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Lawmaker Quits Over Gun Control

State Sen. Hudak Faced Possible Recall Over Support of Curbs

by JOE PALAZZOLO

A Colorado lawmaker facing a possible recall election for her support of gun-control legislation resigned Wednesday, marking the latest victory for state gun-rights activists who vowed payback for a package of gun bills that passed earlier in the year.

State Sen. Evie Hudak, a Democrat whose district sits about a dozen miles northwest of Denver, might have been the third lawmaker this year replaced by a Republican in a recall vote, had she stayed in office. Her opponents were gathering signatures for a petition and planned to submit them to the secretary of state next week.

The first recall vote in the state's history in September claimed the jobs of Senate President John Morse, from Colorado Springs, and Sen. Angela Giron, from Pueblo, reducing the Democrats' edge over Republicans in the Senate to 18-17. Democrats will likely retain that edge, even after Ms. Hudak's announcement, because of the state Senate's succession rules.

Ms. Hudak, who won her most recent election by a hair and represented a swing district, said in her resignation letter that she was defending laws passed this year that subjected private gun sales to background checks and banned magazines that hold more than 15 rounds.

"By resigning, I am protecting these important new laws for the good of Colorado and ensuring that we can continue looking forward," Ms. Hudak said.

Doug Schepman, a spokesman for Colorado Senate Majority, said Ms. Hudak faced no pressure to resign. "The decision was entirely hers," he said.

Mike McAlpine, whose group Recall Hudak Too organized the effort, claimed victory.

"We are ecstatic. We have driven her from office," Mr. McAlpine said.

With Ms. Hudak's resignation, Colorado Democrats can tap someone to serve in her place until 2014.

Colorado is one of a handful of states that allow the same party as the resigning lawmaker to make the appointment, according to Joshua Spivak, a senior fellow at the Hugh L. Carey Institute for Government Reform at Wagner College.

"And the Democrats took advantage of that here to keep their majority," he said. If the replacement were to resign, the Democrats could appoint another replacement.

The passage of a sweeping package of firearms legislation earlier this year in Colorado was hailed as a major win for gun-control advocates. While the state has a history of supporting gun rights, it is also home to serious cases of gun violence: the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School and the 2012 shooting at a movie theater in Aurora.

The first recall effort served as a proxy war between the National Rifle Association and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has supported gun-control measures in the wake of last year's massacre of elementary-school children in Newtown, Conn. The mayor gave \$350,000 to a Colorado committee formed to defeat the recall, while the NRA gave about \$360,000 to the recall effort, according to public records. The effort to unseat Ms. Hudak drew less attention and fewer outside dollars.

Mr. McAlpine said the NRA gave him "seven clipboards." His group raised about \$65,000, most of it from individual donors.

Ms. Hudak, who didn't respond to requests for comment, received support from the Democracy Defense Fund, which collected \$120,000 from unions and other political action committees, according to finance reports.