



NATION

Showdown looms when Florida survivors lobby lawmakers

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PARKLAND, Fla. — Busloads of students from Stoneman Douglas High School were headed for Tallahassee on Tuesday and a showdown with state lawmakers while back home officials announced plans to resume classes next week at the battle-scarred school.

The school remained shut down Tuesday, six days after a gunman's rampage left 17 students and staff dead and more than a dozen others wounded.

Three of those killed were members of Junior ROTC, and Gov. Rick Scott on Tuesday ordered that Florida Guard members attend their service. The U.S. Military Academy issued a posthumous certificate of appointment for Peter Wang, a 15-year-old JROTC member who died in uniform while helping fellow students flee to safety.

One hundred survivors were making the 450-mile trip from Parkland to the state capital for a rally Wednesday and talks with leaders of both parties.

“I really think they are going to hear us out,” said senior Chris Grady, 19. He said he hopes for “common sense laws like rigorous background checks.”

Some of the students say they support a ban on military-style assault weapons, like the AR-15 used in the shooting. GOP state Sen. Bill Galvano, however, has said he will introduce legislation to raise the legal age for possessing an assault rifle to 21 but not ban them. A waiting period for purchases, expanded background checks and other measures also are planned.

More than 20 vigils paying homage to the victims took place Monday night at schools, churches and in parks across Florida.

At a rally Saturday in Fort Lauderdale that drew nationwide attention, some of the teens pleaded for stricter gun laws and berated lawmakers who have taken political donations from

the National Rifle Association. President Trump was among the targets.

“If the president wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and it should never have happened ... I'm going to happily ask him how much money he received from the National Rifle Association," said Emma Gonzalez, 18, a senior at the school.

The students also are planning a “March For Our Lives” in Washington, D.C., on March 24 to demand legislative action by Congress to address gun violence. The march got a boost from George and Amal Clooney, who announced a \$500,000 donation to the cause saying they were inspired by the "courage and eloquence" of the student activists.

Here in Parkland, plans call for teachers to return to the school for meetings Friday, Broward County Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie said. A voluntary orientation for students and parents was set for Sunday; the goal was resumption of classes on a modified schedule next Tuesday.

Runcie, citing the "long and difficult recovery process," said the timeline could still change. He said the events were open only to students, their parents and guardians and the school's staff.

"Broward County Public Schools appreciates the support of our entire community during this phased reopening process," Runcie said in a statement.

Bacon reported from McLean, Va. Contributing: The Associated Press