



THE COALITION TO
STOP GUN VIOLENCE

Friday, September 4, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capital, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 2847 Firearm: unsafe handguns

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV) is writing in support of Assembly Bill 2847. AB 2847 strengthens California's Unsafe Handgun Act (UHA) to ensure that new models of firearms sold in the state incorporate microstamping technology and comply with the UHA's other safety requirements.

In 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation to strengthen the UHA. AB 1471 (Feuer) required that all new models of semiautomatic pistol offered for sale in California incorporate microstamping technology, which imprints a microscopic array of characters unique to that firearm on bullet cartridge casings when the weapon is fired, on two internal surfaces of the pistol. This technology could enable law enforcement to match cartridges found at crime scenes directly to the gun that fired them, similar to the way law enforcement can use an automobile's license plate to identify the vehicle's make, model, VIN, and registered owner. In cities across California, large majorities of fatal and non-fatal shootings go unsolved by law enforcement, encouraging cycles of retaliatory violence instead. If widely adopted, Microstamping could help law enforcement solve more gun crimes and identify firearm trafficking channels.

Since microstamping requirements only apply to new handgun models, the gun industry has effectively boycotted this law (as well as other new requirements of the UHA) by refusing to offer new handgun models for sale in California. So far, no firearm manufacturer has submitted a handgun for certification to DOJ that incorporates microstamping technology.

AB 2847 eases compliance by requiring that newly developed semiautomatic pistol models etch microstamping characters on one place on the interior of the firearm, rather than two places, as required by current law. Additionally, AB 2847 furthers implementation of the new UHA requirements by directing the Attorney General to remove three previously grandfathered handgun models from the roster for each new compliant handgun model that is introduced.

For the past fifteen years, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence has advocated for firearm manufacturers to incorporate microstamping into their firearms. Unfortunately, each step along the way firearm manufacturers resisted, even while microstamping technology has become more reliable and easier to implement. Numerous peer-reviewed studies demonstrate that the technology implementation costs are



negligible and the components are incredibly durable, continuing to reliably mark even after withstanding thousands of test-fired rounds.¹

Our country continues to experience unacceptably high rates of firearm violence, with interpersonal violence concentrated in American cities. California alone experiences an average of 1,361 firearm homicides every year.² The majority of this violence is geographically concentrated in a handful of cities and is exacerbated by low homicide clearance rates. This is true in California where the three cities with the highest per capita homicide rates - San Bernardino, Oakland, and Stockton - have extremely low clearance rates.³ In San Bernardino and Stockton, 6 out of every 10 homicides that occurred over the last decade remain unsolved, and in Oakland, police were unable to make arrests in 54% of all homicides.⁴

Microstamping technology has the potential to help resolve the crisis of unsolved murders and daily gun violence in California. It can help law enforcement officers analyze more forensic evidence using fewer resources and in less time. This technology will allow law enforcement to accelerate the traditional ballistics identification process which, in its current state, can take months. Microstamped shells can be examined under a simple microscope and the codes identified within minutes. Codes can be quickly linked to a specific firearm and matched to other shootings where the same firearm was used with over 95% certainty.⁵

Microstamping technology has powerful potential to help law enforcement solve gun crimes, identify high risk gun trafficking networks, and strengthen trust with communities impacted by daily gun violence. It can help to interrupt the feedback loops of unsolved shootings, retaliatory violence, strain on police resources, and police distrust that fuel gun violence in cities across California.

While the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence maintains that it is technologically feasible - as demonstrated through numerous prototypes and test firings - to etch microstamping characters on two sections of the firearm, we support AB 2847's easing of the compliance requirement established previously by AB 1471. We believe that AB 2847 provides the best approach to incentivize manufacturers to adopt microstamping technology, spurring competition between manufacturers, and rewarding the manufacturers that bring microstamped firearm models to market.

CSGV supports AB 2847 and urges you to sign this bill. Microstamping will provide tools for law enforcement to solve gun crimes, prevent gun violence, and create trust between law enforcement and community members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Horwitz', is written in a cursive style.

Josh Horwitz
Executive Director
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence



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References

¹ See: Lizotte, T. E. & Ohar, O. (2009). Firearm microstamping technology: Counterinsurgency intelligence gathering tool. *SPIE*. 7305: 1-11.;

Lizotte, T. E. & Ohar, O. (2008). Forensic firearm identification of semiautomatic handguns using laser formed microstamping elements. *SPIE*. 7070: 1-15.; and

Ohar, O. P. & Lizotte, T. E. (2009). Extracting ballistic forensic intelligence: Microstamped firearms deliver data for illegal firearm traffic mapping – technology, implementation and applications. *SPIE*. 7434: 1-46.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Firearm Homicides Deaths. Five-year average (2014-2018). California. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2018.

³ 2018 per capita homicide rates as reported AmericanViolence.org. *Marron Institute of Urban Management*. *New York University*; And Mirabile, F. & Nass, D. (2019). [What's the homicide capital of America? Murder rates in U.S. cities ranked](#). *The Trace*.

⁴ Lowery, W., Kelly, K., Mellnik, T., & Rich, S. (2018). [Homicide database: Mapping unsolved murders in major U.S. cities](#). *The Washington Post*.

⁵ Ohar, O. P. & Lizotte, T. E. (2009). Extracting ballistic forensic intelligence: Microstamped firearms deliver data for illegal firearm traffic mapping – technology, implementation and applications. *SPIE*. 7434: 1-46.