

Supreme Court leaves state assault weapons bans in place

Originally published June 20, 2016 at 6:41 am Updated June 20, 2016 at 9:35 am

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court has rejected challenges to assault weapons bans in Connecticut and New York, in the aftermath of the shooting attack on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that left 50 people dead.

The justices on Monday left in place a lower court ruling that upheld laws that were passed in response to another mass shooting involving a semi-automatic weapon, the elementary school attack in Newtown, Connecticut.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly turned away challenges to gun restrictions since two landmark decisions that spelled out the right to a handgun to defend one's own home.

In December, less than a month after a mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia dissented when the court refused to hear an appeal to overturn a Chicago suburb's ban on assault weapons. Scalia died in February.

Seven states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws banning assault weapons. The others are California, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts and New Jersey, according to the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. In addition, Minnesota and Virginia regulate assault weapons, the center said.

Connecticut and New York enacted bans on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines in response to the December 2012 massacre of 20 children and six educators at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The gunman, Adam Lanza, shot and killed his mother before driving to the school where he gunned down the victims with a Bushmaster AR-15 rifle. Lanza then killed himself.

In Orlando, gunman Omar Mateen used a Sig Sauer MCX semi-automatic rifle and a pistol during the attack at Pulse nightclub. Mateen was killed in a shootout with police after killing 49 others.

The Associated Press