



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 24, 2019

## Pa. Attorney General Declares “Receivers” Are Now “Firearms” Under State Law

Just days after Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro issued his “legal opinion” that “receivers” — the part of a firearm that contains the trigger mechanism — are now to be treated as complete firearms by the Pennsylvania State Police, [the Firearms Policy Coalition \(FPC\) filed suit](#). The group claimed that Shapiro stepped outside his legal authority:

Rule by executive fiat was rejected by the 13 American Colonies, including Pennsylvania, when they declared independence from England, and we reject such lawlessness today. The attorney general’s revisionist legal opinion adds an entire class of inanimate objects to the definition of “firearm” under Pennsylvania law that the General Assembly never considered, nor intended.



Federal law holds that receivers may be bought and sold (as well as created at home using 3-D printing technology) without federal notice as long as they aren’t completely operable. Referred to as “80 percent receivers,” they can be purchased and then finished at home without having to put a serial number on them or otherwise notify the government.

But, according to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, this is a federal “loophole” that he hopes the expanded opinion from his attorney general will plug:

If we don’t recognize that 80 percent receivers are firearms under Pennsylvania law, we are creating a giant loophole that allows criminals to skirt our agreed-upon laws that keep people safe. Changing this classification will not hurt legal, responsible gun owners.... This change will stop criminals, terrorists and other people who can’t pass a background check from acquiring a gun through the loophole.

Except that those “criminals, terrorists, and other people” don’t.

California tried to plug this “loophole” with a law similar to what the Pennsylvania AG opined, with little to show for it. Because of the cost of machining an “80 percent receiver” into a workable part of a firearm, most individuals intent on committing mayhem will obtain a firearm on the street, though private sources, or theft. And the preferred weapon of choice is a handgun, not a long gun.

FBI statistics confirm that semi-automatic “ghost guns” — those without serial numbers — are used in less than one percent of crimes in the United States.

Still the attack on firearms continues unabated. Shapiro supports his expanded “legal opinion” by



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claiming that the presence of “ghost guns” puts the public at risk simply because they don’t have serial numbers on them that can be traced.

The Trace, an anti-gun information outlet funded by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, looked into California’s experience with its laws requiring individuals purchasing “80 percent receivers” to obtain a serial number from authorities before completing their assembly into fully functional firearms.

In 2016 California legislature passed a law requiring gun owners to register their homemade firearms with law enforcement. (It also passed a second law that outlawed the possession of any firearm that wasn’t registered.) To its dismay, “records obtained by The Trace and NBC indicate that the law has had little effect. Compliance with the law is low, and prosecutors have never brought charges under the new statute.”

The group noted that, since July 2018, only 2,214 “ghost guns” have been registered in accordance with the law, a virtually invisible number compared to the 4.2 million Californians who are believed to own at least one firearm. In addition, says the group: “Not a single person has been charged with having an unregistered ghost gun since the criminal penalties kicked in on January 1, 2019.”

Why all the fuss? What motivates people such as Shapiro and legislatures in Pennsylvania and California (and elsewhere) to attempt to solve a problem that doesn’t exist? The best statistics available show that “ghost guns” number well less than a million among the estimated 400 million firearms owned privately by American citizens.

The fuss doesn’t have anything to do with crime, gun violence, or keeping weaponry out of the hands of criminals intent on murder and violence. It has everything to do with knowing where all the firearms are and who has them. They want laws that allow them to track, follow, surveil, and limit the freedom of citizens so they cannot be a threat to their totalitarian agendas.

It’s helpful to remember that communist dictator Mao Tse Tung said, “All political power comes from the barrel of a gun. The communist party must command all the guns. That way, no guns can ever be used to command the party.”

*Photo: StephanieFrey/iStock/Getty Images Plus*

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