



ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) The prospect of requiring background checks for nearly all gun sales in Minnesota is at the center of a fiery debate at the Capitol. The House Public Safety Committee is set to vote later Tuesday on a Democrat's gun bill that currently includes that measure. That vote is a critical test of whether that measure can become law. Republicans say it doesn't have the votes.

Rep. Michael Paymar, a St. Paul Democrat, says expanding background checks is necessary. He has been criticized by Republicans and some rural Democrats, who favor competing legislation backed by gun rights advocates that they say would improve but not expand the current system.

A Senate panel passed a bill with universal background checks last week on a party-line vote, with all Republicans opposed.