

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks on Bruen Supreme Court Ruling

June 23, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams: I have said and stated for some time now that the Supreme Court decision was keeping me up at night. It's clearly reached a point where we won't have any sleep. This decision is so impactful. When I spoke with my chief counsel, based on his preliminary analysis, I said, "Give it to me on a scale of one to 10." It's very close to a 10 of major concern that we have. While we're still analyzing the decision, we can say with certainty this decision has made every single one of us less safe from gun violence.

Mayor Adams: The decision ignores this shocking crisis of gun violence every day, engulfing not only New York, but engulfing our entire country. The opinion claims to be based on nation historical past, but does not account for the reality of today. It ignores the present, and it endangers our future. While nothing changes today, and we want to be clear on that, nothing changes today, we have been preparing for this decision and will continue to do everything possible to work with our federal, state, and local partners to protect our city. We will collaborate with other mayors, municipality leaders, and governors, and will leave no unturned stone as we seek to undo and mitigate the damage that we are witnessing today.

Mayor Adams: Those efforts will include a comprehensive review with the corporation counsel, our chief counsel, and other legal experts to assist us in this manner as we start to define sensitive locations when carrying a gun is banned and reviewing our application process to ensure that only those who are fully qualified can obtain a carry license. This is something that the police commissioner, who's joining me today, will ensure that our licensing division is aware of. We will work together to limit the risk this decision will create once it is implemented, and we cannot allow New York to become the wild, Wild West. That is unacceptable.

Mayor Adams: This decision is created. We will not allow our city to live in fear that everyone around us is armed and that any altercation could evolve into a shootout. We will not allow the men and women of the Police Department to be subjected to further

danger, making their already difficult jobs even more harrowing. Let me say this again: we will do everything in our power, using every legal resource available, to ensure the gains we've seen during this administration are not undone and that New Yorkers are not put in greater danger of gun violence. There is no place in the nation that this decision affects as much as New York City. There is no place in the nation that is going to be impacted, based on this decision, more than New York City. There's no place in the nation that the decision affects as much as New Yorkers, and we are prepared to set an example that will lead the country of how do we fight back on this decision?

Mayor Adams: Today's Supreme Court decision may have opened an additional river that is going to feed the sea of gun violence in our city and in our nation. Now is the time for every elected official, who cares about the safety of all Americans, to come together and respond thoroughly and comprehensively to this appalling decision. Our work begins now to start saving New Yorkers and Americans. Police Commissioner?

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As the mayor said, this case has been remanded back to the lower court, so the important thing to know today is that nothing changes. If you have a premise permit, it does not automatically convert to a carry permit. If you carry a gun illegally in New York City, you will be arrested. Nothing changes today, and that's important for everyone to be aware of. When we open the universe of carry permits, it potentially brings more guns to the city of New York and to the streets of New York City, and that should concern us all. Mr. Mayor?

Question: Mayor Adams, can you specify? You've spoken about the idea of sensitive areas before. Is there a possibility, based on population or anything like that, to determine the whole city as a sensitive area? Can you talk just a little bit about what the key process is like, and can you give us any idea of what those risks could potentially involve?

Brendan McGuire, Chief Counsel to the Mayor and City Hall: We're still very much in the process of reviewing the opinion, and we obviously will... any measures that we take will be consistent with the opinion. But we are going to consider, as the mayor said, every option available. And that includes, when we examine sensitive locations and figuring out, how can we, in a way that will most protect residents of New York City, to the utmost extent, how can we do so in a way that is consistent with the law and in a

way that is reasoned and thoughtful, in terms of the way in which we can protect those here in the city.

Question: How can we expect policing to change once this ruling takes effect?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think the police commissioner made it clear... and this is so important, because we saw this during the marijuana – legalization of marijuana in the state – people automatically, they only read the headlines. They thought they can go out and just sell marijuana, whatever they want. And the police commissioner's comment that nothing has changed. If you have a target permit, that is not a carry permit. And the thought that people may hear this ruling and believe they can openly carry, those who are legally allowed to have a permit of some sort. So, we are going to send a very clear message: Number one, nothing has changed, but, number two, we're going to continue our pursuit. As we have removed over 3,000 illegal guns off our streets, we're going to continue to pursue that. This complicates matters, if it's implemented. And there's still levels to it, as it was mentioned, but we are going to continue to pursue those who are carrying illegal firearms.

Question: How do you expect the permitting process will change? And do you envision a permitting process, because of this decision, will now take longer and be more deliberate?

Commissioner Sewell: So we're evaluating our permitting process, but obviously, as the mayor stated, we'll wait and see what happens when the lower court renders a decision. But we are taking a look at our policies, our procedures, and our licensing scheme, as it stands now.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the governor floated the idea of creating a restrictive [inaudible] permit regulatory scheme. Are there restrictions requirements you'd like to see mandated that people have to meet in order to qualify for a handgun license, if the city permitting process is indeed kibosh?

Mayor Adams: Number one, we are hoping that the governor immediately calls lawmakers back to Albany. We have to look at this and we can't wait. Lawmakers need to get back in pursuit of how we're going to analyze this decision. And right now, the corporation counsel and our chief counsel is going to look at what restrictions, if any, we can put in place in a permitting process, and we're going to partner with the

commissioner and her team to do so. We're still analyzing this bill to know specifically what restrictions we can put in place.

Question: Just to follow up on Liz's question, does this specifically, this decision, mean more stop and frisk? Does it mean more bag checks? Does it mean more direct measures in terms of how protests are fleeced on the street this summer? Can you talk about the specific measures?

Commissioner Sewell: So nothing has changed as it stands now. Now, obviously we would look at the way we do civilian encounters when people are allowed to carry, if that came to pass, but at this time nothing has changed, and I want to make that clear.

Question: So many of the guns that are recovered now weren't obtained legally in the first place. How do you anticipate this decision will impact the flow of guns into New York? Because there aren't a whole lot of legal guns here to begin with.

Mayor Adams: No, it's a concern and it's alarming. We are going from the people proving they need to carry a gun to they shall be allowed to carry a gun. We just have to really think what that means in New York City. That is a real concern. It's a real concern. And the added burden on police officers now to be able to distinguish between the two and the concern about disputes elevating to gun violence. For a city like this, densely populated, this decision is just not rooted in reality. This is not a decision based on people who had one shot at a time. This is a city in a country where people have AK-47 assault rifles, multiple shots. I don't know what the Supreme Court was thinking about when they made this decision.

Question: Yeah, if you could just elaborate on that a bit, mayor. You said at a press conference a week or two ago that this is what keeps you up at night. And you said, "Imagine people getting on the 4 train and everybody's carrying." Can you elaborate a little more on what makes this so dangerous for people here in the city?

Mayor Adams: Right now, if you want a carry permit or a target permit, there are criteria you look for. And the standard is, you have to justify you need that gun through the licensing division. Based on this ruling, if it plays out, you no longer need that justification. The mere fact you want a gun, and if there are not some serious issues that we are going to identify and analyze, you have the opportunity to get that gun. That can

increase the number of firearms in our city at a level that has never has not been witnessed since the wild, Wild West.

Question: Mayor, you've spoken a lot about improving collaboration with Port Authority and other agencies that hold transit hubs coming into New York. Can you talk about that? Have you spoken to them today?

Mayor Adams: That's a great question.

Question: Do you plan to? And what sort of measures could we expect if this rule does eventually take effect? What could you expect to see at different hubs in the bi-state or tristate?

Mayor Adams: That is a great question. This is going to cause the police commissioner and her team to do just an unbelievable shift from our thoughts of using technology, our thoughts of collaboration with the Port Authority. If we're now saying the mere fact you want to carry a gun, you can carry a gun. A lot of our planning is going to... We are going to have to shift into a totally different mindset and thinking about, how do we go about and attack this problem? We will adjust. You know, I want to be clear on that. Our primary role is to keep New Yorkers safe, but this is going to have a major impact on some of the strategies that we are rolling out, that the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety has been looking into and what the Police Department has been doing.

Question: Mr. Mayor, could you go through some of the sensitive locations that you have, sort of like a wish list of what you want to make sure is cut off? Second question, what would you say to somebody who's watching this and says, "I have to get a gun because I'm afraid. I don't know who could be carrying it now for my protection?" Maybe they didn't carry it before but would start now.

Mayor Adams: Since we're still analyzing the legislation, the definition of "sensitive location" and where we want that to be is something that the corporation counsel and our lead counsel will determine in partnership with the New York City Police Department. So, there's no clear list that I can give you now until we properly analyze this ruling.

Mayor Adams: And I say to those New Yorkers who are out there stating that, "Okay, let me go out now to the gun shop. Let me go and get a gun." I want to share with them that almost a third of the people who died from guns is due to suicides. That gun inside your home, the accidental shootings with your children, the gun left accidentally unlocked up. Having a gun presence in your home is heightening the risk of your family. And I'm saying to them, we don't need a society where there's an over proliferation of guns. I'm asking them to not go into that culture of guns being everywhere.

Question: At least in the short term, is there a plan to stop the possible flow of guns from, say, the iron pipeline from states down south, anticipating demand?

Mayor Adams: Well, listen, if this ruling is implemented, the iron pipeline is going to be the Van Wyck, not I-95. The guns are going to be purchased here. People are going to be empowered to believe they can carry. This has a significant impact on not only those guns that come up the pipeline, but the guns that are being sold and could be sold right here in the state of New York.

Question: Is the city able to legally police gun shows more closely as well as curtail the hours of gun shops? Is that a possibility?

McGuire: I think, as we've said, as we're looking at this, as we're looking at the opinion, all options are on the table. This opinion does not foreclose all gun regulation, to be clear. Sensitive locations is a key piece of this. The application process is a key piece of this. The opinion acknowledges that. So, there are areas here that we are going to study very closely. We've only had about an hour. So, there's more time here that needs to be spent on this, but all options are on the table, as the mayor said.

Question: Mr. Mayor, can you talk a little bit about your time as a transit cop in the 80s, when guns were much more frequent in the system and we had incidences like Bernie Goetz shooting? Do you worry that we're going to have more shootings like this?

Mayor Adams: Yes, yes, right. And I think sometimes normally people don't remember that, that Bernie Goetz was carrying a firearm and shot at several young men who were on the train. And if you were to have looked at Bernie Goetz profile, my understanding, I don't see if there was a red flag. And so that anger can turn into violence. We see it all the time, and that is what we are concerned about in New York. We're a densely populated city. Millions of people use our transportation system. Traffic accidents can

escalate into gun fights. That's not what we want. And that's why the Police Department has in place, I think, one of the best procedures to ensure who can carry a gun. And so, it is those types of encounters that a bad moment can turn into a bad shooting and create a bad outcome.