

Retailers take a harder line against gun sales

NEW YORK (AP) — Dick’s Sporting Goods and Walmart took steps Wednesday to restrict gun sales, adding two retail heavy-weights to the growing rift between corporate America and the gun lobby.

Dick’s said it will immediately stop selling assault-style rifles and ban the sale of all guns to anyone under 21. Its CEO took on the National Rifle Association by demanding tougher gun laws after the massacre in Florida.

Walmart, the nation’s largest retailer, followed late Wednesday saying it will no longer sell firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21. It had stopped selling AR-15s and other semi-automatic weapons in 2015, citing weak sales.

The announcements from the major national retailers came as students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, returned to class for the first time since a teenager killed 17 students and educators with an AR-15 rifle two weeks ago.

“When we saw what the kids were going through and the grief of the parents and the kids who were killed in Parkland, we felt we needed to do something,” Dick’s Chairman and CEO Ed Stack said on ABC’s “Good Morning America.”

Several major corporations, including MetLife, Hertz and Delta Air Lines, have cut ties with the NRA since the Florida tragedy. None of them were retailers who sold guns.

Sporting goods chain Bass Pro Shops, which owns Cabela’s, didn’t respond to requests for comment. Nor did the Outdoor Retail Association or Gander Outdoors.



AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File

Customers shop for food at Walmart in Salem, N.H. Walmart says it will no longer sell firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21. The retailer's new policy comes after Dick's Sporting Goods announced the same policy earlier Wednesday.

The announcements from Dick’s and Walmart drew hundreds of thousands of responses for and against the moves on the companies’ social media accounts.

Dick Sporting Goods had cut off sales of assault-style weapons after the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. But sales had resumed at its smaller chain of Field & Stream stores, which consisted of 35 outlets in 16 states as of October.

On Wednesday, Stack said that would end, and he called on lawmakers to act now.

He urged them to ban assault-style firearms, bump stocks and high-capacity magazines and raise the minimum age to buy firearms

to 21. He said universal background checks should be required, and there should be a complete database of those banned from buying firearms. He also called for the closing of the private sale and gun show loophole that enables purchasers to escape background checks.

“We support and respect the Second Amendment, and we recognize and appreciate that the vast majority of gun owners in this country are responsible, law-abiding citizens,” Stack said in a letter. “But we have to help solve the problem that’s in front of us. Gun violence is an epidemic that’s taking the lives of too many people, including the brightest hope for the

future of America — our kids.”

Walmart said it was also removing items from its website that resemble assault-style rifles, including airsoft guns and toys. “Our heritage as a company has always been in serving sportsmen and hunters, and we will continue to do so in a responsible way,” Walmart said.

One industry analyst said that other retailers that devote a small percentage of their business to hunting will probably follow suit. While guns can be bought from sporting goods stores or department stores, they can also be purchased online, at gun shows and from small local gun stores.

The NRA has pushed back aggressively against calls for raising age limits for guns or restricting the sale of assault-style weapons. Calls to the NRA were not immediately returned.

Stack also revealed that Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old arrested in the Florida attack, had bought a shotgun at a Dick’s store within the past four months.

“It was not the gun, nor type of gun, he used in the shooting,” the CEO wrote. “But it could have been. Clearly this indicates on so many levels that the systems in place are not effective to protect our kids and our citizens.”

The vast majority of Dick’s business is selling sporting goods like basketballs and sneakers. Joseph Feldman, a senior managing director at the Telsey Advisory Group, estimated that guns and ammunition account for 8 percent of the company’s sales.

Dick’s, which had net sales of \$7.92 billion in the fiscal year that

ended in January 2017, has a much bigger stake in youth sports.

“The longer-term positive perception that they create a more welcoming environment will offset any lost sales in the year,” Feldman said.

Dick’s is based just outside of Pittsburgh in a state where the first day of deer hunting season is an unofficial holiday for many families. Stack said Dick’s is prepared for any backlash but will never allow the sale of such guns in its stores again.

“This is the moment when business leaders across the country get to decide if they want to stand on the right side of history,” said Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. “Mothers make the majority of spending decisions for their families, and we want to shop with businesses that care about the safety of our families — making this a smart business move, too.”

Pam Platt of Louisville, Kentucky, said she was thrilled to hear about Dick’s move and called the store’s customer service line to offer her praise. She said she told the representative who answered that she wanted her to “hear something good from somebody.”

“She perked up,” Platt added. Platt said she now plans to start buying more at her local Dick’s store, including a pair of sneakers this week.

“When I go to the store, I will let them know why I am here,” she said. “I care about this issue.”

But many others were unhappy with the company’s move, some posting on the Dick’s page that they would stop shopping at its stores.

NEAL: ‘Lots of groundwork’ left with Depot

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In Neal’s time at the port he has focused on developing that infrastructure to offer “shovel-ready land” to businesses looking for places to build.

“Whether roads or water and sewer needs, (we need) to eliminate the question for people considering coming here,” he said. “They have to have the confidence that we’ll be able to deliver.”

The port owns more than 12,000 acres of land, 2,500 of which are zoned for future industrial use. About 600 acres are “shovel-ready,” and construction could start on them immediately.

When Neal arrived, he said there were a few businesses and services: a potato flake plant, Oregon Potato; a Lamb Weston facility; the terminal T-3 dock and the Morrow County Grain Growers terminal which will be expanded this year.

The port began to see serious growth soon after, Neal said.

“It kind of goes in spurts,” he said. “I’ve seen timeframes when it’s two, three, four years in between significant projects.”

He noted businesses such as Cascade Specialties, which came to the port in 1994, Coyote Springs Generating Station, which began operating in 1995 and doubled its size in 1999, and the Tillamook Cheese factory, which opened at the

port in 2000. Since then, he said, growth has been fairly steady.

“From 2008 to 2013 we had 88 percent growth,” he said. “And that was in the height of one of the worst recessions the county’s ever had — but the ag economy was strong.”

The port’s 2017 economic impact analysis revealed that it generated about \$2.7 billion of economic output and created about 8,500 direct and indirect jobs.

He said he expects to see continued growth with the data center industry, food processing and alternative energy projects.

“I think it will continue to be a fairly strong economic engine,” he said.

In late March, the Port of Morrow commissioners will hold a special meeting with a representative from the Special Districts Association of Oregon, who will help them with the process of finding a new port director. Neal said they hope to have someone in place a few months before he retires.

Neal said he hopes his successor will be someone invested in the health of the port, as well as the surrounding communities.

“We help all our communities with projects that we don’t necessarily want to see our name in the paper,” he said. “We’ve built ball fields, tracks, helped with sewer and water lines, and we do that with the knowledge that

they probably don’t have the resources to do it themselves.”

After he leaves, Neal said he will decompress and spend some time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

“I’ll play a little more golf, and try to get my game back up to where it was,” he said.

He and his wife plan to travel a bit, but he said he will continue to serve on some local boards, including the Bank of Eastern Oregon and Windwave.

“We’re not going to worry too much about schedules and timeframes,” he said.

Neal said he feels he is leaving the port in good hands, from the commissioners to the staff members. Many of the commissioners have served for a long time, with the most senior Larry Lindsay at 51 years.

“I have a very close relationship to my commissioners and my staff,” he said. “They do a really good job and come from different disciplines.”

Rick Stokoe, the Boardman Police Chief and a Port of Morrow Commissioner for the past three years, said Neal will be a tough act to follow.

“We’re not looking forward to having to go through that process,” he said. “We’re lucky to have him. He pretty much got the port where it is today.”

State Rep. Greg Smith

worked for Neal in the mid- to late 1990s at the port, prior to getting elected to the Oregon House of Representatives. Smith worked on various economic development projects and said he, like many others, considers Neal a personal mentor.

“Not a week goes by that I’m not calling him to get his advice,” Smith said.

He praised Neal’s versatility — equal comfort talking irrigation in the fields and policy at the statehouse — and his economic development prowess.

“He took sand and sage-brush and turned it into the second largest port in the state,” Smith said. “That’s phenomenal.”

Neal said overall he is happy with the growth the port and region have seen during his tenure.

“There’s always the ones that got away,” he said, adding that he’d have liked to see more progress on the transfer of the Umatilla Army Depot land.

“That’s not an easy project to begin with,” he said. “Whoever carries on with that will have a lot of groundwork to do. There’s a lot of work to do to make anything succeed, because the infrastructure is very bad out there.”

Neal said he hopes to see that, and other projects, flourish once he leaves.

“That’ll be another chapter for somebody else,” he said.

THEFT: Pendleton police chief calls case ‘pretty cut and dried’

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the time “expenses were increasing, but donations were not,” and the financial reports did not pencil out to keep operating.

White-Zollman on Wednesday said she knows of the theft case but on the advice of a lawyer could not comment about it.

“We are aware and have been cooperating with law enforcement,” she said.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said his department started the criminal investigation in September 2017.

The case came to light, he said, after MacGregor told a friend about her wrongdoing. The friend was a member of the organization’s board of directors. That led to a board member who is a lawyer contacting the Oregon Department of Justice, which in turn called Pendleton police.

Roberts said officers working in conjunction with the justice department served three search warrants to secure evidence of fiscal information and found MacGregor made several transfers of funds from Tonya’s House accounts to personal accounts. She also used a credit card belonging to the nonprofit for personal use.

Some fraud cases are complex, Robert said, and working with the justice department on these is common practice. This case, he said, “seemed pretty cut and dried.”

Tonya’s House hired MacGregor in April 2016. According to the indictment, the thefts occurred from November 2016 to May 2017. The largest amount was for \$10,000 or more and relates to the aggravated theft charge. The seven counts of first-degree theft are each for \$1,000 or more. The second-degree theft count is for \$100 or more.

Roberts also said this type of crime is not uncommon for small nonprofits. They usually lack oversight and most of the board members don’t get into the nuts and bolts of daily operations.

Karen Hutchinson-Talaski of Hermiston in 2014 and 2015 stole more than \$8,000 from the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce while working as its director. And Joann Griffith faces 35 counts of theft and computer crimes related to stealing from the Spray Rodeo Association and Haystack Cemetery Association, both in Wheeler County.

BRIEFLY

Trump taunts Sessions, AG doesn’t keep quiet

WASHINGTON (AP) — Harshly criticized yet again by his boss, Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Wednesday abandoned his usual stony silence and pushed back against President Donald Trump for saying Sessions’ response to Republican complaints about the FBI was “disgraceful.”

Sessions gave no suggestion he would step down in light of the charge made on Twitter and insisted he would “continue to discharge my duties with integrity and honor.”

Trump’s latest tirade stems from a comment Sessions made Tuesday, when he suggested the Justice Department’s inspector general will evaluate whether prosecutors and FBI agents wrongly obtained a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act to monitor the communications of a onetime Trump campaign associate. Sessions had asked the watchdog office to review the complaints in response to pressure from congressional Republicans, who, like Trump, have fumed about what they believe to be bias within the FBI.

Trump tweeted: “Why is A.G. Jeff Sessions asking the Inspector General to investigate potentially massive FISA abuse. Will take forever, has no prosecutorial power and already late with reports on

Comey etc. Isn’t he I.G. an Obama guy? Why not use Justice Department lawyers? DISGRACEFUL!”

Sessions answered hours later, saying his department had taken the appropriate step and “will continue to do its work in a fair and impartial manner according to the law and Constitution.”

Teacher barricades himself in class, fires gun; no one hurt

ATLANTA (AP) — A social studies teacher barricaded himself inside a classroom at a Georgia high school on Wednesday and fired a handgun, sending students running outside or hunkering down in darkened gym locker rooms, authorities said.

No Dalton High School students were in the classroom when the teacher fired the weapon, and despite the chaotic lockdown and evacuation, the only injury was a student who hurt her ankle running away.

It wasn’t immediately clear why the teacher, 53-year-old Jesse Randal Davidson, had the gun. Under questioning by detectives, he refused to discuss what led to the shooting.

The teacher was taken into custody without incident after a 30- to 45-minute standoff with officers, police spokesman Bruce Frazier said.

Friday Meals



March 2nd from 5 to 7:00 p.m.
@ the St. Anthony Hospital Blue Mountain Cafe

Cedar Wrapped Salmon - \$7.50/Adults - \$7.00/Children & Seniors

Baked Potato w/ Toppings & Vegetable of the day.

Clam Chowder Bread Bowl - \$4.25
Single Cup \$1.25

Hearth Pizza Station
Filled with Lent friendly Pizzas



CHI St. Anthony Hospital

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