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Washington, D.C., officials blasts Republicans' bid to gut gun laws

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By Moriah Costa

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - District of Columbia officials blasted the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday for passing legislation that would gut local gun laws in the U.S. capital.

The House on Wednesday approved a spending bill for Washington and several agencies that included an amendment making only federal gun laws applicable in the city.

Mayor Vincent Gray, a Democrat, said that the city should not have to ask Congress for permission to enforce its own laws. Congress has oversight over the District of Columbia's laws and budget.

"It's shameful that we have to continue to fight these incursions into our democracy in the District of Columbia," Gray, flanked by police and gun control advocates, said at a news conference.

A 2008 Supreme Court decision struck down the district's ban on handgun possession. Residents now must register handguns every three years, complete a safety course and be fingerprinted and photographed.

The amendment sponsored by Republican Thomas Massie of Kentucky would do away with those provisions. In a statement, Massie criticized Washington gun laws as harassment of law-abiding citizens.

District of Columbia Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, a non-voting member of the House, criticized Massie's use of an amendment to the appropriations bill to change the law.

"If you want to overturn our laws, there's only one way to do it in the Congress of the United States," Holmes, a Democrat, said at the news conference. "You've got to introduce a bill, take that bill through the processes and have other people who agree with you to get to it done."

The spending bill also aims to block a district law decriminalizing possession of up to an ounce (28 grams) of marijuana. The law took effect on Thursday.

The fate of the spending bill and its amendments will likely depend on talks between the Senate, House and White House. The District's representative in Congress cannot vote on the House floor.

(Reporting by [Ian Simpson](#); Editing by [Bill Trott](#))

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