

February 21st, 2020

HB-910 Criminal Law – Untraceable Firearms - SUPPORT

House Judiciary Committee

Luke Clippinger, Chair

Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice-Chair

Chair Clippinger and members of the committee,

My name is Robert Van Rens. I am a veteran and a gun owner. I am a former member of the NRA and an NRA-certified safety instructor in handgun, rifle, and shotgun. I understand the mechanics and operation of firearms and how they are regulated.

Unserialized firearms, colloquially called “ghost guns,” are an attempt to circumvent the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, which requires background checks for all transfers of regulated arms. The sales of unfinished receivers and frames, the components that, in finished form, must, under federal law be stamped with a unique serial number used to track a firearm, for completion in a home workshop allows prohibited persons or anyone wishing to possess an “untraceable”, which is to say unserialized handgun or semiautomatic rifle to do so without undergoing a background check.

The advent of inexpensive computer-controlled machine tools for the home shop has taken the process of finishing a rifle receiver or handgun frame from a time-consuming, specialized process requiring a fair degree of skill to something anyone willing to spend a modest amount of money and with basic mechanical ability can accomplish.

Any veteran of our armed services can attest that assembling an AR-15 or semi-automatic pistol is not especially difficult with basic tools. Once the receiver or frame has been completed, every single component needed can be purchased online or in-person for cash at a gun show or gun shop. None of these items is regulated in any way.

We regulate firearms because they are especially dangerous tools, and they are often used in crimes of violence. Of particular concern is that handguns, the type of guns so often associated with gun violence, are prominent among untraceable guns. There is no bar for prohibited persons from purchasing the components to manufacture an unserialized gun, which don't require a background check, and there is no waiting period, or any other legal hurdle to overcome. The only delay is imposed by the time it takes to build.

This bill represents a common-sense regulation that helps limit the availability of illegal guns and prevent what is currently a relatively minor problem from becoming a major one.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Robert Van Rens