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## **18051 YouTube bans more firearms videos, days before national rally for gun control**

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A current search on YouTube for the phrase “how to build a gun” returns more than 25 million results. Modify the search to just “gun” and the number of hits doubles.

But, the popular video streaming platform plans to change that. This week YouTube said that, starting in April, it will ban content that promotes the sale of guns and gun accessories like bump stocks, devices that make rifles fire more rapidly. Videos showing how to build and refashion guns to make them deadlier will also be removed.

YouTube’s decision comes just days before the March for Our Lives, a rally scheduled for March 24 that was organized by survivors of the Parkland high school shooting which left 17 people dead.

By changing its content guidelines, the website has launched itself into a heated gun-control debate that has taken over the country.

After the shooting, students who survived took to social media to call for stricter gun control, sparking a movement that has resulted in many U.S. businesses distancing themselves from the gun industry and the National Rifle Association. Major retailers have also taken steps to limit the sales of guns.

While these responses are considered unprecedented, this is not the first time YouTube has altered its rules for gun-related content in the wake of a shooting. After a gunman using rifles modified with bump stocks opened fire in Las Vegas and killed nearly 60 people, the website expanded its policies to ban videos that show how to modify guns to make them fire more quickly, Newsweek reported. While the new guidelines have not officially been implemented, users who post content about firearms should review their videos, YouTube’s spokesman said.

For many YouTube content creators and proponents of the Second Amendment, the ban amounts to censorship. The National Shooting Sports Foundation, the firearms industry’s trade association, said YouTube’s new policies are troubling and worrisome. YouTube is a virtual public square and the new policies can legitimately be viewed as the stifling of commercial free speech, which has constitutional protection, the statement said.

According to YouTube, the website worked for months with experts to update its guidelines. However, Karl Kasarda, co-owner of InRange TV, [which also posts content dedicated to firearms on YouTube], told the Wall Street Journal that the broadness of the policies gives YouTube the freedom to censor content it doesn’t like.