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By JOSH CARTWRIGHT / CBS NEWS / May 26, 2017, 2:51 PM

Texas governor jokes about shooting reporters



Texas Gov. Greg Abbott speaks at Dallas City Hall in downtown Dallas following the deaths of five police officers on July 8, 2016, in Dallas, Texas. / SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

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Two days after a GOP House candidate from Montana was charged with assaulting a journalist, Gov. Greg Abbott, R-Texas, joked about shooting reporters, [according to the Texas Tribune](#).

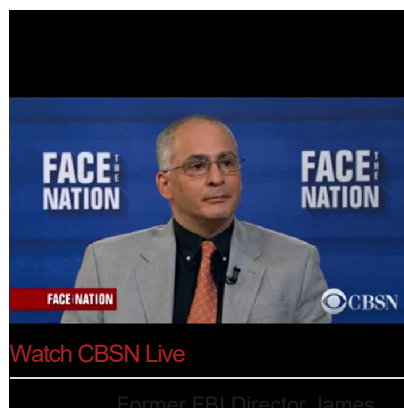
The comment followed Abbott's Friday signing of a bill that reduces the licensing fee to carry a handgun in the state of Texas from \$70 to \$40.

The governor then made his way upstairs to the shooting range for some target practice, and once he was finished, he held up his target sheet to show off his marksmanship, joking to the reporters and photographers present that, "I'm gonna carry this around in case I see any reporters."

His remark comes mere days after Greg Gianforte, who is now the Congressional representative for Montana's at-large district, allegedly slammed Ben Jacobs, a reporter for The Guardian, to the ground.

Though he initially contradicted the reporter's version of the altercation -- backed up by an audio recording and a Fox News producer who witnessed the altercation -- Gianforte later admitted to his "mistake" in an apology delivered after securing Montana's only congressional seat.

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
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Gianforte has been charged with misdemeanor assault, and is **scheduled to appear in court** between now and June 7th.

Jokes about threatening the press have become more common recently. At the United States Coast Guard commencement ceremony on May 17th, 2017, DHS Secretary John Kelly joked with President Trump after he'd been presented with a ceremonial sword, saying, "Use that on the press, sir."

President Trump chuckled, responding, "Yeah, that's right."

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Congressman-elect Gianforte gets anger management but no jail time for assaulting reporter

By [Katie Mettler](#)

June 12, 2017



Congressman-elect Greg Gianforte will perform community service and anger management classes but serve no jail time for body-slammimg a reporter on the eve of his election last month.

Gianforte pleaded guilty to charges that he assaulted Guardian reporter Ben Jacobs at the politician's campaign headquarters on May 24 — an incident that was witnessed by other journalists and captured on audiotape.

Gallatin County Justice of the Peace Rick West sentenced Gianforte to 40 hours of community service and 20 hours of anger management classes on Monday, reported the Associated Press. The congressman-elect, who won Montana's lone U.S. House seat 24 hours after the assault, must also pay \$385 in fines and court costs, according to the AP.

He will be under court supervision until late November, when his 180-day suspended jail sentence ends. Gianforte can then petition the court to have his record cleared of the conviction if he doesn't violate the conditions of his sentence, reported the AP.

Gallatin County Attorney Marty Lambert, who prosecuted the case, said the punishment handed down Monday fit Gianforte's crime. Lambert called the sentence "just" and said that Gianforte's "honesty and forthrightness" after the altercation will allow Montanans to "put all this behind us and move forward," [reported the Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#).

“I don’t think Mr. Gianforte had to go to jail to reinforce the need for him not to engage in that type of behavior again,” Lambert said, according to the Daily Chronicle. “I think that sentence was fair.”

Though all sides, including the judge, maintained in court Monday that Gianforte was treated no differently than any other misdemeanor offender, the congressman-elect was never required to report to the jail, take a booking photo or be fingerprinted.

The judge ordered him to do so on Monday, but Gianforte’s defense attorneys said they planned to appeal, reported the AP.

On election eve, Jacobs tweeted that he had been “body slammed” by Gianforte after asking the candidate to respond to the Congressional Budget Office score of the American Health Care Act, as [The Washington Post has reported](#).

Gianforte deflected the question, and when Jacobs persisted the candidate told him to talk to his campaign spokesman, Shane Scanlon. Jacobs’s audio recording, later published by the Guardian, picks up the sounds of an altercation and screams from Gianforte. Jacobs can be heard saying his glasses were broken.

“I’m sick and tired of you guys!” Gianforte says. “The last guy that came in here did the same thing. Get the hell out of here! Get the hell out of here! The last guy did the same thing. Are you with the Guardian?”

Gianforte's handlers initially denied Jacobs's version of events, claiming the reporter got aggressive while asking a question and initiated the altercation. Jacobs's audio and the Fox News team in the room at the time told a different story.

Gianforte was charged with misdemeanor assault that night, drawing national attention that made onlookers wonder if the Republican technology entrepreneur would still be able to pull out a win in the race.

During his acceptance speech a full day after the assault, Gianforte apologized to the reporter and said he "made a mistake" and "shouldn't have treated that reporter that way." Last week, Gianforte offered a more forceful apology and pledged to donate \$50,000 to the Committee to Protect Journalists.



"Notwithstanding anyone's statements to the contrary, you did not initiate any physical contact with me, and I had no right to assault you," Gianforte wrote in a letter published June 7. "I am sorry for what I did and the unwanted notoriety this has created for you. I take full responsibility."

Jacobs attended the sentencing hearing Monday and engaged in a back and forth with Gianforte, who said he looked forward to sitting down with the reporter on Capitol Hill for a real interview once he was "ready," reported the Daily Chronicle.

"I look forward to it," Jacobs replied.

Reading from a prepared statement in court, Jacobs said he has interviewed hundreds of politicians, including President Trump. “Mr. Gianforte’s response was to slam me to the floor and start punching me,” Jacobs said, according to the Daily Chronicle.

It also thrust him into “a national spotlight I did not seek or desire,” Jacobs reportedly said.

“I have accepted his apology and fully expect his thoughtful words to be followed by concrete actions once he has taken his seat in Congress,” Jacobs told the court, according to the Daily Chronicle.

Gianforte apologized again.

Outside the courtroom, Gianforte spoke with reporters.

“This was not a proud moment,” he said, reported the AP, “but I’m ready to move on.”

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