



# FACT SHEET: GHOST GUNS IN VERMONT

- **The Problem:** Ghost gun products are often sold anonymously, without licenses, background checks, serial numbers, or sale records. They are designed to allow anyone to quickly and easily build their own deadly weapons from unregulated and untraceable kits and components. And they are now a leading source of weapons for people who know they could not pass a background check—including minors—and those who wish to conceal their involvement in gun trafficking.

The core component of ghost gun kits is typically an “unfinished” firearm frame or receiver. The ghost gun industry will leave its products just unfinished enough to attempt to escape the definition of a “firearm” used in relevant state and federal gun safety laws—and to escape sale records, serial numbers, and background checks.

Bypassing these laws poses a significant threat to public safety. Federal and state laws in Vermont help keep people with significant histories of violence or domestic abuse from accessing guns and allow law enforcement to trace crime guns. Both of these measures are essential to preventing gun violence, yet ghost guns often render them useless.

**The ghost gun industry is especially dangerous in a state like Vermont, which has taken steps in recent years to strengthen its gun laws.** This includes universal background checks to prevent people who are legally disqualified from buying firearms. We have seen that people otherwise prohibited from buying firearms are often the most motivated to turn to ghost guns.

Ghost guns are constantly being recovered in communities across New England, and have sadly made their presence known in Vermont.

- In 2023, over a four-day period, Bennington police seized four ghost guns, along with 10,000 bags of fentanyl and large quantities of cocaine.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2023, a convicted felon in Rutland was charged with possessing a ghost gun after having purchased a Polymer80 ghost gun kit online.<sup>2</sup>
- A ghost gun was recovered at the scene of a 2022 shooting in Pownal, in a case where three individuals currently face trial on attempted murder charges.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Michael Albans, “Bennington PD struggling to keep up with drug influx into the community,” Bennington Banner, May 2, 2023, [https://www.benningtonbanner.com/local-news/bennington-pd-struggling-to-keep-up-with-drug-influx-into-the-community/article\\_d8985158-e91b-11ed-9046-b31c5bfd9bf3.html](https://www.benningtonbanner.com/local-news/bennington-pd-struggling-to-keep-up-with-drug-influx-into-the-community/article_d8985158-e91b-11ed-9046-b31c5bfd9bf3.html).

2. Mike Donoghue, “Rutland man pleads not guilty to ‘ghost gun’ charge,” Times Argus, December 1, 2023, [https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/rutland-man-pleads-not-guilty-to-ghost-gun-charge/article\\_7035ef09-f586-5ccd-87d0-9f6adcd5a79c.html](https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/rutland-man-pleads-not-guilty-to-ghost-gun-charge/article_7035ef09-f586-5ccd-87d0-9f6adcd5a79c.html).

3. Michael Albans, “Jury draw set for March in Pownal attempted murder gang shooting linked to Danby killing,” Manchester Journal, November 2, 2023, [https://www.manchesterjournal.com/local-news/pownal-vermont-attempted-murder-gang-shooting-jury-draw/article\\_16d4fa1e-7a7d-11ee-b41c-273fe6edbe09.html](https://www.manchesterjournal.com/local-news/pownal-vermont-attempted-murder-gang-shooting-jury-draw/article_16d4fa1e-7a7d-11ee-b41c-273fe6edbe09.html).

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► **The Solution:** Recent executive actions by the Biden administration have classified *some* ghost gun products as firearms, but it's critical that Vermont pass a strong state law to ensure that key ghost gun products not covered by current federal regulations are treated the same way every other firearm is treated under Vermont law. This will ensure that regardless of any future developments at the federal level under subsequent administrations, or any outlier decisions from federal courts, Vermont residents will be protected by a comprehensive law that is enforceable by the state.

Reforms should aim to:

- Ensure that all firearms, whether the frames/receivers are completed or unfinished, are engraved with a serial number prior to sale.
- Prohibit the manufacture of a firearm, frame, or receiver, including by a 3D printer, unless the firearm is engraved with a federal serial number by a federal firearm licensee.
- Prohibit the possession of unserialized firearms and both completed or unfinished frames/receivers after a delayed implementation period.

**These regulations will ensure that the ghost gun crisis does not undo the progress that Vermont has made in protecting its residents and preventing gun violence.**

