



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 19, 2023

Matt Gaetz Moves to Abolish the ATF

To Representative Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), the move last Friday by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to require citizens owning pistol braces to register them with the government was the “final straw.” On Tuesday, he [rolled out a bill](#) to abolish the rogue agency altogether.

The bill is one page long: “A Bill to abolish the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.... The [agency] is hereby abolished.”

Would that this would be so simple!

In June 2021, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene proposed the same thing but gave the agency six months to move its responsibilities to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Her bill included:

- Repealing all ATF regulations issued after August 1, 2020;
- Rescinding all hiring authority for the agency;
- Publishing a list of all the weapons it had confiscated, and then selling them to licensed firearms dealers via a public auction;
- Putting those proceeds into a fund for Border Patrol agents killed in the line of duty as a result of one of its botched operations, Operation Fast and Furious; and
- Using any remaining funds to fund grants to states to establish firearm safety programs.

In 2014 Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) had offered a similar bill, but with some of its operations being handed off to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) rather than the FBI.

When Gaetz rolled out his bill to abolish the ATF, he said:

The continued existence of the ATF is increasingly unwarranted based on the actions they're taking to convert otherwise law-abiding people into felons. My bill would abolish the ATF.

If that doesn't work, we're going to try defunding the ATF.

If that doesn't work, we're going to target the individual bureaucrats at the top of the ATF who have exceeded their authority in rulemaking. And if that doesn't work, we're going to take a meat cleaver to the statutes that the ATF believes broadly authorize their actions.

When Representative Greene presented her bill back in 2021, she said the Biden administration was using the agency to harass lawful gun owners:

Joe Biden and the radical, anti-gun Democrats want to unleash the ATF on law-abiding gun owners across America, attacking our God-given Second Amendment right to keep and bear



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arms.

The ATF's ongoing, unconstitutional attacks on the Second Amendment must end.

And, when Representative Sensenbrenner proposed abolishing the ATF, he also minced no words:

The ATF is a largely duplicative, scandal-ridden agency that lacks a clear mission....

It is plagued by backlogs, funding gaps, hiring challenges and a lack of leadership.

For decades it has been branded by high-profile failures. There is also significant overlap with other agencies.

While neither of these last two bills saw the light of day (as will likely be the outcome of Gaetz' effort), the history of the ATF shows it to be corrupt to the core. Sam Jacobs, in an article published by the Libertarian Institute in 2020, took 19 pages to review just a few of the agency's egregious and illegal operations.

They included:

- A review of the agency by a Senate subcommittee back in the 1980s that concluded: "Based upon these hearings, it is apparent that ATF enforcement tactics ... are constitutionally, legally, and practically reprehensible";
- Its Siege at Ruby Ridge;
- Its Siege at Waco, Texas;
- Its expanded powers granted after 9/11;
- Its harassment of gun-show buyers and sellers in Richmond, Virginia;
- Its "baiting" of innocent Hmong refugees in Laos;
- Its entrapment of mentally disabled teenagers;
- What the agency actually does with all those Form 4473s gun buyers must complete to purchase a firearm;
- What the agency does with its slush fund generated from its illegal sales of cigarettes; and
- How it punishes whistleblowers inside the agency when they bring to light some of the agency's illegal activities.

For readers who may be unfamiliar with some of these illegal overreaches, [the source is here](#). Upon reading, they may agree with Gaetz, Greene, and Sensenbrenner: The time to abolish this rogue agency is long past due.

Related article:

[Final ATF Rule Turns Pistols Into Rifles to Be Regulated Under National Firearms Act](#)



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