near the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf and the Bab al-Mandab strait in the Red Sea, two Gulf sources and a British security source said.

"The Americans want to create an 'alliance of the willing' who confront future attacks," a Western diplomat said. "Nobody wants to be on that confrontational course and part of a U.S. push against Iran."

Addressing such concerns or possible misunderstandings, Kathryn Wheelbarger, one of the most senior policy officials at the Pentagon, told Reuters in an interview that the new initiative was "not about military confrontation."

Under Washington's proposal, the United States would provide coordinating ships and lead surveillance efforts while allies would patrol nearby waters and escort commercial vessels with their nation's flags.

Iran has said foreign powers should leave securing shipping lanes to Tehran and other countries in the region.

France, which has a naval base in the United Arab Emirates, does not plan to escort ships and views the U.S. plan as counterproductive to easing tensions because Tehran would see it as anti-Iran, a French official said.

The British security source said it was not viable to escort every commercial vessel, a view shared by several other countries.

A senior Western official based in Beijing said there was "no way" China would join a maritime coalition. A South Korean official said Washington had yet to make any official request.

A decision by Japan to join such an initiative would be likely to inflame a divide in Japanese public opinion over sending troops abroad. Japan's military has not fought overseas since World War Two.

"The Americans have been talking to anyone interested about setting something up, mainly looking to Asia as it's of vital importance to their security of (oil) supply and asking for ships, but it's gone a bit quiet," a Gulf official said.



India has deployed two ships in the Gulf to protect Indian-flagged vessels since June 20. Other Asian oil importers are unlikely to have anything but a symbolic presence, such as the involvement of a liaison officer, officials and diplomats said.

"It's just impossible. The Strait is already too crowded," an Asian official said of an escort system in the Strait of Hormuz which is 21 miles (33 km) wide at its narrowest point.

A second Gulf official said: "We're not going to do anything like that, we are not going to do anything on our own."

RISING TENSION

Tensions rose further on Thursday after Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had seized a foreign tanker smuggling fuel. A U.S. military commander in the region said the United States would work "aggressively" to ensure free passage of vessels in and around the Strait

of Hormuz.

Tension has mounted since U.S. President Donald Trump last year quit a 2015 nuclear pact under which Iran agreed to curtail its atomic program in return for relief from economic sanctions crippling its economy.

France, Britain and Germany, which with Russia and China are party to the agreement, have tried to rescue the deal and defuse tensions.

Failure to secure support for the maritime initiative would be a blow to efforts by the United States, and its Sunni Muslim allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to isolate Shi'ite Muslim Iran and Iran-backed forces in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are already patrolling the coastline off Yemen where they are leading a coalition battling the Iran-aligned Houthi movement, though the UAE has said it is scaling down its presence there.



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Editor's Choice



A worker cleans up outside the Legislative Council, a day after protesters broke into the building in Hong Kong, China July 2, 2019. REUTERS/Jorge Silva TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Former Vice President Joe Biden listens as Senator Bernie Sanders speaks during the 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Houston



Tennis - Wimbledon - All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, London, Britain - July 1, 2019 Cori Gauff of the U.S. in action during her first round match against Venus Williams of the U.S. REUTERS/Toby Melville TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Eliane Karp, the wife of Peru's former President Alejandro Toledo, is dragged out of the courtroom at the end of his extradition hearing in this courtroom sketch at San Francisco federal court



Senator Kamala Harris gives a thumbs down as she speaks during the 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Houston, Texas, U.S.



Mourners arrive at Rufaro stadium, in Mbare township where the body of Zimbabwe's founder Robert Mugabe will lie in state, Harare



A mourner is put on a stretcher after being involved in a stampede after the public was invited to view Robert Mugabe's body as it lies in state at the Rufaro stadium, in Mbare



FILE PHOTO: Former Canadian Olympians, rower Marnie McBean (R) and downhill ski racer Steve Podborski, carry torches during a Canadian Olympic Committee ceremony in Vancouver, British Columbia. REUTERS/Andy Clark/File Photo

The 10 Fastest-Growing Jobs Of The Next Decade—And What They Pay



(Photo/Getty Images)

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

The fastest-growing job over the next decade sounds like something out of a science fiction novel. Solar photo-voltaic installers (or, just solar panel installers) will be in demand through 2028, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' latest employment projections. The bureau expects today's 9,700 workers in the field will grow to 15,800 over the next 10 years, or a boost of 63%. Those who hold the role, which involves assembling, installing and maintaining solar panel systems on rooftops or other structures, earn a median salary of over \$42,000 a year. Aside from solar panel work, the need for healthcare workers will also rise sharply. Home health aides and personal care aides top the list of fast-growing jobs, and median pay hovers at \$24,000. The round-the-clock job generally provides low pay for high demands — both physically and mentally — which is bound to become more common as share of the aging population continues to grow. Home health care has grown by 150% to nearly 2.3 million workers in the past 10 years, according to The New York Times. Professionals are mostly women of color, and about one-third are immigrants, the Times reports. Overall, the BLS projects the creation of 8.4 million jobs in the next 10 years,

with an estimated 169.4 working Americans by 2028. People age 65 and over are expected to stay in the workforce longer. Meanwhile, the share of working young Americans ages 16 to 24 will continue to decline, due to more people going to school as well as displaced opportunities as older workers fill jobs historically held by younger adults. Service-providing jobs will continue to grow, especially for those in health care and social assistance, private educational services and construction. However, retail trade, wholesale trade, utilities, federal government and manufacturing sectors are projected to lose jobs.



Here are the top 10 jobs expected to grow the most in the next 10 years, plus their median annual wage in 2018:

- 1. Solar photo-voltaic installers
2. Wind turbine service technicians
3. Home health aides
4. Personal care aides
5. Occupational therapy assistants

Median annual wage: \$42,680
Projected growth: 63%

2. Wind turbine service technicians



Median annual wage: \$54,370
Projected growth: 57%

3. Home health aides



Median annual wage: \$24,200
Projected growth: 37%

4. Personal care aides



Median annual wage: \$24,020
Projected growth: 36%

5. Occupational therapy assistants

Median annual wage: \$60,220

Projected growth: 33%



6. Information security analysts



Median annual wage: \$98,350
Projected growth: 32%

7. Physician assistants



Median annual wage: \$108,610
Projected growth: 31%

8. Statisticians



Median annual wage: \$87,780
Projected growth: 31%

9. Nurse practitioners



Median annual wage: \$107,030
Projected growth: 28%

10. Speech-language pathologists



Median annual wage: \$77,510
Projected growth: 27%

(Courtesy https://www.cnbc.com)

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Industry Leader Juul Denies Targeting Kids

America's Vaping Crisis Raises It's Ugly Head

Juul's campaign to convince America it does not target kids to vape is getting crushed by lawmakers, attorney generals and the media. The backlash is wicked — and widespread:

Driving the news: Attorneys general from Illinois and Washington, D.C. are launching new investigations into Juul, and how the company's e-cigarettes became so popular with young people, reports AP. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also issued a formal warning on Friday against the broad use of e-cigarettes and recommended users avoid buying bootlegged vaping products.

The Connecticut attorney general announced an investigation into Juul's health claims and appeal to young people. In May, North Carolina's attorney general sued Juul "for designing, marketing, and selling its e-cigarettes to attract young people."



A year ago, the attorney general from Massachusetts launched a probe into accusations that Juul markets and sells to minors.

The Trump administration has followed up tough talk with real action, Axios' Sam Baker tells me: The FDA is still moving forward with tight limits on e-cigarette sales, even over the objections of conservatives who say it's too much regulation from a Republican administration. On April, 11 Democratic senators (including Elizabeth Warren) sent Juul a letter demanding data and documents about "hooking an entire new generation" via its "highly addictive nicotine." Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the lead senator on the letter, wasn't satisfied by Juul's 22-page response, and continued to blast Juul's "PR campaign."



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

Juul is asking policymakers to distinguish between its past and present.



Juul CEO Kevin Burns wrote in a Washington Post op-ed in March that after FDA objections, "we stopped the sale of flavored Juul pods to traditional retail stores, enhanced our online age-verification process, strengthened our retailer compliance, and exited our Facebook and Instagram accounts." Federal re-

searchers said in December that in an annual survey of American teenagers, 21% of high-school seniors "said they had vaped within the past 30 days — about double the level from the year before," the N.Y. Times reported.



Juul has about 75% market share, based

on Nielsen convenience store data.

A front-page article in Saturday's Washington Post reported that some teens refer to school bathrooms as "Juul rooms": "As e-cigarettes have skyrocketed in popularity, ... pediatricians report seeing teens who behave less like tobacco users and more like patients with substance-abuse disorders."

Many e-cigarettes, "including Juul, allow users to ingest far more nicotine than they would with traditional cigarettes."

A devastating analogy in the Post story: "[E]ven though many teens assume e-cigarettes are safe, some turn up with signs of nicotine toxicity, a condition previously seen in young children who accidentally ingested nicotine gum."

"These kids have behaviors that we often see in patients who have opioid or mari-

juana addiction," Sharon Levy of Boston Children's Hospital told The Post.

Addiction treatment specialists told The Post that some kids resort "to stealing from their parents or selling e-cigarette paraphernalia to support their habits."

A congressional hearing last week explored parallels between marketing by Juul and Big Tobacco, with a Stanford expert testifying that Juul's "early marketing (2015-early 2016) was patently youth oriented."

Dr. Robert Jackler, a surgeon and Stanford professor who launched a group to study the impact of tobacco advertising, testified that Juul "saturated social media channels frequented by underage teens ... which led to viral peer to peer promotion ... on youth oriented social media, especially Instagram."



Juul's view ... James Monsees, co-founder and chief product officer of Juul, said in his opening statement at last week's congressional hearing:

"When minors use our product, far from benefiting our business, it causes direct harm. Indeed, the single biggest risk to our company is that unabated growth in underage usage will cause us to lose our ability to reach our true intended market of adult smokers."

In a response for this article, Juul's Ted Kwong told Axios: "JUUL Labs exists to help adult smokers switch from combustible cigarettes, which are still the leading cause of preventable death in the world and we do not want non-nicotine users to buy JUUL products. We share these serious concerns about youth vaping." (Courtesy axios.com)

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