

# The Time Katie Porter Can't Reclaim

By AMY SWEARER

The California Democrat deliberately misrepresented my past statements about gun laws.

**L**AST WEEK, during a hearing before the House Oversight and Reform

Committee on saving lives from gun violence, a [heated confrontation](#) between me and Representative Katie Porter, a Democrat from California, went viral.

Instead of focusing on any of the bills currently before the House or on any of the testimony given that day, Porter brought up [an exchange I'd had](#) with Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio during a 2019 hearing on the alleged dangers of so-called assault weapons. Jordan asked a series of general questions about the features of the “guns Democrats want to ban” and then, without referencing any particular bill or bills by name, asked whether Americans would be less safe “if this law that the Democrats are proposing actually happens? Or this bill that the Democrats are proposing actually becomes law?”

I responded, “Worse, you will see millions of otherwise law-abiding citizens become felons overnight for nothing more than having scary looking features on firearms.”

Porter said that because a bill that had been introduced at that time by Representative David Cicilline (D., R.I.) contained a grandfather provision for individuals to keep possession of guns they already owned, I had “falsely testified under oath” about what Cicilline’s bill did.

This was an incredible assertion. It was, quite literally, a public accusation that I had committed perjury, a federal felony for which I could face up to five years in prison if convicted.

Of course, I interjected to defend myself, but Porter clearly didn't want an explanation or rebuttal. She quickly cut me off, insisting, "I reclaim my time."

The ensuing back-and-forth went viral, predominantly in a skewed narrative of edited clips posted by liberals to frame Porter as some hero of the truth, and I as nothing more than an angry "Karen" screeching at a congresswoman.

Porter reclaimed her time rather than engage with the substance of my rebuttal, which she did not allow me to present.

So now I'd like to reclaim my own time.

Porter is wrong. Her accusation crossed serious ethical lines. And she ought to be ashamed of herself for the time she wasted in a serious hearing. Had Porter cared to know, I would have told her exactly how absurd she was in her representation of my exchange with Jordan and also in her understanding of the bill she defended.

First, Porter mischaracterized the nature of the 2019 hearing. It was not held to discuss any particular piece of legislation, but to broadly discuss so-called assault weapons and the danger they allegedly posed to the American public. There were, in fact, two different "assault weapons" bills that had been introduced in the House by September 2019: Cicilline's bill ([H.R. 1296](#)), introduced in February, and a bill introduced several months later by Representative Eric Swalwell ([H.R. 2959](#)), a Democrat from California who was also a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Unlike Cicilline's bill, Swalwell's did *not* include a widely applicable grandfather provision; instead, it would have criminalized the private possession of all "large capacity magazines," as well as almost all "assault weapons," minus a narrow and short list of enumerated exemptions. While Swalwell's bill was never referenced by name in the 2019 hearing, other members and witnesses alluded to proposals far more expansive than Cicilline's bill, including Swalwell's proposal to eliminate any grandfather provisions.

There is a reason why no one, either at the time of the hearing or in the three years since, objected to my understanding of Jordan's nonspecific question or to my general, broadly applicable characterization of what any bill then being considered by House Democrats would accomplish.

Simply put, my characterization was correct: Swalwell's bill would have made the private possession of all standard-capacity magazines and almost all semiautomatic "assault weapons" a felony. Any owner who did not participate in a buyback would have

been required to keep the firearm stored at a gun range or hunting club, and the guns would effectively have had to stay on those premises at all times.

And, as I was trying to explain to Porter before she cut me off, Cicilline's bill — grandfather provision and all — nonetheless posed serious dangers to peaceable citizens and made it very likely that, as with Swalwell's bill, many would quickly be turned into felons.

That bill's two primary problems stemmed from vague wording that seemed poised to make anyone a felon for letting another person so much as handle his pistol-gripped firearm or standard-capacity magazine.

The bill made it a felony to transfer the grandfathered firearm to *any* person without first going through a federal firearms licensee and having a background check conducted. The sole exceptions were for the (1) "temporary custody of the grandfathered semiautomatic assault weapon for purposes of examination or evaluation by a prospective transferee," and (2) "temporary transfer of possession for the purpose of participating in target shooting in a licensed target facility or established range if the [firearm] is, at all times, kept within the premises of the target facility or range." Meanwhile, the "grandfathering" of magazines applied only to "possession," and the law provided no means of legally transferring those magazines to the possession of another.

In other words, the moment any person other than the gun owner takes physical possession of a grandfathered gun outside of the confines of a gun range without a background check, or takes physical possession of a gun with a standard-capacity magazine under any context, multiple felonies have been committed. The moment that law would have gone into effect, countless Americans would have become felons in the literal blink of an eye, countless numbers of times every day. And they'd be felons based on nothing more than the temporary changed possession of a standard-capacity magazine or gun with "scary looking features."

Perhaps Porter doesn't realize how many peaceable citizens would very quickly be turned into felons under that bill. Perhaps she does, and just doesn't care. But either way, her characterization was and is objectively wrong.

It would be one thing if Porter truly believed I committed perjury three years ago and thought a gun-violence-prevention hearing dedicated to the victims of recent tragedies was the appropriate place to raise these concerns for the first time. But she doesn't believe that.

It also seems that she knows her perjury accusation crossed several lines. Despite very clearly asserting that I "falsely testified under oath," she has tried to walk it back on social media, framing the interaction as "calling me out" for "mischaracterizing the law."

She is a law professor with multiple Ivy League degrees. She knew what those words meant when she said them. She knew — or should have known — there was no reasonable basis to say them.

She said them anyway because this was never about [my 2019 testimony](#). It was never even about the [testimony I gave](#) in the hearing room on June 8, 2022. It was about politics, pure and simple. This was an orchestrated political stunt to bolster her “street cred” during an election year in a purple district. She wanted her out-of-context, click-bait video clip to sell to her constituents on Twitter. She wanted her name trending on social media and plastered on headlines.

Worse, I suspect she wanted to make sure that the publicity surrounding the hearing dealt with anything — *anything* — other than the merits of the legislation or the counterarguments made against it that day. Even if that “anything” meant ambushing a witness who showed up with the best of intentions and slandering her on national television.

Serious people don’t walk into a hearing about saving lives and look for excuses to make the narrative about something else. While Porter’s accusation is serious, she proved herself to be an unserious person. She is a politician, up for reelection, more concerned with sound bites than with substance.

And to be honest, I largely don’t care about her petty games.

I don’t really care that she, a law professor who knows better, slandered me in front of a national audience in a gross political stunt.

I don’t really care that her Twitter minions picked up on her cues and harassed me all day.

I don’t care nearly as much about her lies as I do about what her lies silenced.

The time she wasted on clickbait for a reelection campaign did not belong to her. It didn’t belong to me. It didn’t belong to the other witnesses.

It belonged to the victims of unspeakable tragedy, whose lives we all implicitly agreed to honor in that hearing room.

And for hours while the headlines focused on Porter’s cold, calculating gamesmanship, their voices were nowhere to be found.

That’s time we don’t get to reclaim.