Assault Weapons Ban of 2021
H.R. 1808 & S. 736


HISTORY OF ASSAULT WEAPONS IN THE UNITED STATES

It’s no accident that assault weapons — a term coined and promulgated by the gun industry as a way of marketing and selling military-style weapons — are so often the chosen weapon of mass shooters. Assault weapons lead to far deadlier mass casualty events than shootings with other firearms; in shootings where assault weapons or high-capacity magazines are used, 155% more people are shot, and 47% more people are killed. These firearms are designed to kill as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time — they are weapons of war, and do not belong on our streets or in our communities.

In 1994, Congress took steps to address this issue by enacting a federal assault weapons ban as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. However, the ban expired in 2004 and was not renewed. Congress’ failure to renew the bill had dire consequences: During the decade that the federal assault weapons ban was in effect, 89 people died in 12 massacres. In the decade after the ban expired, over 300 people were shot and killed in 34 mass shootings, representing a 183% increase in massacres and a 239% increase in fatalities. Just in the last two months, assault weapons were used to kill 38 people in Buffalo, Uvalde, and Highland Park. It’s well past time to renew the assault weapons ban to keep communities safe.

WHAT ARE SEMI-AUTOMATIC ASSAULT WEAPONS?

Semi-automatic assault weapons are firearms with tactical designs developed for military use that automatically fire and reload a new bullet every time the trigger is pulled. These characteristics make these weapons exponentially more lethal than traditional rifles, because they accept detachable magazines, including large capacity magazines, and have additional features that increase accuracy and concealability. During the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, the shooter used an assault rifle to fire 154 bullets, murdering 20 children and six adults in just four minutes.

Since the bill sunsetted in 2004, sales of these weapons have increased drastically, which has resulted in countless preventable deaths. In 2004, the year the bill expired,
only 100,000 assault rifles were manufactured in the country; in 2013, less than ten years later, nearly 2 million were manufactured. As of 2020, there were 20 million AR-style firearms in the United States. Today, they are the preferred style of weapons for any would-be mass shooter.

**WHAT ARE LARGE CAPACITY AMMUNITION FEEDING DEVICES?**

Large capacity ammunition feeding devices, also known as large capacity magazines, are magazines or drums that are capable of holding more than 10 or 15 rounds of ammunition. These devices allow shooters to rapidly fire bullets without stopping to reload, giving victims less time to escape or incapacitate the shooter. When a shooter uses this type of device, the death toll rises by 62% and the number of wounded people increases 14-fold.

Unsurprisingly, these devices are commonly used to carry out mass shootings. In 2019, it took a gunman in Dayton, Ohio equipped with a large capacity magazine just 32 seconds to fire 41 rounds, killing nine people. However, some states have been able to save lives by banning these devices: between 1976 and 2018, state laws banning these types of magazines were associated with 38% fewer fatalities and 77% fewer nonfatal injuries.

**WHAT DOES THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN OF 2021 DO?**

Assault weapons bans are effective at reducing the number of people killed or injured when a shooting occurs. Eight states — Delaware, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C — already have assault weapon bans in place, but are vulnerable to weaker gun laws of surrounding states. We need a federal ban to ensure that schools, grocery stores, and parades are safer for communities across the country.

That’s why it’s crucial that Congress pass H.R. 1808, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2021, to ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines. The bill defines both of these things and makes it unlawful to import, sell, manufacture, transfer, or possess either one, without criminalizing those already in existence. Specifically, this law would make it unlawful to import, sell, manufacture, or transfer:

- All semi-automatic rifles that can accept a detachable magazine, or a fixed magazine of more than 10 rounds, and specific features that make them more lethal
- Any part, or combination of parts, that increases the rate of fire of a semiautomatic firearm, including bumpstocks
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- All semi-automatic pistols that can accept a detachable magazine and have specific features that make them more lethal
- All semi-automatic shotguns that have specific components to make them more lethal
- Large capacity feeding devices capable of accepting more than 10 rounds.

 Firearms and high capacity magazines manufactured before the date of enactment will remain legal to possess. Individuals would be allowed to sell existing assault weapons, but only after the completion of a Brady Background Check. Large capacity magazines may be kept, but can only be transferred to a government buyback program if a person wants to dispose of it. This approach has worked once before; renewing the assault weapons ban will save lives, and it’s well past time Congress gives it a vote.