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WASHINGTON - The House Judiciary Committee is expected to consider a bill that would ban assault weapons during a hearing scheduled Wednesday.

The action follows a series of mass shootings across the country in recent weeks, including mass shootings at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York; an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas; and a Fourth of July parade in Highland, Park, Illinois.

It also comes on the heels of President Joe Biden signing a bipartisan gun safety bill – the most significant move on guns by Congress in decades – that enhances background checks on gun buyers 18 to 21 years old and encourages states to develop "red-flag" laws that deny guns to people deemed to dangerous.

Biden also called for a ban on assault weapons in June, as did some members of Congress.

The bill was introduced in both chambers as companion legislation by Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif, according to a press release. Another 211 House Democrats and 34 Democratic senators are listed as co-sponsors.

The bill was introduced in the Senate in March 2021, but *The Washington Post* reported that it did not have enough votes to pass the House.

When he introduced the bill, Cicilline said assault weapons were created to "kill as many people as possible," within a short period. He added that "banning these weapons will make our cities and towns safer and more secure and help to reduce gun deaths."

"We're now seeing a rise in domestic terrorism, and military-style assault weapons are increasingly becoming the guns of choice for these dangerous groups," Feinstein said in a statement last year.

The bill would forbid the "sale, import, manufacture or transfer of certain semi-automatic weapons." The ban would not include those who already own firearms.

It would also forbid the transfer of high-capacity ammunition magazines. Background checks would be mandatory to purchase "any future sale, trade or gifting of an assault weapon covered by the bill." It also prohibits magazines and "other ammunition feeding devices," that have over 10 rounds of ammunition, which permit shooters to fire rounds fast without having to reload the gun.

More than 2,200 guns for hunting, household defense or recreational purposes are listed as exceptions to the bill. The bill also "includes a grandfather clause that exempts all weapons lawfully possessed at the date of enactment."

The last assault weapons ban expired in 2004, after a Republican-led Congress refused to renew it. In September 1994, a federal law was enacted to ban assault weapons. At the time, Biden was one of the senators who pushed for the 10-year assault weapon ban.

If the bill passes the committee, House Democrats could take it to the full House, where they would need almost all Democrats to support it.