

THE DANGERS OF SILENCERS

Silencers are inherently dangerous devices that criminals may use to suppress the sound of gunfire and mask muzzle flash. They were not designed to protect hearing, but to make it difficult for people who are nearby to identify the sound of gunshots and locate an active shooter. **Silencers put law enforcement and the public at grave risk.** The deregulation of these weapons would only increase this risk by providing easy access to criminals determined to get away with murder.

Silencers Would Be Available Without Background Checks

There are currently over 900,000 silencers registered under the National Firearms Act. If silencers were removed from the act's purview, the owners of those silencers would be able to sell them through unlicensed, private sales without a background check at gun shows and on the internet. Criminals, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill could then easily obtain them. The background check loophole is a deadly problem with our gun laws, and widening that loophole to include silencers would recklessly endanger public safety.

If Silencers Are Available to Criminals, They Will Use Them

The National Firearms Act currently requires silencers to be registered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives. That law has been on the books since 1934 and has made it more difficult to obtain silencers than consumer firearms. However, when criminals have gained access to silencers, they've been used in targeted, assassination-style murders.

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The National Firearms Act has required silencers to be federally registered since 1934.

The real reason the gun lobby wants to deregulate silencers is so that the industry can profit off their sale and the accessories required for their use—all at the expense of public safety.

210+

lifesaving gun safety laws have been enacted in 45 states and DC since the tragedy at Sandy Hook.

115,000

Americans are shot each year—over one million in the past decade.

If silencers truly enhanced the health of gun owners, they would have been issued to every member of law enforcement and every member of the military.

Christopher Dorner, a former LAPD officer who had been fired, murdered four people and wounded several others using a gun with a silencer in February 2013. He targeted law enforcement officers in what the Police Foundation described as a bizarre act of vengeance—a “gang-style hit” on individuals who were sitting in a car. Police were initially puzzled as to why no neighbors heard the 14 shots: it was because Dorner used a silencer.

Police Officers In Particular Face a Serious Threat From Silencers

Silencers enable criminals to elude law enforcement and raise the risk of ambush attacks targeting cops, in which a shooter may escape before the police are even called.

Silencers also prevent police officers from quickly and effectively responding to active shooters, since suppressors make it harder to recognize the sound of gunfire and mask muzzle flash, frustrating attempts to locate and engage armed offenders.

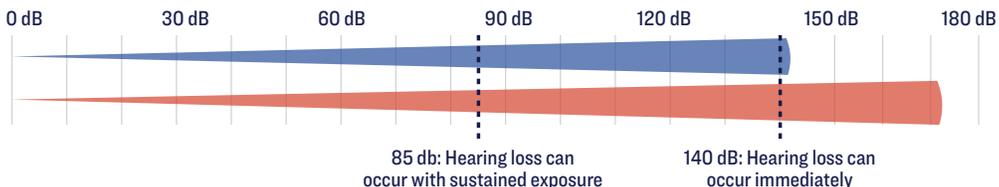
Proliferation of silencers would also diminish the effectiveness of gunshot detection systems, such as Shotspotter. These systems are now deployed in nearly 100 cities, including Chicago, New York City, and Washington DC. They provide police with real-time alerts to illegal gunfire, enabling them to more safely respond to and investigate gun crime.

Silencers Are Not Effective Hearing Protection

The claim that silencers are necessary or even effective hearing protection is bogus. Dual ear protection—muffs and plugs—is the gold standard for any professional shooter, including police and members of the Armed Forces. **Public health experts warn that hearing loss can occur at 85 decibels. Firearms produce explosive sounds in excess of 140 decibels with the most effective silencers suppressing the sound of gunfire by up to only 28 decibels.** No shooter concerned about their hearing would ever risk firing more than a single round without OSHA approved muffs and plugs. Rest assured that if silencers were appropriate hearing protection every police officer and member of the military would be issued a silencer for use in training—they are not and for good reason.

■ 112-142 dB: SOUND LEVEL OF A SUPPRESSED GUN

■ 140-170 dB: SOUND LEVEL OF AN UNSUPPRESSED GUN



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For more details and underlying research, visit lawcenter.giffords.org/silencers

giffordslawcenter.org

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Eight states ban silencers, with certain exceptions: CA, HI, IL, NY, MA, NJ, DE, and RI. Other states ban silencers but exempt those registered under the National Firearms Act.

WE'RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For nearly 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

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