



Assault Weapons and High Capacity Magazines

WHAT ARE ASSAULT WEAPONS AND HIGH CAPACITY MAGAZINES?

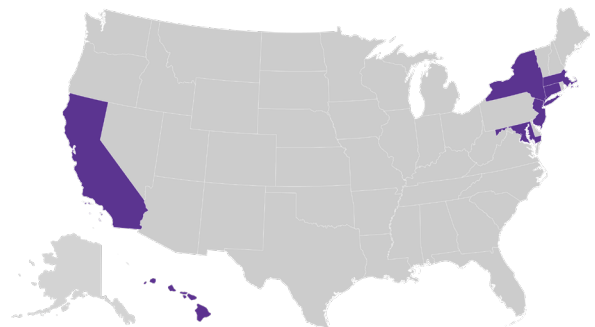
The term “assault weapon” refers to a semi-automatic gun that was designed for military use and quick, efficient killing. These weapons of war have no place on American streets. Similarly, high capacity magazines contribute to fatality and injury counts in mass shootings by allowing shooters to fire more bullets without needing to reload. A high capacity magazine is typically defined as any magazine or drum that is capable of holding more than either 10 or 15 rounds of ammunition. Assault weapons and high capacity magazines are all too often the weapons of choice in mass shootings, including the massacres in Parkland, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, Orlando, Sandy Hook, Aurora, and countless others. Assault weapons are uniquely lethal because of their rapid rate of fire and high muzzle velocity, coupled with high capacity magazines, which when attached to an assault weapon, allow dozens of gunshots without needing to reload.

THE FEDERAL ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN OF 1994

In 1994, Congress enacted a federal assault weapons ban as part of a comprehensive bill known as the “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.” A ban on assault weapons was supported by former Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan. The Act named 19 guns (and their copies), as well as other semi-automatic firearms with two or more specified features listed above. It was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. The ban expired on September 13, 2004. Congress did not renew it. When it expired, assault weapons and high capacity magazines were suddenly legalized, unless banned by state or local laws.

STATE LEGISLATION

Currently, seven states (California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York) and the District of Columbia ban assault weapons, and two more regulate elements of their possession or purchase. These laws are all slightly different, but all work to prevent these guns from being readily available to the general





public. Additionally, ten states and the District of Columbia have banned high capacity magazines, though like assault weapon laws, the regulations slightly differ. The National Law Enforcement Partnership considers anything higher than ten rounds as high or large capacity and advocates for their limitation from civilian access and use. While the Supreme Court case *Heller v. District of Columbia* has recognized the right of law abiding citizens to own a gun in the home for self-protection, courts have widely upheld state assault weapon and high capacity magazine bans as constitutional.

WHY SHOULD WE REGULATE ASSAULT WEAPONS AND HIGH CAPACITY MAGAZINES?

Assault weapons, paired with high capacity magazines, have long been the weapon of choice for mass shooters. The shooter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida killed 17 students and teachers using an assault weapon. But this was just one in a long list of horrific shootings committed with these weapons. Assault weapons were also used in:

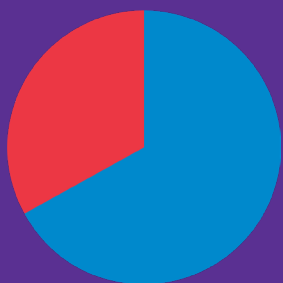
- The Tree of Life Synagogue shooting, 11 killed and 6 more injured;
- The Sutherland Springs church shooting, 26 killed and 20 more injured;
- The Las Vegas music festival shooting, 59 killed and over 500 more injured;
- The Pulse Nightclub shooting, 49 killed and 53 more injured;
- The San Bernardino Community Center shooting, 14 killed and 22 more injured;
- The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, 26 killed and 2 more injured;
- The Aurora, Colorado movie theatre shooting, 12 killed and 58 more injured;

A review of mass shootings between 2009 and 2015 demonstrated that in shootings where assault weapons or high capacity magazines are used, 155% more people are shot and 47% more die compared to those without them.

Assault weapons kill one out of every five law enforcement officers killed by guns, and over a third of law enforcement agencies surveyed after the expiration of the federal assault weapon ban reported that they were experiencing a noticeable increase in criminals' use of assault weapons. Law enforcement organizations have long supported laws prohibiting assault weapons because the agencies charged with protecting the public are effectively being "outgunned" by militarized civilians and criminals with easy access to assault weapons and high capacity magazines.

"Shootings where assault weapons or high capacity magazines are used result in **155% more people being shot.**"³

But we know that regulating them can save lives: during the time the ban was in effect, there was a **37% decline in gun massacres** and a **70% decline in the percentage of assault weapons traced to gun crimes**.



67%

of Americans support an assault weapons ban.⁴

PENDING LEGISLATION AND HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Representative David Cicilline (D-RI 1) introduced S. 66 and H.R. 1296, the “Assault Weapon Ban of 2019.” It would ban the sale, manufacture, transfer, and importation of 205 military-style assault weapons by name, as well as outlaw any assault weapon that can accept a detachable magazine and has one or more military characteristics. This is similar to the 1994 assault weapon ban, but notably different that it requires only one additional feature, instead of two. It also bans any high capacity magazine that can accept any more than ten rounds of ammunition, along with bump stocks and other devices that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire at a rate that mimics fully automatic weapons. Any gun or high capacity magazine that is lawfully possessed at the day of enactment will be grandfathered in and exempted from the ban.

Take action today by calling your Senators and Representatives and demanding that they co-sponsor this important piece of legislation, if they haven’t already.

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1. <http://www.vpc.org/press/new-data-shows-one-in-five-law-enforcement-officers-slain-in-the-line-of-duty-felled-by-an-assault-weapon/>
 2. <https://www.lepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Partnership-Facts-Assault-Weapons-and-High-Cap-Ammo.pdf>
 3. <https://everytownresearch.org/documents/2015/04/analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings.pdf>
 4. <https://poll.qu.edu/national/release-detail?ReleaseID=2521>