

Congress mulls ban on bump stocks

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Following the mass shooting in Las Vegas, Congress gestured to a potential ban on bump stocks. During the massacre, the gunman utilized semi-automatic rifles that require one trigger pull per round fired. However, the shooter had attached a firearm accessory known as bump stocks to the stock of the rifle, which in essence, turned a semi-automatic rifle into a nearly fully-automatic weapon.

The call for banning bump stocks has support from Republicans and Democrats.

“This replacement shoulder stock turns a semi-automatic rifle into a weapon that can fire at a rate of 400 to 800 rounds per minute,” said Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Dean Heller, GOP senator from Nevada said, “Unfortunately, we are all now keenly aware of how this device operates and believe that this renewed review and determination will keep our citizens safe and ensure that federal law is enforced.”

Many people, including congressional leaders, did not first learn about what a bump stock was until after the Las Vegas tragedy.

“I didn’t even know what they were until this week,” said House Majority Leader Paul Ryan. “Fully automatic weapons have been banned for a long time. Apparently this allows you to take a semi-automatic, turn it into a fully automatic. So clearly that’s something we need to look into.”

In 1986, the National Firearms Act amended 1930s legislation and prohibited the manufacture, sale or transfer of fully-automatic weapons. Exceptions to the law allow for those fully-automatic weapons made or registered prior to 1986 to be owned by citizens.

The partisan split comes about regarding where the authorities ought to act. Many democrats are calling for new legislation to provide a new nation-wide standard on bump stocks. Most republicans have not endorsed legislation but are willing to review administrative regulation within the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency.

“ATF is pushing for a legislative approach rather than going through an administrative process,” said a House aid to the Washington Examiner. In the wake of the potential bump stock grab, gun shop owners are running low on inventory quickly.

Despite the high demand, many gun shops highly discourage the use of bump stocks claiming they increase the likelihood of jamming and inaccuracy.

“I will order them if someone wants one, but I highly discourage them from purchasing,” said Will Dance in an interview with CNN, a retailer with Red Hills Arms in Tallahassee, Florida.

Surprising many democrats and republicans, the National Rifle Association also announced publicly they are open to some sort of regulation on bump stocks. “The NRA believes that devices designed to allow semi-automatic rifles to function like fully-automatic rifles should be subject to additional regulations,” read a statement issued on Oct. 5.

The good news for bump stock advocates is that many gun-related tragedies have actually led to state legislatures passing looser gun laws. In 2015, Wisconsin eliminated its 48-hour waiting period for handgun purchases. In 2017, Florida expanded its “stand your ground law” that was supported by many firearm owners.

While many states have begun the process of regulating bump stocks, no new legislation has yet been passed, and much of the conversation has already slowed among lawmakers.