Now is the time for Obama to make his move. If not, the NRA will do it for him.

By GEORGE E. CURRY
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In the wake of the killing of 20 schoolchildren in Newtown, Conn. last month and just before Vice President Joe Biden presented a list of proposals to President Obama this week that includes banning assault weapons and limiting sales of high-capacity ammunition clips, the president of the National Rifle Association expressed confidence that new gun legislation will stall in Congress.

In an interview Sunday on CNN's "State Of The Union," NRA President David Keene said, "I would say that the likelihood is that they are not going to be able to get assault weapons ban through this Congress."

When asked about placing limits on high-capacity ammunition clips, Keene replied, "I don't think ultimately they are going to get that, either."

Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), referring to Keene, said on CNN, "I think he's wrong." Murphy explained, "Newtown fundamentally changed things. The NRA doesn't get this."

Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) acknowledged that it will not be easy to get Congress to ban assault weapons.

He told CNN, "I think we have the possibility, but it's going to be difficult." Cummings said the prospects are brighter for Congress to place restrictions on high-capacity magazines and

require expanded background checks.

A 10-year ban on the sale of assault weapons expired in 2004, largely as a result of pressure exerted by the NRA. The organization has risen from being founded in 1871 to help improve marksmanship to a powerful 4 million-member lobbying organization that takes in more than $200 million in annual revenue.

According to Opensecrets.org, NRA spent $20 million in the last election cycle, all on friendly lawmakers who score well on the NRA's political scorecard. The combination of big bucks and political pressure have made too many members of Congress fearful of bucking the powerful gun lobby, a group that doesn't even want machine guns banned.

But there are growing indications that the NRA's political clout might be vastly overrated.

"The gun lobby had an abysmal 2012 election cycle. They spent more than $11 million to defeat President Obama, warning that on Election Day, "Americans will vote either to defend or surrender freedom in the most consequential national decision in U.S. history." They also failed to elect their preferred candidate in six of their seven top targets for the U.S. Senate. And more than two-thirds of incumbents who lost their seats in the House of Representatives were backed by the NRA, including four Democrats," noted Media Matters, the watchdog group.

And the NRA got a poor return on its political investment.

"According to open government group the Sunlight Foundation, the NRA Political Victory Fund, the NRA's political action committee, received a less than one percent return on $10,536,106 spent on independent expenditures during the election cycle," the media monitoring group also found. "The NRA spent 0.44 percent of its money supporting winning candidates and 0.39 percent opposing losing candidates. The NRA Institute for Legislative Action, the organization's lobbying arm, garnered a 10.25 percent return on $7,448,017 spent on the election. In seven Senate races where the NRA spent more than $100,000, six of the NRA-backed candidates lost."

That trend did not start with the November elections, according to ThinkProgress, a liberal blog.

Paul Waldman, contributing editor at *The American Prospect*, analyzed data from the last four federal elections – 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010.

“The conclusion to be drawn from these data will be surprising to many: The NRA has virtually no impact on congressional elections,” he wrote. “The NRA endorsement, so coveted by so many politicians, is almost meaningless. Nor does the money the organization spends have any demonstrable impact on the outcome of races. In short, when it comes to elections, the NRA is a paper tiger.”

Not exactly.

“If you’ve been following the issue of guns over the last few years, you know that these have been good times for gun advocates,” according to ThinkProgress. “In a landmark 2008 decision in *District of Columbia v. Heller,* the Supreme Court settled a longstanding question by declaring that the 2nd Amendment confers an individual right to own guns. Under Barack Obama’s administration, the only pieces of legislation on guns have expanded gun rights; for instance, gun owners are now allowed to bring firearms into national parks as a result of legislation Obama signed in 2009. The assault weapons ban passed under Bill Clinton expired in 2004, and despite early indications the Obama administration might try to renew it, they have made no moves to do so.”

Public opinion on gun control has moved, according to a Gallup poll released Monday. It showed that 38 percent of Americans favor stricter gun measures, a 13-point increase from last year and the highest it has been in more than a decade.

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