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By SKYLER SWISHER

expanding gun background checks.

by Democratic presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg.



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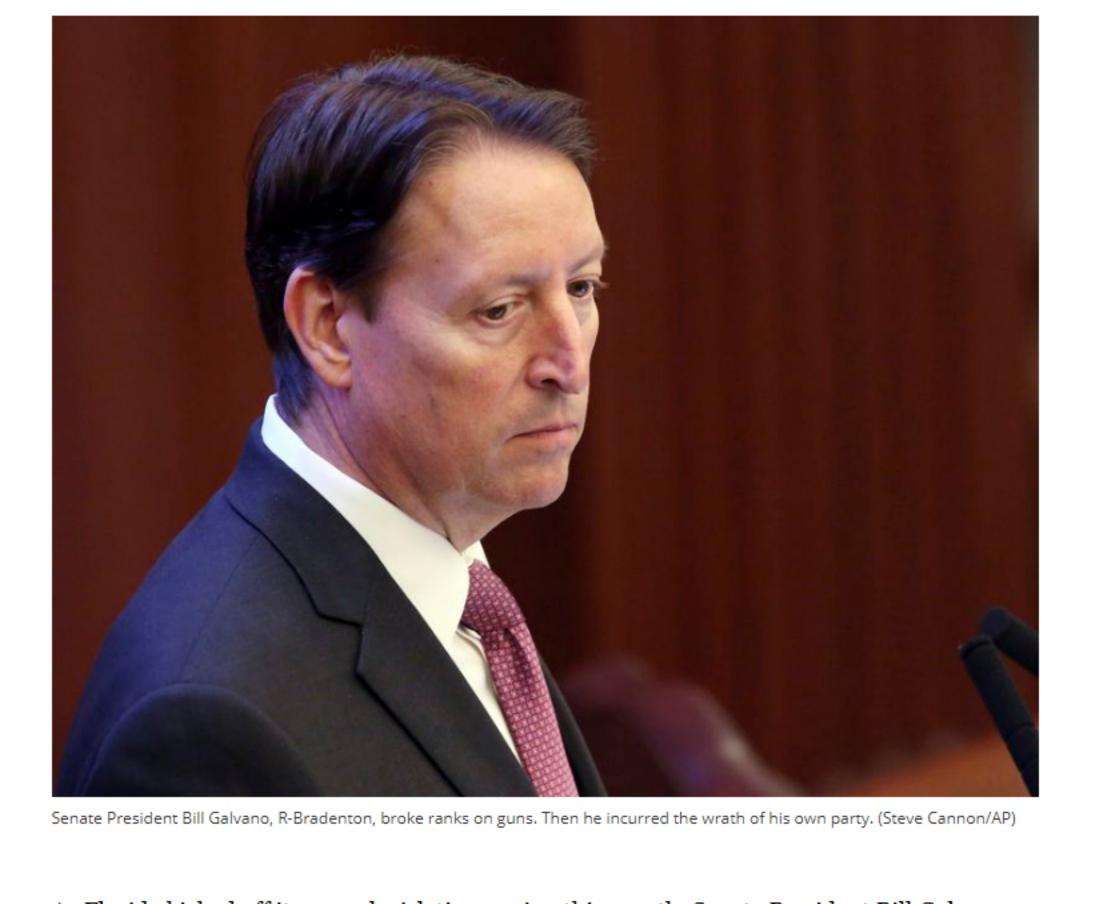


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How Florida's GOP Senate president angered Trump Jr., the NRA and incurred the wrath of the right



As Florida kicked off its 2020 legislative session this month, Senate President Bill Galvano broke ranks with the National Rifle Association and threw his political muscle behind

Then the Republican leader found himself under attack from members of his own party. Their charge: Galvano was nothing more than a fake Republican. Suddenly, the respected Senate president had been transformed into a "gun-grabbing" villain.

Much of the anger stemmed from a \$500,000 donation Galvano's political committee had

received from Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control group founded and largely financed

Donald Trump Jr., the president's son, took aim at the mild-mannered state senator with a long record of GOP service, telling The Daily Wire that the last thing Florida needs is "a liberal, gun-grabbing Bloomberg minion." Conservative Andrew Pollack, whose daughter was murdered in the Parkland school shooting, accused Galvano of exploiting his daughter's death to push an anti-gun agenda.

Andrew Pollack 🤣 @AndrewPollackFL

"Bill Galvano might as well switch parties and call himself an anti-gun liberal," Pollack wrote.

No one can call themselves a Republican and accept \$500,000 from mini Mike Bloomberg. Bill Galvano might as well switch parties and call himself an antigun liberal. @DonaldJTrumpJr is right. Florida deserves better! #FixIt dailywire.com/news/trump-jr-... Trump Jr Blasts FL Republican Bill Galvano Over Past Suppor... Donald Trump Jr. slammed incoming Florida Senate President Bill Galvano, a Republican, for siding with extreme anti-Second dailywire.com ♥ 15.2K 3:41 PM - Jan 19, 2020 (i) > North Florida's U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, considered to be one of the "Trumpiest" members of Congress, chimed in on Twitter: "Republicans. Taking money from Bloomberg. In Florida. To pass gun control. No. No. No."

The episode highlights the political price Republicans can incur by reaching across the aisle and crossing more conservative elements in their party. In the era of social media, the punishment can be doled out quickly through Twitter accounts with hundreds of thousands and even millions of followers. The more extreme the post, the more viral it becomes.

Galvano, 53, who represents the Bradenton area, will leave the Senate later this year because

of term limits. Galvano said Wednesday he knew the gun bill would be difficult given how

polarizing the issue is. Polls, though, show the overwhelming majority of Floridians want

universal background checks. "We have had objections or concerns raised on both sides of the issue," Galvano said. "I have a lot of faith ... in the process, and we'll see where it goes from there."

The bill (SB 7028) does not include any "gun grabbing." It seeks to close the so-called "gun-

Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and seven other counties already have that requirement on the

show loophole," requiring background checks for gun sales conducted in public. Miami-

books. People who sell a firearm privately wouldn't have to run a background check, but they would have to keep a notarized record of the sale, including a signed affidavit that the purchaser meets the requirements to own a gun. Failure to make the record would be a misdemeanor offense. Federally licensed firearms dealers already are required to run background checks.

State Sen. Joe Gruters, who is chairman of the Florida GOP, said he's a "solid no" on the

bill. Galvano's colleagues — Gov. Ron DeSantis and House Speaker José Oliva — haven't

Oliva said he has served with Galvano for nine years, and Galvano is not a "RINO (Republican in name only)."

embraced the gun bill, but they are defending Galvano's record.

sanctuary cities, lowering taxes and expanding school choice programs,

"The pile-on was entirely unnecessary," Oliva said, adding that he doesn't expect the gun bill

Senate President Bill Galvano, R-Bradenton, has come under attack from some in his own party for not opposing a bill to expand gun background checks in Florida. (Steve Cannon/AP) "As far as a divide in the Republican Party, I think that sometimes gets exaggerated," he said. "There are individual senators who have individual views. ... We are made up of individuals who have (different) views and life experiences that we bring to the table. It seems to be a lot of click bait."

on the powerful gun lobby.

to pass in the House.

Sen. Manny Diaz, R-Hialeah, dismissed the notion that the backlash showcases a divide in the Republican Party. He said the comments directed at Galvano aren't warranted.

Galvano has a history of supporting

DeSantis said.

conservative causes that include banning

Galvano's legacy also will include legislation passed after the 2018 Parkland school shooting, a compromise he helped broker that raised the age to buy a rifle from 18 to 21, required a school safety officer be stationed on every campus, boosted funding for schoolbased mental health, and created Florida's red-flag law.

Fred Guttenberg, a gun-control advocate whose daughter was killed in the Parkland

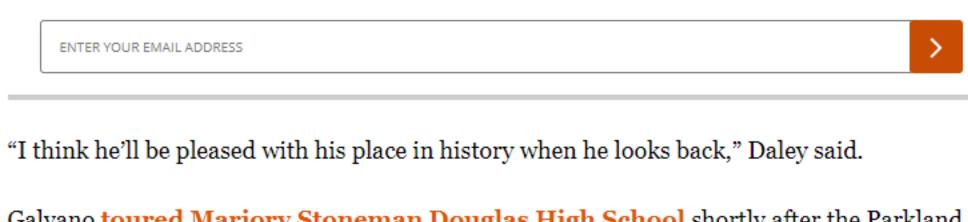
MORE COVERAGE: The AR-15: Killing machine or 'America's rifle'? »

"He is trying to do one simple thing — be a part of making sure more Floridians don't die of gun violence," Guttenberg said. "There is not a single thing he has gotten behind that is an affront to the Second Amendment. ... They are using amped-up rhetoric to tell a lie." RELATED: NRA faces resistance on gun issues in Florida »

shooting, said Galvano should be "honored" and "commended" for having the courage to take

State Rep. Dan Daley, D-Coral Springs, said Galvano shouldn't worry about the backlash because the majority of Floridians support expanded background checks. A Florida Atlantic University poll conducted shortly after the Feb. 14, 2018, Parkland school shooting found

87% of Florida voters supported universal background checks. Political Pulse Newsletter



Galvano toured Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shortly after the Parkland massacre. He saw fresh blood stains, and a school riddled with bullet holes.

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Skyler Swisher is a reporter covering politics. Before joining the Sun Sentinel, he wrote about health care

for The Daytona Beach News-Journal. A native of Memphis, he is a graduate of the University of

"I will carry that experience with me for the rest of my life," Galvano wrote in a letter to the

@SkylerSwisher.

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