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March 21, 2023

Representative Jason Kropf  
900 Court Street NE, H-491  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Kropf:

On February 22, 2022 deputies from the Columbia County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant on a rural property outside of Rainier. Police located two loaded and fully-functional AR-style "ghost guns," lacking in any markings or serial numbers, in the property owner's truck. Nearby, police found a storage container that had been repurposed as a ghost gun manufacturing work shop containing firearm parts and accessories. In the home, deputies discovered a drill press and additional parts required to make homemade AR-15-style rifles.

Fortunately, this suspect was already on felony probation when this search was conducted, so the deputies arrested him for Felon in Possession of a Firearm and probation violations. But if not a felon, or had the police found him with only ghost gun parts as opposed to completed rifles, our enforcement ability that day would have been severely limited and the public would face a serious safety risk. This particular suspect had prior arrests for stalking, assault, and unlawful use of a weapon for shooting at his neighbors. His ability to distribute these homemade weapons throughout the community let alone possess them himself was highly dangerous.

If this suspect could procure so many ghost gun precursor parts and successfully manufacture multiple semiautomatic rifles, then many others have the same capability to surreptitiously manufacture weapons and distribute them through unregulated channels. Not only do ghost guns present a risk because they are more easily accessible by dangerous people, they also inhibit law enforcement's ability to investigate gun crimes, decreasing the likelihood that grieving families will see justice served for the people that kill their loved ones.

We need updated firearms laws that are capable of confronting the very real threat that comes from the increased availability of undetectable firearms. There is no telling how many dangerous people could access these untraceable weapons if our laws are not upgraded to confront this new reality.

Sincerely,

  
Jeff Auxier