

Feinstein, Pascrell Introduce Crime Gun Tracing Modernization Act

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Washington—Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Congressman Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), co-chair of the Congressional Law Enforcement Caucus, today introduced the [Crime Gun Tracing Modernization Act](#) to allow the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives to electronically search gun sale records following a crime committed with a firearm.

The ATF is currently prohibited from electronically searching gun sale records when conducting criminal investigations. Instead, it must search through physical paper files, which can seriously delay criminal investigations.

“It’s ludicrous that current law prevents the ATF from using computers to conduct a swift and thorough investigation when a gun is used in a crime,” said Senator Feinstein. **“We need to give ATF agents all the tools necessary to track guns used by criminals, not tie their hands behind their back. Modernizing the ATF’s records will not only speed up investigations, it will ultimately save lives.”**

“Americans would be appalled at the state of crime gun tracing in America,” said Representative Pascrell. **“Because of a dreadful law imposed at the behest of the NRA, the ATF is literally banned from using computers to trace firearms used in crimes. Every moment after a crime is committed matters dearly to police. Law enforcement in every state share one goal: solving crimes as expeditiously as possible to keep their communities safe. This small, simple change will help prevent crime, it will save lives, and will create needed efficiency. After decades of being hamstrung by extremist NRA policies, the ATF must be given the authority to do its job.”**

After a firearm associated with a crime is discovered by federal, state or local law enforcement officials, the ATF is required to recreate the chain of custody for the firearm. Yet for decades it has been blocked from digitizing millions of gun sales records already in its possession so they can be easily searched at the National Tracing Center in Martinsburg, W.Va. This outdated restriction

requires ATF agents to sift through mountains of paper records, a laborious process that delays investigations and drains law enforcement resources.

The ATF receives more than half a million gun trace requests and stores more than 100 million sales records a year, creating serious delays in criminal investigations throughout the United States due to the paper-based system.

This has overwhelmed the ATF with millions of pieces of paper that are now stored in boxes in closets, hallways and storage lockers in a parking lot. The situation has gotten so dire that the floor at the National Tracing Center has partially caved in and the ATF has been instructed to not store any more physical records in its facility or it may be in danger of further structural damage.

The bill only allows the ATF to electronically search records already in its possession for criminal or national security purposes and it would prohibit searches for any other purpose.

“The Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA) appreciates efforts to help our agencies get timely and relevant information regarding violent gun crime investigations. We commend Congressman Pascrell and Senator Feinstein for introducing the *Crime Gun Tracing Modernization Act* which would simply digitize paper records that ATF already has in its possession. This will enable quicker data retrieval compared to the current manual time-consuming process when state and local agencies request gun traces related to specific criminal investigations,” said Megan Noland, executive director of the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA).

“The MCCA is proud to endorse the *Crime Gun Tracing Modernization Act of 2023* and thanks Sen. Feinstein and Rep. Pascrell for reintroducing this important legislation. Crime gun tracing is a critical tool that provides valuable investigative information. However, this can be a slow and inefficient process, as current law requires the ATF to search its records manually. This legislation will automate this process while instituting protections to safeguard law-abiding gun owners' privacy and rights,” said Eddie Garcia, chief of the Dallas Police Department and president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA).

“Violent criminals are getting more sophisticated and better at covering their tracks, specifically with firearms use. As a result, federal law enforcement needs modern tools to trace the movement of illegal weapons. With an electronically searchable record of firearms used in illegal activity across the country, ATF can better identify and target criminals who use firearms to wreak havoc on their communities. Making it easier to track illegal firearms is better for all Americans, especially those who use firearms lawfully, by ensuring federal law enforcement can identify and isolate illegal weapons. We applaud Congressman Bill Pascrell for reigniting the effort to move this bill in the new Congress and look forward to supporting its passage,” said Larry Cosme, president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA).

“Under this legislation, ATF agents could use their time more efficiently and could expedite the tracing of crime guns, which often reveals critical information that advances Federal, state, and local law enforcement investigations. This will keep communities in this country safer and more secure, and the APA is proud to support the measures in this bill,” said David LaBahn, president of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA).

In the Senate, the bill is cosponsored by Senators Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.).

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