President Joe Biden speaks about gun violence in the Rose Garden at the White House on Thursday.

Calls violence an ‘epidemic’: moves fall short of promises

Alexandra Lefko
Aamer Madhani
Michael Balsamo
WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Friday announced a dozen executive actions to combat what he called an “epidemic and an embarrassment of gun violence in America.”

But he said much more is needed. And for Biden, who proposed the most ambitious gun-control agenda of any modern presidential candidate, his limited moves underscored his limited power to act alone on guns with difficult politics impeding legislative action on Capitol Hill.

Biden’s new steps include a move to crack down on “ghost guns,” homemade firearms that lack serial numbers used to launder weapons, and are often purchased without a background check. He’s also moving to tighten regulations on penal-stabilizing braces like the one used in Boulder, Colorado, in a shooting last month that left 10 dead.

The president’s actions delivered on a pledge he made last month to take what he termed immediate “common-sense steps” to address gun violence, after a series of mass shootings that sent a renewed attention to his issue. His announcement came the same day as yet another episode, this one in South Carolina, where five people were killed.

But his order sets up more challenges for some of his biggest campaign-trail proposals, including:

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Expert: Lack of oxygen killed George Floyd, not drugs

Amy Forliti
Steve Karnowski
Tammey Webb
M INNEAPOLIS — George Floyd died of a lack of oxygen from his lungs being pinned to the pavement with a knee on his neck, a medical expert testified at former Officer Derek Chauvin’s murder trial Thursday, employing a terms-of-war defense theory that Floyd’s death was necessary to fight health problems that were killer.

“A healthy person subjected to what Mr. Floyd was subjected to would have died,” said Dr. Martin Tobin, along with critical care specialist at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital and Loyola University’s medical school in Illinois.

Using easy-to-understand language to explain medical concepts and even borrowing his necktie to illustrate a point, Tobin told the jury that Floyd’s breathing was severely constricted while Chauvin and another Minneapolis police officer held the 46-year-old Black man down on his stomach last May with his hands cuffed behind him and his face jammed against the ground.

The lack of oxygen resulted in brain damage and caused his heart to stop, the witness said.

Tobin, analyzing images of the three officers constraining Floyd for what prosecutors said was 9 1/2 minutes, testified that Chauvin’s knee was “virtually on the neck” for more than 90% of the time.

He cited several other factors that he said also made it difficult for Floyd to breathe: officers lifting up on the suspect’s chest, the hard surface of the ground against which to side with his face. Now, the jury will hear from the prosecution’s medical expert, who is expected to say Floyd died of asphyxiation.

Tobin’s testimony comes as the trial that opened Thursday, May 2, is expected to last about six weeks, with the jury deliberating at the conclusion.

Chauvin, 45, is charged in a case that set off widespread protests, racial unrest, and calls for police reforms across the country.

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