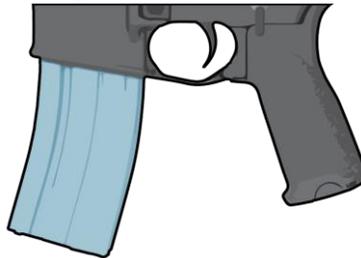


ASSAULT WEAPONS FAQ

WHAT IS AN “ASSAULT WEAPON”?

An “assault weapon” is a firearm with certain features that make it easier to shoot many bullets across a wide area in a short time. Assault weapons can be handguns or long guns (like the AR-15 rifle or AK-47). There are three key features that distinguish whether a firearm is an assault weapon:

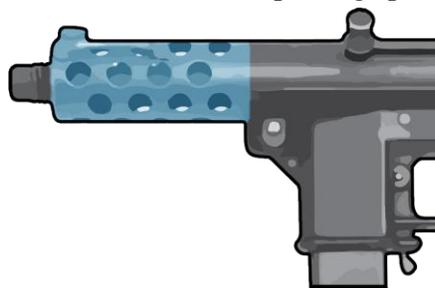
- 1) Semiautomatic (meaning you do not need to reload after each shot);
- 2) The ability to accept a detachable magazine;



- 3) Pistol grip on a rifle *or* a combination of a forward pistol grip and barrel shroud.



Pistol grip



Barrel Shroud



Forward Pistol Grip

Photos from <https://trendct.org/2016/07/25/here-are-parts-make-assault-weapon/>

WHAT FEATURES MAKE A GUN INTO AN ASSAULT WEAPON?

Some assault weapon features, like pistol grips, second handgrips, or barrel shrouds, make the gun easier to hold with two hands. This allows the shooter to spray an area with bullets without taking careful aim, and to control the gun without getting burned as the barrel heats up. Others, like detachable magazines, make it easier to maintain a high rate of fire for an extended period of time. Still others, like flash suppressors, allow the shooter to conceal their position. These features, most of which were specifically designed for the military, are unnecessary for hunting or target shooting.



THE COALITION TO STOP GUN VIOLENCE

WHAT WAS THE FEDERAL ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN?

In 1994, after a string of mass killings committed by criminals with assault weapons, Congress passed a law banning certain assault weapons. The 1994 law named 19 specific models and also banned “copies or duplicates” of those models. In addition, the law outlawed guns that had two or more specified assault weapon features (referred to as the two-features test). Guns that were legally possessed before the effective date of the law remained legal.

WHAT WAS THE “SUNSET CLAUSE”?

The 1994 assault weapons ban included a “sunset clause” providing that the law would be automatically repealed on September 13, 2004. President Bush professed support for renewing the ban but refused to lobby Congress to pass new legislation. When Congress failed to act to extend the ban, assault weapons again became legal under the provisions of federal law.

DURING THE TIME OF THE 1994-2004 BAN, HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE THAT CRIMES WERE COMMITTED WITH ASSAULT WEAPONS?

The 1994 law included several loopholes that gun makers and dealers exploited to continue making and selling assault weapons that Congress intended to ban. As a result, many assault weapons remained available.

Some gun companies made inconsequential design changes (like moving a screw or replacing a flash suppressor with a “muzzle brake”) and gave the gun a new name. The new name got the gun off of the prohibited list, and the minor change arguably put it out of reach of the law’s “copies or duplicates” language. For example, the banned TEC-9 became the legal AB-10.

Also, some gun companies copied assault weapons that were originally made by other manufacturers. For example, Bushmaster’s XM15 was a copy of the banned Colt AR-15, with one minor design change. Functionally equivalent in all relevant respects to its banned cousin, the XM15, like innumerable other AR-15 variants, remained legal. The DC-area sniper allegedly used a new Bushmaster XM15 to shoot 13 victims, killing 10.

Finally, because the 1994 law allowed the continued ownership and sale of “pre-ban” assault weapons, those weapons remained available.

WHICH STATES HAVE ASSAULT WEAPON BANS?

Seven states and the District of Columbia have an assault weapons ban law: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York.



WHAT IS CONGRESS DOING TO REINSTATE THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN AND ADDRESS THE LOOPHOLES IN THE 1994 LAW?

Since the assault weapon ban expired in 2004, Senator Dianne Feinstein and other Members of Congress have continued to introduce bills that would reinstate the assault weapons ban, finally ensuring that military-style assault weapons are banned from the civilian marketplace.

In the 116th Congress, Representative David Cicilline and Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced H.R. 1296/S. 66, the “Assault Weapons Ban of 2019.” This legislation would reinstate and strengthen the 1994 ban to effectively prevent the gun industry from circumventing Congressional intent by continuing to manufacture and market deadly assault weapons.