



June 3, 2013

Pro-gun group efforting recall of Colorado state senate president

By CAROLINE HORN

A state senate district in Colorado could soon be the latest battleground between the National Rifle Association and New York Mayor and gun control advocate Michael Bloomberg.

Earlier today a non-profit organization delivered a petition to the Colorado Secretary of State's office asking to recall state Senate President John Morse (D-Colorado Springs). The group, the Basic Freedom Defense Fund, is angry that Morse supported a gun control bill signed into law in March by Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper.

A spokesman said the group turned in 16,046 signatures. Just 7,178 signatures are required to trigger a recall. The Secretary of State's office now has 15 days to certify the results. Assuming there are enough valid signatures, a recall election would be held sometime between August 23 and October 23 of this year.

The NRA has already involved itself in the recall effort. Last month it sent a mailer to Morse constituents saying "Senator Morse blatantly violated your rights this legislative season, and needs to be removed from office." Andrew Arulanandam, a spokesman for the NRA, said the organization would be "fully engaged" in a recall campaign.

Similarly, Bloomberg's gun control advocacy group, Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG), could also get involved on Morse's side. MAIG did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday, but last week communications director Erika Soto Lamb said "we are aware of this and want to make sure that people know that the NRA is behind the recall efforts."

For his part, Morse said Monday he has discussed the possibility of the recall with MAIG, but he had not yet secured any financial support. Morse also said he would not back down from his support for stricter gun laws.

"There are those among us that say even in light of these incidents we should do nothing," he said on a call with reporters, citing the 2012 mass shootings in Aurora, Colo., and Newtown, Conn. "But how could I as a legislator possibly agree with that approach?"

The pro-Morse group A Whole Lot of People for John Morse claims it has evidence many of the petition signatures were obtained fraudulently. Campaign manager Christy Le Lait alleges outside interest groups paid workers to gather signatures.

"This was not a grassroots effort," Le Lait said.

Morse was first elected to the state Senate in 2006. His district includes Democratic and independent-leaning areas of Colorado Springs in the otherwise conservative El Paso County. According to Joshua Spivak, a senior fellow at the Hugh L. Carey Institute for Government Reform at Wagner College who specializes in recall elections, Morse will be just the fifth state legislative leader to face a recall election in U.S. history.