

TIME

How a Top Republican Donor Is Pushing Congress to Pass Gun Control



People join together after a school shooting that killed 17 to protest against guns on the steps of the Broward County Federal courthouse on February 17, 2018 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Earlier this week former student Nikolas Cruz opened fire with a AR-15 rifle at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School killing 17 people. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images) Joe Raedle—Getty Images

By ALANA ABRAMSON Updated: March 12, 2018 5:05 PM ET

A prominent Republican donor said he is launching a group devoted to pushing for comprehensive gun safety legislation on a national level following last month's de school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Al Hoffman Jr., a real estate developer who served as Ambassador to Portugal unde

W. Bush, plans to publicly announce the formation of the group, which will be called Americans for Gun Safety Now, on March 24, when he is in Washington D.C. to attend the March for Our Lives rally.

Hoffman **drew headlines** last month when he said that he would refrain from supporting politicians who did not support a ban on assault weapon sales in the wake of the Parkland shooting. The purpose of the group he is forming, he told TIME in an interview Monday, is to ensure that Congress passes a **gun control package** by the end of the year — that contains and builds on provisions in the bill Florida Gov. Rick Scott signed into law last week — while maintaining support for the Second Amendment.

“This organization is dedicated to bringing together [people] to create a national strategy for bringing out real reform — protections and changes to our nation’s gun laws,” Hoffman said Monday. “If we can get this march to help solidify the sense of urgency to pass legislation now, to get it done before they go home for Christmas for Congress, we’ll have a much safer nation.”

Hoffman declined to specify who was involved or he had spoken with about the event, explaining that he wanted to reveal more information later in the month, but said he had held conversations with over 50 people.

“It’s a committed group of concerned citizens. We represent a wide variety of stakeholders,” he said. “These are notable Americans.”

The **\$400 million gun control package** Scott signed into law last Friday does not ban assault weapons, which is what Hoffman initially said he wanted after the Parkland shooting.

But it does **raise the age limit** of purchasing a firearm to 21, imposes a three-day waiting period for the sales of firearms, **bans bump stocks**, provides \$75 million in funding for expanded mental health services, and allows some teachers with the proper training to carry a firearm. Hoffman said he wants national legislation to include a ban on bump stocks, which President Trump said he would do through executive action — limit high-capacity magazines, and raise the age limit for all gun sales to 21, before turning to the

implementation of universal background checks and providing additional support for mental health services.

“And this is all while we’re pledging our support for Second Amendment rights,” he highlighted the fact that he keeps a gun underneath the seat of his car and has a concealed weapons permit. “That’s really what we’re trying to do.”

Hoffman also did not specify if the group would be a non-profit organization or a political action committee, or start as a non-profit and then form a PAC, although he did not have any Congressional lawmakers on board with the proposals from the group would receive financial support. But the formation of this group appears to come at a time when political incentives to pass gun control seem to be waning.

Just hours after Scott signed Florida’s gun control bill into law, the National Rifle Association **filed suit in court**, arguing that raising the age limit to purchase a rifle infringes on the Second Amendment. Although the House of Representatives is slated to vote Wednesday on the STOP School Violence Act, which has bipartisan support, that bill is largely with the issue of school safety rather than gun control.

Hoffman said he expects to encounter opposition in his push for gun safety legislation, but he will stand by his ideas.

“I can’t support them,” he said of politicians who may be opposed to his proposals. “Some of them I like very much, but I can’t support them.”