



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 7882 • MADISON, WI 53707-7882

Time to Close the Ghost Gun Loophole in Wisconsin

Our country is facing the tragedy of yet another mass shooting, this time impacting Lewiston, Maine. We all deserve to feel secure in our communities, and it is heartbreaking to see this happen again and again. These tragedies once again spur us to action, reminding us of the importance of pushing for past-due reforms to address gun violence.

It was five years ago that an attack in our own community of Middleton occurred, and many people still live with that trauma. On September 19, 2018, our community fell victim to an active shooter that was able to procure firearm parts from the internet. It was a regular day for employees in Middleton, but that quickly changed when the shooter opened fire on his co-workers.

Tragically, the shooter took advantage of the ‘ghost gun loophole’ to acquire his weapon. Previously prohibited from possessing a firearm, the attacker in the Middleton shooting was able to purchase the required parts to assemble a functioning firearm. Ghost guns, like the weapon the shooter procured, are known as such because they are untraceable. The shooter was able to legally assemble the weapon’s parts and create a firearm without a serial number, therefore avoiding the required background check.

At the end of last year, the Biden Administration imposed new rules to crack down on ghost guns. Due to this rule, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) requires firearm components to be serialized by the manufacturer and, therefore, traceable by law enforcement. Just recently, the United States Supreme Court affirmed this rule in a 5-4 decision.

We are thankful that the Biden Administration is taking action to ensure the safety of communities across the country. Now, we must codify these kinds of reforms into law at the state and federal levels. That is why, as legislators, we re-introduced a bill to close the ghost gun loophole once and for all in Wisconsin. Our bill also provides necessary protections against undetectable firearms such as those that can slip through metal detectors.

This common-sense gun safety measure is what our community has been asking for since the terrible shooting in 2018 and it is far past time for our legislature to do something about it. While implementing safety measures like this might seem far off in the gerrymandered State Capitol, recent bills like universal background checks and safe storage proposals now have bipartisan sponsors. As legislators, we will continue advocating for gun safety measures and reach across the aisle to try get these bills across the finish line.

It’s up to all of us to ensure that our cities, offices, churches, schools, and homes are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

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Representative Alex Joers and Senator Dianne Hesselbein