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LOCAL NEWS

Opponents of new gun law look to overturn it through 2026 ballot question

Gun rights advocates would need to collect thousands of signatures to secure a ballot question about repealing the law.



Members of the Gun Owners’ Action League protested outside the State House in 2023. *Joseph Prezioso /AFP via Getty Images*

By **Ross Cristantiello**

August 21, 2024 | 12:21 PM

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Earlier this summer, Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey signed into law a **major gun bill** that cracked down on “ghost guns,” expanded so-called “red flag” laws, and more. Now, gun rights advocates are taking the first steps toward challenging the law. The process could eventually lead to a ballot question going before voters in 2026 about repealing the law.

Members of the Gun Owners' Action League, the local state affiliate of the National Rifle Association, said this month that they had **filed a referendum petition** with the office of Secretary of the Commonwealth Bill Galvin. In order to do so, 10 qualified Massachusetts voters had to sign onto the petition.

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“Chapter 135 represents the worst attack on civil rights in modern U.S. history,” GOAL said in a statement to Boston.com, referring to the **82-page law**.

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Certain types of laws are not able to be subject to referendums, and as such the attorney general's office reviews petitions to determine if they meet constitutional requirements. Galvin **referred** the petition to Attorney General Andrea Campbell's office on Aug. 8, asking her to opine on whether it could be the subject of a referendum. Campbell is also required to prepare a summary of the law that would be repealed.

Campbell's office cannot comment on the ongoing review. As a blanket statement, the attorney general must make a determination based solely on the analysis of the law, without incorporating personal and political ideologies. When reached for comment, Campbell's office referred Boston.com to the state's **guide** on the referendum petition process.

Last week, GOAL said in a release that the group had been contacted by Campbell to solicit input on whether the law could be subject to a referendum. GOAL claimed that Campbell was “trying to find an

excuse to deny the petition” and took issue with the fact that she was also seeking input from gun control organizations like **Giffords**, **Everytown**, and the **Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence**.

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GOAL accused Campbell of looking for support from these “anti-civil rights groups” and threatened legal action if she were to deny the petition.

“It is confusing that the Attorney General would be seeking opinions from the very people that likely wrote Chapter 135. The AG’s only job right now is to determine if the petition meets Constitutional standards, which it clearly does,” GOAL Executive Director Jim Wallace said in a statement. “Why in the world would the AG need the input of anti-civil rights organizations to interpret a Constitution she is supposed to fully understand and protect?”

Provided that Campbell’s office finds that the law can be subject to a referendum, GOAL and its allies would have until early October to collect tens of thousands of signatures if they hope to see the referendum put before voters.

GOAL is also **challenging** the law through litigation, vowing to work with other groups to file lawsuits regarding specific pieces of the law. They have already filed a **lawsuit** in federal court concerning the licensing and training sections of the legislation. This is “only the first salvo in what is to come,” the group said.

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The organization has raised a number of concerns, including claims that the law places an undue burden on firearms retailers, does nothing to make sure red flag laws help people found to be suicidal, drastically broadens the definition of “assault style firearms,” and makes it difficult for residents to get new firearms licenses.

The Healey administration hailed the law as the state’s “most significant gun safety legislation in a decade.” It was a response to a 2022 Supreme Court decision that determined that citizens have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense.

“It cracks down on ghost guns and 3-D printed weapons, which I have long advocated for, enhances our ability to prevent guns from falling into dangerous hands, and invests in our communities to address the root causes of violence. This law will save lives, and I’m grateful to the Legislature and gun safety advocates for their hard work to see this through,” Healey said in a statement last month after signing the bill into law.

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- -SophomoreDromedaryCharlestown

1 hour ago

Charlton Heston is cackling with glee from Hades.

Reply · Like · Dislike · Share
- mtbr1975

3 hours ago

Do of course the gun rights group thinks that only their side of the argument should heard and the other side shouldn't even get a say.

Reply · Like 1 · Dislike 2 · Share
- B

Binxc

2 hours ago

Just wondering if you think when it comes to constitutional rights the other side shouldn't get a say. Abortion hypocrite and it isn't even a constitutional right as the left claims

Reply · Like · Dislike 1 · Share
- uugghh

2 hours ago

Says the pot calling the kettle black.

Reply · Like 1 · Dislike · Share

J

JustmeinNH

4 hours ago

Target practicing is fun. In fact I use my bb gun to shoot a yellow finch birds when they eat the Swiss Chard I'm grown

Reply · · Share

T

TFGsux

4 hours ago

Hilarious.
(Edited)

Reply · · Share

↩ 1 reply

southcoastmass

5 hours ago

Back in high school 30+ years ago, one of my classmates wore a black t-shirt with a target on it that said, "The only gun control we need is a sharp eye and a steady hand."

I got a good chuckle out of it. I can only imagine the uproar from the pearl clutching liberal teachers if a shirt like that was worn today.

Reply · 1 2 · Share

A

Always-Always-Right

5 hours ago

"and invests in our communities to address the root causes of violence."

I.e. hundreds of thousands of dollars funneled from taxpayers to Weirdo Lib NGOs. In a just society, Governor She/Her is indicted for this obscene corruption.
(Edited)

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wolfy915

5 hours ago

GOAL and Northeastshooters are fringe radical far right groups. I resigned my membership in GOAL after they asked people to photograph children speaking out against gun violence. Never been a member of the NRA. One-issue echo chambers.

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B

Binxc

2 hours ago

Didn't happen. Nice try and lie since that was a fake talking point by David Lynsky the lying fraud state rep from Natick

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uugghh

2 hours ago

Cocoo for Coco Puffs.

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