

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears on NPR's "Morning Edition"

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Steve Inskeep: How does the gun debate look to the former cop who is the mayor of New York City? We reached Eric Adams as Congress debates gun measures after a school shooting in Texas. New York City itself has seen a rise in shootings in recent years. Mass shootings get more national attention of course, but day to day, gun violence kills even more people, and the mayor is worried about the summer. Eric Adams is on the line. Mayor, welcome.

Mayor Eric Adams: Good speaking with you.

Inskeep: What's going wrong with gun violence in New York?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think that the question is not only New York City, but across the entire country. We are seeing the over proliferation of guns. We are seeing a system that is currently feeding young people to this type of violence because of the accessibility to guns, lack of supportive services and really not a dual approach of what I call intervention and prevention.

Inskeep: Well, now that's interesting when you said prevention, I think there or intervention, that's the idea of getting out on the streets and maybe talking with or counseling people before they get to the point of pulling out the weapon. Is that right?

Mayor Adams: So true. So true. And I consider that actually part of the prevention part. Intervention is what we're doing with our Neighborhood Safety Teams, getting police officers interacting with those who are carrying guns, because we must take them off the streets and get support from the other arms of the criminal justice system. And you must be on the ground to do that.

Inskeep: Mayor, you just mentioned taking guns off the street. Do you have the proper legal power to do that in the circumstances where your officers think they need to do that?

Mayor Adams: Yes, we do. And we're seeing the results of that. We're seeing that. We removed over 3,000 guns off our streets. We're seeing a 30% decrease in shootings and in homicides during the month of April and May. We're seeing the byproduct of the plan we put in place. We're saying to every agency in the city, gun violence is everyone's problem and we all must have a solution to it.

Inskeep: Help me understand this because of course the laws are different in every state. If I'm in Texas, I can walk around with a firearm. What is the law in New York that you can use to disarm someone before there's an actual violent incident?

Mayor Adams: Well, we actually have one of the most comprehensive gun laws here in New York City, not outside the city, but here in New York City. But what we are faced with now is that there's a deliberation in the Supreme Court, the right to carry law, that is going to challenge that and that is a very dangerous outcome for New York.

Inskeep: Meaning that if the Supreme Court were to rule against that New York law, that would be a disadvantage to your police force.

Mayor Adams: Yes, it is. It is stated that one would no longer have to go through that permit process if they rule that way and they would now just have the right to be able to obtain a firearm without the restrictions that we currently have in New York City.

Inskeep: I guess we should just underline for people, under Supreme Court rulings up to now, gun regulations like the ones you describe have not been challenged. Earlier gun rulings, even by a conservative Supreme Court have not overturned this specific regulation yet although you mentioned that it is possible. Can you answer a common criticism of gun rights advocates to laws like those in New York. They will say it's a kind of bumper sticker. New York has all these gun laws and there's still plenty of gun violence in New York, therefore the laws don't work. How do you answer that?

Mayor Adams: The same way I did when one of the congressmen from Georgia raised that question. It is happening because his state, Georgia, is feeding the pipeline, the

iron pipeline. Those lax laws in other states are causing the crises in Chicago, the crises in Atlanta, Detroit, St. Louis, New York, San Francisco. They're feeding these guns into our city. We had one gun that was stolen out of a car in Virginia that was used in five incidents, including shooting two people.

Inskeep: Can you answer another argument that gun rights advocates make? They will argue that a person is safer if they are allowed to carry their own firearm. And I'm sure there is someone listening right now who feels that they are safer in certain circumstances or even all the time if they have a gun with them. When is it true that someone would be safer with their own gun?

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, it's clear that of those who are in states where you have [inaudible] gun laws, police officers are three times more likely to be murdered by guns in that state. And so when you look at people who state that you're safer because a civilian or an innocent person is carrying a gun, it just is not true. Guns kill people, not only due to violence, but also the substantial number of people who die due to suicide. You know and I know, people sometimes have a tendency when they carry a gun, they feel they should use a gun. Some basic disputes can turn into a gun fight of legal gun carriers like we're seeing basic disputes on our streets, turning into gun fights with illegal gun carriers. And it's time for us to realize that our babies are dying because of the fixation of those who are gun manufacturers and the talking points of the NRA.

Inskeep: Mayor Adams, I want to remind people who don't know that you have not been seen as super progressive on these issues when you won the democratic primary in New York City. You were not seen as the most progressive candidate necessarily, but here you are advocating gun control, which is a thing that gets people labeled progressive. Do you see yourself as progressive on this issue? Or would you phrase it some other way?

Mayor Adams: I don't use that term progressive. I don't even know what it means anymore. I am a sensible, pragmatic, elected public official and what I believe in is making sure we rid our guns off streets. I also believe in making sure we rid our dangerous people off our streets. That is the problem we're facing in America. The far left that believes no one should be held accountable for their criminal actions is now competing with the far right that believes that guns should be given to anyone that desires to have one. They are shooting at each other with their dispute, while innocent Americans and New Yorkers are caught in the crossfire. And so I think the

overwhelming number of New Yorkers support my belief in this position. They believe in pragmatic, sensible gun laws, and they surely don't believe that dangerous people should remain on our streets. So let's get rid of the labels of the far left and the far right. And let's do what's right for America and keep our children safe.

Inskeep: Eric Adams is the mayor of New York City. Mayor, pleasure talking with you.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Take care.