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## NRA Loads Up for Doc Trial

Tallahassee, FL - With a federal judge ready to hear arguments next week, the National Rifle Association and doctors are feuding about the NRA's role in a legal challenge to Florida's new "docs v. glocks" law.

The NRA is seeking to formally intervene in the case, contending it was a "foremost supporter" when lawmakers approved the measure to restrict doctors from asking patients about gun ownership.

"The Firearm Owners' Privacy Law protects NRA members from intrusive, irrelevant questions by health care practitioners and from discrimination on account of their exercise of Second Amendment rights," the NRA said last week in a motion to intervene.



But physicians, who argue the law is a violation of their First Amendment free-speech rights, are trying to block the NRA from playing a large role in the case. In a document Friday, the doctors said the state can adequately defend the law and that the NRA "offers only inflammatory hyperbole."

"The interest at issue here is a doctor's and patient's First Amendment right to engage in an open and frank discussion free of government interference," the document says.

The legal sparring follows a major lobbying fight during this year's legislative session about the law, which Gov. Rick Scott signed June 2.

A group of physicians quickly challenged the constitutionality of the law in federal court in Miami. U.S. District Judge Marcia G. Cooke has scheduled a July 13 hearing on the doctors' request for an injunction to block the law.

The law, which passed largely along party lines, says doctors and other health-care practitioners "shall respect a patient's right to privacy and should refrain" from asking about gun ownership or whether people have guns in their homes. It also, however, says health providers may ask about guns if they believe in "good faith" that the information is relevant to a patient's medical care or safety.

The issue centers, at least in part, on pediatricians who ask questions about household safety issues that could affect children. The law's supporters point to episodes such as an Ocala couple complaining that a doctor told them to find another physician after they refused to answer questions about guns.

Former NRA President Marion Hammer, an influential Tallahassee lobbyist, played a major role in pushing the bill (HB 155) through the Legislature.

The law took effect immediately when Scott signed it. That helped prompt the plaintiffs, who include six individual doctors and three physician organizations, to seek an injunction.

The state has backed the NRA's attempt to intervene in the case.

With no ruling on the motion to intervene — and the injunction hearing next week — the NRA filed another motion Tuesday aimed at allowing it to submit a brief and participate in the hearing.