

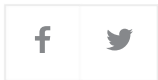


MEDIA AND TELECOMS

MAY 26, 2017 / 5:12 PM / UPDATED 5 YEARS AGO

Texas governor draws criticism for joke about shooting journalists

By Jon Herskovitz



AUSTIN, Texas (Reuters) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott joked about shooting journalists while visiting a gun range on Friday to sign a bill lowering the cost of a handgun license, drawing criticism from gun-safety and free-press advocates who called his remarks “dangerous.”



NOW READING **Texas governor draws criticism for joke about shooting journalists**

In Japan, Biden to launch economic plan for region sceptica...



21 MINUTES AGO

Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters fourth month



25 MINUTES AGO

Bide
amic

31 M



quipping, “I’m gonna carry this around in case I see any reporters.”

A photo of the moment, published by the Texas Tribune, showed the grinning first-term Republican governor pointing to the center of the paper target, where three rounds had pierced the bull’s eye circle.

His comment drew sharp rebukes from Reporters Without Borders, headquartered in Paris, and the Washington-based Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Both said the incident was especially troubling as it came amid increasingly hostile rhetoric directed against the news media by Republican President Donald Trump and his supporters.

“This joke was dangerous and out of line. Because it’s never just a joke to some,” Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence said in a statement. “Words matter. In a state and country where dangerous people can still so easily buy guns without a background check, leaders of every political stripe should be careful not to green light violence on their behalf.”

ADVERTISEMENT

NOW READING Texas governor draws criticism for joke about shooting journalists

In Japan, Biden to launch economic plan for region sceptica...



21 MINUTES AGO

Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters fourth month



25 MINUTES AGO

Bide amic

31 M



All-Inclusive Overwater Resort

Explore offers on overwater resorts with all-inclusive options using these top searches



Luxury Life

[Open](#)

The two groups also cited the misdemeanor assault charge filed on Wednesday against Republican Congressman-elect Greg Gianforte of Montana, accused of body-slammng a reporter who asked him about healthcare on the eve of his election.

“Politicians must condemn this dangerous rhetoric against reporters as it can quickly escalate to physical violence like we saw in Montana,” Reporters Without Borders said in a Tweet.

The group’s latest annual World Press Freedom Index of 180 countries ranks the United States at No. 43, one rung below the tiny West African nation of Burkino Faso.

“We’re really seeing just how much America deserves that ranking right now,” said Margaux Ewen, the organization’s U.S. advocacy director.

ADVERTISEMENT

NOW READING Texas governor draws criticism for joke about shooting journalists

In Japan, Biden to launch economic plan for region sceptica...



21 MINUTES AGO

Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters fourth month



25 MINUTES AGO

Bide amic

31 M



Get Ready for Summer 2022

Enjoy our world class amenities with 24 hour security, wifi, laundry facilities, & more.

Intrnz

Open

Abbott's office did not respond to requests by Reuters for comment.

The bill he signed will cut fees for a first-time license to carry a handgun from \$140 to \$40, and lower the renewal fee from \$70 to \$40, starting in September. It also waives the fees for peace officers and members of the military.

"No law-abiding Texan should be priced out of the ability to exercise their Second Amendment rights," Abbott said in signing the measure.

Additional reporting and writing by Steve Gorman in Los Angeles; Editing by Dan Whitcomb, Lisa Shumaker and Michael Perry

Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

MORE FROM REUTERS



Congressman-elect Gianforte gets anger management but no jail time for assaulting reporter

By [Katie Mettler](#)

June 12, 2017 at 11:46 p.m. EDT

Congressman-elect Greg Gianforte will perform community service and anger management classes but serve no jail time for body-slaming a reporter on the eve of his election last month.

Gianforte pleaded guilty to charges that he assaulted Guardian reporter Ben Jacobs at the politician's campaign headquarters on May 24 — an incident that was witnessed by other journalists and captured on audiotape.

Gallatin County Justice of the Peace Rick West sentenced Gianforte to 40 hours of community service and 20 hours of anger management classes on Monday, reported the Associated Press. The congressman-elect, who won Montana's lone U.S. House seat 24 hours after the assault, must also pay \$385 in fines and court costs, according to the AP.

He will be under court supervision until late November, when his 180-day suspended jail sentence ends. Gianforte can then petition the court to have his record cleared of the conviction if he doesn't violate the conditions of his sentence, reported the AP.

Gallatin County Attorney Marty Lambert, who prosecuted the case, said the punishment handed down Monday fit Gianforte's crime. Lambert called the sentence "just" and said that Gianforte's "honesty and forthrightness" after the altercation will allow Montanans to "put all this behind us and move forward," [reported](#) the Bozeman Daily Chronicle.

"I don't think Mr. Gianforte had to go to jail to reinforce the need for him not to engage in that type of behavior again," Lambert said, according to the Daily Chronicle. "I think that sentence was fair."

Though all sides, including the judge, maintained in court Monday that Gianforte was treated no differently than any other misdemeanor offender, the congressman-elect was never required to report to the jail, take a booking photo or be fingerprinted.

The judge ordered him to do so on Monday, but Gianforte's defense attorneys said they planned to appeal, reported the AP.

On election eve, Jacobs tweeted that he had been "body slammed" by Gianforte after asking the candidate to respond to the Congressional Budget Office score of the American Health Care Act, as [The Washington Post](#) has reported.

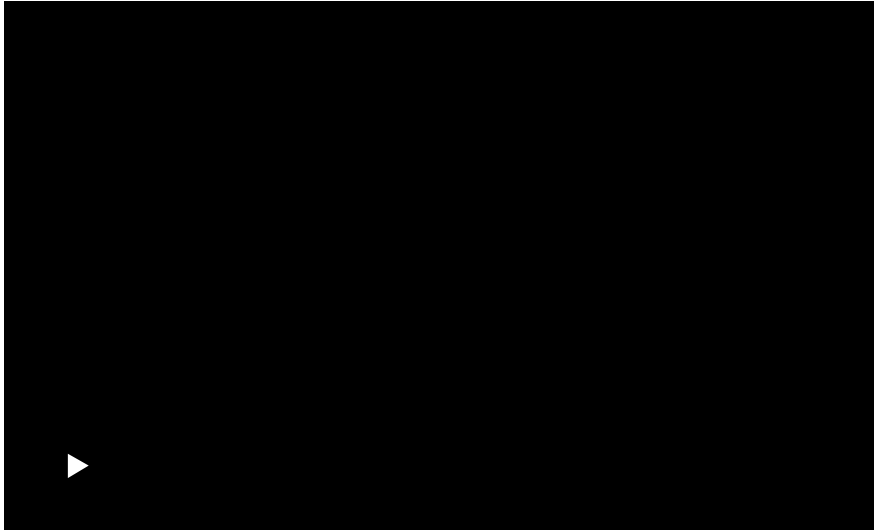
Gianforte deflected the question, and when Jacobs persisted the candidate told him to talk to his campaign spokesman, Shane Scanlon. Jacobs's audio recording, later published by the Guardian, picks up the sounds of an altercation and screams from Gianforte. Jacobs can be heard saying his glasses were broken.

"I'm sick and tired of you guys!" Gianforte says. "The last guy that came in here did the same thing. Get the hell out of here! Get the hell out of here! The last guy did the same thing. Are you with the Guardian?"

Gianforte's handlers initially denied Jacobs's version of events, claiming the reporter got aggressive while asking a question and initiated the altercation. Jacobs's audio and the Fox News team in the room at the time told a different story.

Gianforte was charged with misdemeanor assault that night, drawing national attention that made onlookers wonder if the Republican technology entrepreneur would still be able to pull out a win in the race.

During his acceptance speech a full day after the assault, Gianforte apologized to the reporter and said he "made a mistake" and "shouldn't have treated that reporter that way." Last week, Gianforte offered a more forceful apology and pledged to donate \$50,000 to the Committee to Protect Journalists.



"Notwithstanding anyone's statements to the contrary, you did not initiate any physical contact with me, and I had no right to assault you," Gianforte wrote in a letter published June 7. "I am sorry for what I did and the unwanted notoriety this has created for you. I take full responsibility."

Jacobs attended the sentencing hearing Monday and engaged in a back and forth with Gianforte, who said he looked forward to sitting down with the reporter on Capitol Hill for a real interview once he was "ready," reported the Daily Chronicle.

"I look forward to it," Jacobs replied.

Reading from a prepared statement in court, Jacobs said he has interviewed hundreds of politicians, including President Trump. "Mr. Gianforte's response was to slam me to the floor and start punching me," Jacobs said, according to the Daily Chronicle.

It also thrust him into "a national spotlight I did not seek or desire," Jacobs reportedly said.

"I have accepted his apology and fully expect his thoughtful words to be followed by concrete actions once he has taken his seat in Congress," Jacobs told the court, according to the Daily Chronicle.

Gianforte apologized again.

Outside the courtroom, Gianforte spoke with reporters.

"This was not a proud moment," he said, reported the AP, "but I'm ready to move on."

More from Morning Mix

Trump-like 'Julius Caesar' assassinated in New York play. Delta, Bank of America pull funding.

So long, Trump Tower. First lady Melania Trump and son Barron move into White House.

The frantic online search for Comey's professor friend at Columbia Law School