

Georgia lawmakers yank tax break for Delta after airline cuts ties with NRA

By **Brooke Singman**

How the NRA boycott backlash is growing.

Companies, like Delta, who are cutting ties with the NRA are facing heat as Second Amendment supporters strike back

Georgia lawmakers voted to nix a tax benefit for Atlanta-based Delta as part of a broader tax package approved Thursday, following the airline's decision to sever ties with the National Rifle Association.

The bill -- which includes a sweeping income tax cut -- cleared the state House on an overwhelming 135-24 vote, after being approved in the state Senate on a 44-10 vote. It now heads to the governor's desk.

The final version dropped an earlier amendment that would have renewed a jet fuel tax exemption worth \$50 million that was taken off the books in 2015.

“Businesses have every legal right to make their own decisions, but the Republican majority in our state legislature also has every right to govern guided by our principles,” Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, who very publicly threatened to pull the airline tax break earlier this week, said in a statement.



Republican Gov. Nathan Deal, serving his last year in office, said he plans to sign the tax package, though he initially pushed for the airline tax break.

Deal said he would still pursue a jet fuel tax exemption separately.

The rejection of the tax break for now, though, marked a swift rebuke from state lawmakers, who had been weighing the restoration of the benefit until this week. It was originally pitched as an “airline tax break,” rather than one that would only benefit Delta.

But in the wake of the Atlanta-based airline’s decision to end its relationship with the NRA, Cagle, who is running to succeed Deal in November, warned that he would block any legislation that could prove to be beneficial to them.

“I will kill any tax legislation that benefits @Delta unless the company changes its position and fully reinstates its relationship with the @NRA,” Cagle, who heads the Georgia State Senate, tweeted on Monday. “Corporations cannot attack conservatives and expect us not to fight back.”

Last weekend, Delta, which employs 33,000 Georgians, announced its decision to cut ties with the gun rights group, after the Parkland, Fla., high school shooting on Feb. 14 that left 17 dead. Delta announced that it would end the NRA’s contract for “discounted rates through our group travel program.”

The decision reflects the airline’s neutral status in the current national debate over gun control amid recent school shootings,” read the statement posted to the Delta News Hub. “Out of respect for our customers and employees on both sides, Delta has taken action to refrain from entering this debate and focus on its business. Delta continues to support the 2nd Amendment.”

Delta tweeted last Saturday that they “will be requesting that the NRA remove our information from their website.”

Delta added: “Delta supports all of its customers but will not support organizations on any side of any highly charged political issue that divides our nation.”

Connecticut Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy and New York Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo both have invited Delta to move its headquarters to their states in the midst of the company’s disagreement with the legislature.

United Airlines also notified the NRA that it would no longer offer a discounted rate for the NRA’s annual meeting.