



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 11, 2015

ATF Drops Proposed Ammo Ban; Agency's Very Existence Threatened

The groundswell of public and congressional opposition against the ATF's proposed ban on 5.56 M855 rifle ammunition was so swift and strong that the agency announced on Tuesday that it was [backing down](#). The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was not only bombarded with more than 80,000 negative responses to its latest anti-Second Amendment maneuver, but it also was blasted in Congress, where 238 House members and 52 senators signed letters opposing the ammo ban. Not only that, but legislation has been introduced to abolish the agency.



One of those signing the letter of opposition in the House — the one circulated by Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) — was none other than the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative John Culberson (R-Texas). Culberson is a Tea Party favorite and no friend of the ATF, and his committee has jurisdiction over funding for the ATF.

Goodlatte was pleased that the ATF backed down:

After much pressure from a large, bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives, I am pleased that the Obama Administration has abandoned its attack on the Second Amendment.

“Abandoned” is far too generous a word to use to describe the ATF's temporary backing away from what is becoming a “third rail” in American politics. “Temporary halt to continuing aggressive hostilities” might better describe the ATF's decision to put consideration of its ban on 5.56 M855 ammunition used in the popular AR-15 rifle on hold until the clamor dies down.

The ATF has allowed itself plenty of wiggle room in declaring that it will consider various “issues” raised by complainants before moving ahead with a new “framework” to eliminate the manufacture, importation and sale of the ammunition.

In the meantime, lawmakers have been busy drafting and offering legislation designed to remove from the ATF its authority to ban rifle ammunition, or to disband the agency altogether. Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) announced in late February his “Protecting Second Amendment Rights Act” that would prohibit the ATF, or any other federal agency, from issuing or enforcing any new restrictions or prohibitions of rifle ammunition. Said Rooney at the time:

The Obama Administration's proposal would unilaterally strip law-abiding hunters and sportsmen of their Second Amendment Rights. Congress has made its intentions clear: this ammunition is for sporting purposes and should not be restricted.

A few days later Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) offered his bill to formally end the agency and transfer its present responsibilities either to the FBI or the DEA. Calling the ATF “largely duplicative”



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and “an affront to the Second Amendment”, Sensenbrenner’s bill would require ATF Director Todd Jones to be the funeral director of his own wake, submitting a plan within 180 days to wind down the agency altogether.

Those “affronts” reach far back into the history of the ATF. Most are acutely aware of the Operation Fast and Furious scandal that was designed to impugn the credibility and integrity of gun store owners along the nation’s southern border by allowing illegal weapons to be shipped to Mexican drug cartels. The plan blew up when the plot was discovered after the death of a border agent at the hands of a cartel member using a weapon enabled by the ATF. It also resulted in the first attorney general in U.S. history (Eric Holder) to be held in contempt by the Congress during the subsequent investigation..

Many undoubtedly recall the Waco siege of 1993 that began after the failed raid by ATF agents of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.

There are many who hold that neither bills offered by Rooney or Sensenbrenner go far enough. Though the Sensenbrenner bill would abolish the agency itself, it would not, as indicated above, abolish its functions. This is an agency that needs to have not only its facade but its unconstitutional functions excised out of Washington like a cancer. As Peter Pan sang:

Never smile at a crocodile
No, you can’t get friendly with a crocodile
Don’t be taken in by his welcome grin
He’s imagining how well you’d fit within his skin
Never smile at a crocodile
Never tip your hat and stop to talk awhile
Never run, walk away, say good-night, not good-day
Clear the aisle but never smile at Mister Crocodile

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.

Correction: As originally published, the article inaccurately stated that in the Randy Weaver standoff in northern Idaho in 1992, Randy Weaver’s wife was shot by an ATF sniper. It was a FBI sniper who shot Weaver’s wife. We apologize for the mistake.



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