

Post Politics Now

House to take up assault weapons ban today, Pelosi tells colleagues

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By [John Wagner](#) and [Mariana Alfaro](#)

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Today, the full House will consider legislation that would ban assault weapons for the first time in nearly two decades, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said in a letter to Democratic colleagues. The measure stands virtually no chance of in the evenly divided Senate but Democrats hope that House passage will send a message that the party is serious about gun-safety legislation following a spate of high-profile mass shootings across the country.

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Earlier Friday, Pelosi held a ceremony to celebrate passage of the \$280 billion Chips and Science Act, a measure that would subsidize domestic semiconductor manufacturing and invest billions in science and technology innovation. The legislation now goes to President Biden for his signature.

Meanwhile, Pelosi did not say whether she intends to visit Taiwan when asked about an upcoming trip to Asia during her weekly news conference. Her office has been silent on her plans to this point, citing security issues. Some Biden administration officials are concerned that Chinese leaders would see a visit by Pelosi to Taiwan as a provocation.

Your daily dashboard

- **9:30 a.m. Eastern time:** House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) held a news conference. Watch [here](#).

- ◆ **9:30 a.m. Eastern time:** Pelosi held a bill enrollment photo opportunity for the Chips and Science Act before sending it to Biden. Watch [here](#).
- ◆ **Noon Eastern time:** Pelosi held her weekly news conference. Watch [here](#).
- ◆ **1:45 p.m. Eastern time:** White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre briefs reporters. Watch live [here](#).

Got a question about politics? Submit it [here](#). After 3 p.m. weekdays, return to this space and we'll address what's on the mind of readers.

◆ **KEY UPDATE** Just now



This just in: Leahy discharged from rehab, will be back for key vote

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) was discharged Friday from a rehabilitation facility and will back to the Senate next week, just in time to vote on Democrats' surprise [spending package](#).

Leahy was in a rehabilitation facility for weeks, undergoing twice-daily physical therapy sessions after [breaking his hip](#) from a fall at his home in June.

Before going back to his home in McLean, Va., on Friday, Leahy stopped by the Capitol to sign the newly passed CHIPS and Science Bill. The measure, which would fund an expansion the U.S. semiconductor industry, requires his signature as President Pro Tempore of the Senate before it goes to President Biden's desk.

Leahy's office said he will return to the Senate next week to vote on several key legislations on the agenda, including the Democrats' [reconciliation spending bill](#), which is likely to come to the floor later in the week.

Through the reconciliation process, Democrats can avoid a Republican filibuster in the Senate if they can secure a simple majority of 51 — meaning they need all Democratic senators to vote, plus the tiebreaking vote of Vice President Harris.

While in rehab, Leahy remained busy, releasing 12 annual appropriations bills to fund the federal government this week, as well as a supplemental appropriations bill to address the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

◆ **KEY UPDATE** 16 minutes ago



The latest: Blinken says he spoke with Russian foreign minister about Griner, Whelan

By John Hudson

Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday and pressed him to accept a U.S. proposal for the return of WNBA star Brittney Griner and Paul Whelan.

The top U.S. diplomat, speaking to reporters at the State Department, offered no indication that the discussion was fruitful.

“I raised exactly what I said I would raise with him — that is the significant proposal that has been on table for some weeks now that would lead to bringing home Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner,” Blinken said.

“I urged Foreign Minister Lavrov to move forward with that proposal. I’m not going to characterize his response, and I can’t give you an assessment to whether I think things are any more or less likely, but it was important that he hear directly from me on that,” Blinken said.

35 minutes ago



Analysis: Here's where Alito and Rep. Greene overlap on religious liberty

During remarks at a conference centered on religious liberty, Supreme Court Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. mocked foreign leaders who expressed alarm at the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in an opinion he wrote. His mockery drew the attention of media worldwide, but that wasn't the point of his speech, writes Philip Bump.

The point, instead, was to insist that religious liberty — and religion itself — had reached a point where it requires a robust defense.

As Phil writes:

After noting extreme examples of hostility to religion, including the actions of the Islamic State and Nazi Germany, he presented his thesis.

“The problem that looms is not just indifference to religion. It’s not just ignorance about religion,” he said. “There’s also growing hostility to religion, or at least the traditional religious beliefs that are contrary to the new moral code that is ascendant in some sectors.”

You’ll notice the heavy burden placed on the word “or” in that last sentence: There’s hostility to religion or at least to traditional beliefs that conflict with this “new moral code.” The “new code” to which he refers, we can safely assume, is the push toward recognizing the value and identities of people who’ve long been excluded from power if not the social conversation entirely.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of Alito’s concern centered on how the Constitution’s right to freely worship was interpreted, Phil notes.

“Freedom of worship’ means freedom to do these things that you like to do in the privacy of your home or in your church or synagogue or your mosque or your temple,” Alito said. “But when you step outside into the public square in the light of day, you had better behave yourself like a good secular citizen. That’s the problem that we face.”

He sees a secular society — he uses “citizen” intentionally — imposing a new moral code that suppresses religious belief outside the home. As Phil writes, it’s not that there’s a “new moral code,” as such. It’s that there are more non-Christian people to question the implied, often systemic primacy of Christian values and rules in American society.

And how does this tie to Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.)? Well, over the weekend, the controversial lawmaker said in an interview with a right-wing YouTube channel that the GOP should be the “party of nationalism.”

“We should be Christian nationalists,” Greene said.

As Phil writes:

This is typically not subtle. She’s saying that, by becoming a party of explicit Christian nationalism, the GOP wouldn’t have to “chase down” non-White voters, because they would build a robust enough base of support just from White Christians. ...

[Alito] and Greene are fighting in the same direction and with the same instincts, if not explicitly to the same end. To non-Christians, the difference between a country that is explicitly Christian and one in which Christian values are given more weight can at times be hard to distinguish.

Read more on this comparison [here](#).

47 minutes ago



The latest: White House voices support for House bill to ban ‘weapons of war’

The White House on Friday reiterated its support for an assault weapons ban, hours before the House planned to take up the measure, saying in a statement that Congress should build on the momentum of a bipartisan gun-safety bill passed last month and ban “these weapons of war.”

“40,000 Americans die from gunshot wounds every year and guns have become the top killer of children in the United States,” said the statement. “As President Biden has repeatedly called for, we must do more to stop this gun violence and save lives.”

The statement noted as a senator from Delaware, Biden played a role in securing passage of the 1994 ban on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines. That measure expired 10 years later when Congress failed to renew it.

At a news conference Friday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said she was confident the new ban would pass in her chamber. The measure, however, is unlikely to pass in the evenly divided Senate.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus voiced its support for the measure, calling it “lifesaving.”

“We are also pleased that this bill, which reflects the consensus of the Democratic Caucus, will move expeditiously while a separate legislative package on public safety continues to be developed and revised,” the caucus said in a statement, referring to legislation being negotiated on police funding and accountability.

1 hour ago



Noted: The GOP is waging a war against Google – about email filters

The GOP’s online fundraising has fallen off in recent months, declining by about 11 percent in the second quarter of the year, compared with the first, all while online fundraising by Democrats increased by more than 21 percent. Republicans are partly blaming Google’s spam filters for this.

While it’s unclear whether the filters have had an actual impact on the GOP’s fundraising, the party has waged a pressure campaign that has involved public Twitter offensives and private discussions with Google’s chief executive, Sundar Pichai. GOP lawmakers have introduced draft legislation in both chambers of Congress, [Isaac Stanley-Becker](#) and [Josh Dawsey](#) report.

Republicans are accusing Google of political bias in its filter system — a claim the tech giant disputes. But the party may win this war.

As Isaac and Josh report:

The effort’s impact became apparent this month when Google asked the Federal Election Commission to green-light a pilot program that would exempt campaign emails from spam detection, which could reshape the experience of Gmail users. The amount of political fundraising conducted over email and text has exploded in recent years, adding to the deluge of promotional messages Americans are swamped with every day. The program could further intensify the inundation. ...

People familiar with the thinking inside Google said the company is being scapegoated by Republican consultants seeking to shift the blame for poor fundraising caused by lists that have grown stale and recipients who have tired of incessant appeals, especially from entities that have rented or purchased email addresses.

Brett Schenker, an email deliverability specialist who has consulted for Democratic campaigns, echoed that explanation — and said it made him “embarrassed for Google over how they’ve reacted.”

Note that July's fundraising deadline is looming, so Republicans are escalating their tactics, according to emails obtained by Isaac and Josh. Last month, Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) introduced a bill with the backing of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) called the Political Bias in Algorithm Sorting Emails Act of 2022. It would bar email providers from marking messages as spam without the direction of users. Similar legislation was introduced in the House.

Democrats, meanwhile, are seeing matters differently, defending Gmail's spam filter as an asset for users.

Read more about this dispute [here](#).

1 hour ago



The latest: Biden nominates lawyer who defended abortion clinic in Dobbs case

President Biden on Friday nominated the lawyer who defended a Mississippi abortion clinic in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the case at the heart of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, as federal appeals court judge.

Attorney Julie Rikelman, who represented abortion provider Jackson Women's Health Organization and is currently the U.S. Litigation Director for the Center for Reproductive Rights, was tapped as a nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Boston.

Biden's decision to nominate Rikelman, who has worked for the center for more than 10 years, comes more than a month after the Supreme Court ruled on *Dobbs*, a case during which Rikelman argued that Mississippi law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy would do "profound damage to women's liberty, equality, and the rule of law."

Rikelman, who was born in Kyiv and emigrated from Ukraine to the United States in 1979, was one of nine judicial nominees announced by the White House Friday. While her nomination will likely draw rebuke from Republicans, it comes weeks after Democrats criticized Biden for almost naming an antiabortion lawyer to a lifetime judicial appointment in Kentucky. That potential nomination ultimately fell through.

2 hours ago



This just in: House Oversight chair calls on HHS to declare monkeypox emergency

By Dan Diamond

Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.), chairwoman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, called on the nation's top health official on Friday to declare that the monkeypox outbreak is an emergency, saying that it would allow for more federal flexibility in fighting the virus.

“I urge you to immediately declare a public health emergency so that the federal government can use every resource and tool available in its response,” Maloney wrote to Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra.

The letter was shared with The Washington Post.

About 4,900 cases of monkeypox have been confirmed in the United States, including about 1,250 in New York, driven by infections in the gay and bisexual community, according to federal data. The virus can spread by skin-to-skin contact and cause fever, rash and severe pain, although the current outbreak has yet to be linked to a single confirmed U.S. death.

The virus was historically found only in West and Central Africa, and U.S. officials say they are hoping to stave off the virus from spilling into broader populations and becoming permanently entrenched here.

According to Maloney, an emergency declaration would allow HHS to access more funding to fight monkeypox and cut through red tape in its response.

Biden administration officials have spent the past week deliberating over declaring an emergency, with some officials arguing that it would unlock more authority to fight the virus and others saying that the move would be mostly symbolic. The decision has been complicated by advocates’ calls that HHS should declare public health emergencies for other issues, such as abortion access.

The World Health Organization on July 23 declared that monkeypox was a public health emergency of international concern, its highest-level warning, after confirmed outbreaks in about 70 countries where the virus has not historically spread.

◆ **KEY UPDATE** 2 hours ago



This just in: Pelosi says House will take up assault weapons ban Friday

The House will move forward Friday with consideration of legislation that would ban assault weapons for the first time in nearly two decades, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said in a letter to Democratic colleagues.

Pelosi called the measure — which stands virtually no chance of passing in the evenly divided Senate — “a crucial step in our ongoing fight against the deadly epidemic of gun violence in our nation.”

Passing the bill Friday will require clearing an additional procedural hurdle, known as “same-day authority,” that needs a separate vote. Pelosi urged support of that move in her letter.

The assault weapons ban, authored by Rep. David N. Cicilline (D-R.I.), was approved by the House Judiciary Committee earlier this month.

Pelosi signaled in her letter that other public-safety measures, which have been considered in conjunction with the bill, would come to the floor later.

2 hours ago



Noted: A look at how Melania Trump decorated White House's private rooms

During her husband's four years in office, Melania Trump and her interior designer, Tham Kannalikham, declined interview and photography requests about the decorating of the second-floor rooms and private quarters of the White House.

But photos in the new 60th anniversary edition of "The White House: An Historic Guide" reveal that there was a whole lot of swagging, fringing and gilding going on upstairs, The Post's Jura Koncius reports.

Per Juna:

All presidential families leave their mark on the White House, although they don't know how long their design changes will stay in place. This 26th edition of the official guide — published by the White House Historical Association, which funds much of the refurbishing — was released July 28, the birthday of former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy. She nurtured the idea of the White House as a living museum and conceived the guidebook in 1962 to give visitors a comprehensive reference guide to it.

This edition includes images of rooms from a number of administrations, such as Laura Bush's redo of the Lincoln Bedroom with designer Ken Blasingame and the Treaty Room decorated by Michael S. Smith for the Obamas. It also includes foldout pages of the Green, Blue and Red Rooms, comments by 12 first ladies about living in the historic spaces, and a first look at several second-floor rooms decorated during the Trump era.

You can read the full story [here](#).

3 hours ago



Noted: Rep. Phillips prefers 'generational change' over a 2024 Biden bid

Recent polling has shown that a majority of Democrats would like to see a presidential nominee other than President Biden in 2024. Count Rep. Dean Phillips (D-Minn.) among them.

In an interview Thursday with Minneapolis radio station WCCO-AM, Phillips, who has represented his state's 3rd Congressional District since 2019, was asked whether he supports Biden for reelection.

"I have respect for Joe Biden," Phillips began, adding that he considers the president to be "a man of decency, of good principle, of compassion, of empathy and of strength."

But, to answer the question directly, Phillips said, "No, I don't."

"I think the country would be well-served by a new generation of compelling, well-prepared, dynamic Democrats to step up," Phillips said.

"I think it's time for a generational change," Phillips added. "And I think most of my colleagues agree with that."

3 hours ago



This just in: Wisconsin Democrat suspends Senate campaign, endorses front-runner

By Eugene Scott

Wisconsin state Treasurer Sarah Godlewski dropped out of the Democratic U.S. Senate primary Friday, clearing the field for Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, the party's presumptive nominee.

"Over a year ago, we launched this campaign to defeat Ron Johnson and return this Senate seat to the people of Wisconsin," she said in a statement to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, adding: "It's clear that if we want to finally send Ron Johnson packing, we must all get behind Mandela Barnes and fight together."

Barnes said he was "honored" to receive Godlewski's endorsement as Democrats seek to take back the Senate seat from Republicans. Godlewski was the third candidate to withdraw in the past five days, after Milwaukee Bucks executive Alex Lasry and Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson dropped out.

The primary is Aug. 9 and the winner will face Johnson (R) in November.

"This week has demonstrated what it looks like when we come together for a goal that is greater than ourselves," Barnes said in a statement, adding: "That's how we beat Scott Walker in 2018 with the highest midterm turnout on record. By bringing everyone together from every corner of the state. And that's exactly how we are going to take the fight to Ron Johnson — and win."

3 hours ago



Noted: McCarthy says he doesn't recall talking to Cassidy Hutchinson on Jan. 6

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said Friday that he has no recollection of talking to former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson about the possibility that on Jan. 6, 2021, President Donald Trump would come to the Capitol to join his supporters as Congress counted the 2020 electoral college votes.

"I don't remember having any conversations with her about coming to the Capitol, the president coming to the Capitol. I don't recall any of that," McCarthy said at his weekly news conference when asked about the subject.

Hutchinson, a former aide to then-White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, testified publicly under oath to the House Jan. 6 committee last month that McCarthy called her on Jan. 6 to relay his concern that Trump would try to come to the Capitol after he said “we” would march to the Capitol, during a speech at the Ellipse.

“He sounded rushed and frustrated and angry,” Hutchinson testified, adding that McCarthy relayed to her that Trump had offered previous assurances he wouldn’t be coming to the Capitol that day.

At his news conference, McCarthy said he recalled talking to other Trump aides that day, namely Dan Scavino and Jared Kushner, but not to Hutchinson.

“If I talked to her, I don’t remember it,” he said. “I don’t think I wanted a lot of people coming up to the Capitol, but I don’t remember the conversation.”

McCarthy also said he had not watched Trump’s speech at the Ellipse.

“I was working, so I didn’t see what he said,” McCarthy told reporters.

◆ **KEY UPDATE** 3 hours ago



This just in: House Democrats make final push on public safety bill, assault weapons ban

By Marianna Sotomayor

House Democratic leaders are making one final push to pass a package of public safety bills and an assault weapons ban ahead of the congressional August recess.

Leadership had decided to tie the bills together as a measure to fund local police departments faced sharp objections from liberals and members of the Congressional Black Caucus and an assault weapons ban did not have enough support due to objections from moderates.

All parties pledged to work on a compromise solution this week and surprised many when they were able to clinch one late Thursday evening.

CBC Chairwoman Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio), police unions, Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) reached a deal Thursday night to include accountability language for police officers in the moderates’ funding bill, according to three sources familiar with the process who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely describe private talks.

It’s unlikely any of the bills will be considered in the Senate.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus learned late last night about the deal, infuriating some members that they were not fully involved in the process. Moreover, several members remain irate that they would have to vote to fund the police to vote on the assault weapons ban, with many in the liberal caucus now pushing to hold separate votes.

Numerous civil rights groups, including the ACLU, sent letters to Democratic leadership Friday morning asking them to not consider Spanberger’s bipartisan bill that is co-sponsored by Rep. Tom Rice (R-S.C.).

Front-line Democrats, mostly vulnerable members representing swing districts, have been pressing leaders to consider bills that would fund police departments.

Earlier today



On our radar: In Michigan, a pro-Israel group works to beat a Jewish Democrat

Rep. Andy Levin had watched it happen in Ohio, then in Pennsylvania, then North Carolina, then Maryland. He knew that the United Democracy Project, a super PAC created by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, had become the single biggest spender in Democratic congressional primaries, helping pro-Israel Democrats beat left-leaning candidates.

But it was astounding, he said, to see the pro-Israel PAC spend at least \$4.2 million to help Rep. Haley Stevens in their member-on-member primary just outside Detroit.

Reporting from Pontiac, Mich., The Post's David Weigel captures Levin's reaction and what it means for the race:

“The whole thing is so absurd,” said Levin, 61, in an interview here, after a rally with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D). “I’m a way out-there Jewish person. I have mezuzas on the doors in my office. I’m one of two former synagogue presidents in the Congress.”

The Aug. 2 primary in the new 11th Congressional District, drawn by a nonpartisan commission last year, has become one of the country’s most expensive, and the latest battle between the Democratic Party’s left, and donors who want to reduce progressive clout in Congress. It’s also a test of the pro-Israel group’s clout in Democratic primaries, where, seven months into its existence, it’s won all but one of the races it has played in.

You can read Dave's full story here.

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