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## California Senate approves seven gun control bills

By Patrick McGreevy

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The California Senate on Wednesday approved a package of seven gun control bills, including background checks for people who buy ammunition, introduced in response to the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

The shooting deaths in December of 20 children and six adults in Newtown as well as mass shootings in Colorado and Arizona, spurred Democratic legislators in California to look for ways to tighten the state's gun laws, which are already some of the toughest in the nation.

“We all can recite the horrific acts that have occurred in our country over the last year,” said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento). “These bills attempt to respond to those well publicized tragedies and many more that go unpublicized.”

The measures include a requirement that Californians who want to buy ammunition, and the vendors who sell it, would have to submit personal information for a background check to determine whether they have a criminal record, severe mental illness or a restraining order that would disqualify them from owning guns.

The goal of SB 53 is “to ensure that criminals and other dangerous individuals cannot purchase ammunition in the state of California,” said Sen. Kevin De Leon (D-Los Angeles), the bill’s author.

“To purchase a product that has the potential to maim or kill another human being you can (now) walk into a gun store, no questions asked,” he added. “I think that’s a little outrageous.”

Ammunition purchasers would submit their information and a \$50 fee to the state Department of Justice which would maintain a list of qualified buyers that would be checked by ammo stores. Purchasers would have to show their driver's license or other ID at the time they buy bullets.

Sen. Jim Nielsen (R-Gerber) opposed the measure as too broad. “We are criminalizing legal, historic behavior in the state of California and putting onerous burdens and regulations and requirements on law-abiding citizens.”

Sen. Roderick Wright of Inglewood was one of four Democrats to vote against the bill. He said the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to own guns. “Implied in that is the right to buy the ammo to go with it,” Wright said before the 22-14 vote.

The Senate also approved a bill that would outlaw the sale, purchase and manufacture in California of semiautomatic rifles that can accept detachable magazines. SB 374 also would require those who own such weapons to register them with the state.

Other measures approved by the Senate would ban the possession of ammunition magazines capable of holding more than 10 bullets, and regulate mechanisms, called “bullet buttons,” that allow the quick replacement of ammunition magazines on semiautomatic rifles.

All the bills next go to the Assembly for consideration.

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