

David Souers
Friendship
LD 677

LD 677 An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of "Machine Gun" and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-fire Device

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, Members of the committee, I am David Souers. I live

in Friendship, Maine. I am a retired healthcare facility architect from a family that owned, collected and used firearms as a hobby, and for recreation, target practice, hunting and protecting our agriculture from certain wildlife, in compliance with a variety of laws protecting ourselves and others for the types of firearms, locations and use.

I am testifying in favor of this bill to prohibit machine gun like rapid fire devices and conversion kits that can greatly accelerate the normal rate of fire of any firearm including semiautomatic guns which turn a firearm into a fully automatic firearm. The Second Amendment protects the right of self defense. It has been established that this does not include machine guns. It takes only one bullet to severely injure or kill a person. Data and records indicate that in many cases, the person claiming self defense has shot, and often killed, an unarmed person such as in the George Zimmerman shooting of Travon Martin, and the Kyle Rittenhouse shooting of three men in Wisconsin. Increasing the rate of fire has proven to be even more deadly contributing to mass killings. We have heard no evidence where these machine gun rapid fire devices have proven necessary for self defense. However, they show up in criminal mass shootings, and inhibit law enforcement from bringing these deadly violent incidents under control. By any definition in civilian settings, these converted machine gun like weapons are offensive.

Rapid fire devices such as bump stocks, and machine gun conversion devices such as autosears and switches, have been used in mass shootings and other horrific incidents of gunfire across the country, including in New England.

We need this bill and it's protections for the following reasons:

1. Some of these devices enable a shooter to fire up to 1,200 rounds per minute.
2. Over 20 states have recognized the harm done with these devices by passing laws to ban some or all of these device and methods, including states like Louisiana, Indiana, and Florida.
3. Maine already recognizes the danger of machine guns that fire dozens of rounds in rapid succession. Current Maine law bans weapons that have certain devices attached to firearms. However, Maine's laws do not comprehensively address conversion devices, leaving room for some existing devices like bump stocks and allowing for new designs to be developed and sold to work around our state laws.
4. State lawmakers should directly address the sale and proliferation of these devices themselves, rather than just wait until they are designed, attached to a firearm, and used for criminal purposes.
5. Federal law on these devices is not enough. Federal law outlaws some machine gun conversion and rapid fire devices. But these federal restrictions are insufficient in three ways:
 - a. Federal law and regulations do not cover all machine gun conversion and rapid fire devices. For example, bump stocks, manual trigger cranks, and binary trigger systems are not prohibited federally.
 - b. State law enforcement agencies and state prosecutors are not able to enforce federal prohibitions on their own. They have to work with federal prosecutors to bring charges related to devices like Glock switches. The federal executive branch could change the rules that currently prohibit machinegun conversion devices, without going through Congress.

c.States that have passed their own laws to prohibit rapid fire and machinegun conversion devices have empowered their law enforcement officers and prosecutors to tackle these problems without waiting for the federal government to step in. Law enforcement is recovering more and more machine gun conversion devices from shootings.

d.Auto sears and Glock switches in particular are cheap to make, widely available, and proliferating at an alarming rate. Many of these devices are 3-d printed or shipped from China.

e.Between 2019 and 2023, auto sear recoveries increased by 784 percent. Police recovered over 11,000 auto sears in 2023.

f.Law enforcement departments across the country are overwhelmed by the presence of Glock switches and auto sears. It is impossible for federal authorities alone to handle all the cases associated with auto sear recoveries. Before Mississippi lawmakers passed their bill outlawing Glock switches and auto sears, the Jackson Police Chief advocated for the legislation, saying, "If there is a case that would not or could not be prosecuted on the federal level, they'll at least get them on the state level."⁷ Rapid fire and machine gun conversion devices have been used in high-profile and mass shootings.

g.In October of 2017, a shooter equipped with a bump stock fired over 1,000 rounds into a country music festival in Las Vegas, Nevada, killing 60 people and wounding over 400 others

h.In July of 2023, a man in Fargo, North Dakota, outgunned law enforcement, killing one officer and injuring two others, with a semiautomatic rifle outfitted with a binary trigger. Law enforcement recovered a hellfire trigger device in an elementary school classroom after a shooter in Uvalde, Texas, killed 19 students and two teachers. A glock switch was used in a shooting in Houston, Texas in January 2022 that injured three police officers. In October 2021, a person resisting arrest killed one police officer and injured another firing a gun accessorized with an auto sear.

i.A mass shooter used a gun with an auto sear in a Sacramento, California shooting in April 2022 that killed six people and injured 12 others.

We should be consistent across our firearm laws that firearms regardless of how they accomplish machine gun like rapid fire are all equally prohibited without allowing or enabling working around the prohibition of machine guns.

I advocate that this LD 677 ought to pass.