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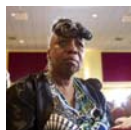
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POLITICS NEWS

Letitia James says she'd investigate NRA's not-for-profit status if elected attorney general

By **JILLIAN JORGENSEN**
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Public Advocate Letitia James said she'd probe the NRA's not-for-profit status in New York State if elected attorney general. (Jefferson Siegel / New York Daily News)



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Public Advocate Letitia James said Thursday she'd investigate the National Rifle Association's not-for-profit status in New York if she's elected state attorney general.



"I will use the constitutional power as an attorney general to regulate charities, that includes the NRA, to investigate their legitimacy," James said at a Harlem press conference where she outlined an anti-gun violence platform.



The NRA is a 501(c)(4) organization, a category that includes not-for-profit civic organizations exempt from taxes. Unlike 501(c)(3) charities — like the Red Cross, for example — 501(c)(4) charities can lobby, and donations made to them are not tax deductible. The NRA does also maintain a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, The NRA Foundation.



Asked to elaborate on her plans to investigate the organization — which has fiercely pushed back on any attempt at gun control and showered friendly lawmakers in political donations — James noted the NRA has a local office.

"The NRA has an office here in New York State and what we want to do is investigate to see whether or not they have in fact complied with the not-for-profit law in the state of New York," she said.

In a statement, NRA counsel William A. Brewer III tied James to Gov. Cuomo — and his past comments about gun enthusiasts.



"Given Governor Cuomo's belief that Second Amendment supporters have no place in the State of New York, it is no surprise that his favored candidate for the office of Attorney

General would attack his most disfavored not-for-profit – and New York’s most venerable Second Amendment advocate – the NRA,” he said.



Brewer argued James had not pointed to any indication the NRA had broken any laws.

“Instead, she brags that if elected, she will launch a taxpayer-funded fishing expedition to see if any exist,” he said. “The truth is, the NRA is a law-abiding New York institution that endures for one reason: it fights for its members and their constitutional rights.”

James’ campaign noted the attorney general can investigate both 501(c)(3)s, and argued lobbying against background checks and for concealed carry reciprocity laws does not seem to serve the purpose of promoting public safety.



James said she would also look to crack down on the movement of guns into New York via the “Iron Pipeline” — Interstate 95 — which connects the city to many states with friendlier gun laws. Asked how she’d look to tackle a problem that has long vexed New York politicians and police, James said she’d ask the Legislature to allow for better tracking of guns and bullets.



“That would go a long ways in identifying those states that are responsible for gun trafficking,” she said. “And perhaps pursuing litigation against those states who are responsible for these products of death on the streets of New York State.”

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