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Firearm and Gun Violence Prevention Glossary

Shotgun — a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder, and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed shotgun shell to fire through a smooth bore either a number of ball shot or a single projectile for each single pull of the trigger.

Rifle — a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder, and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed metallic cartridge to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger.

Firearms Dealer — any person, not a manufacturer or importer, engaged in the business of selling, renting, leasing, or loaning firearms and shall include pawnbrokers who accept firearms as collateral for loans.

Semi-Automatic Firearm — any firearm designed to fire one bullet with one trigger squeeze, then automatically reload the chamber with a cartridge from a magazine and be ready to fire again.

Assault Weapon — an assault weapon can be defined as any semi-automatic rifle, handgun, or shotgun with a detachable magazine and one or more "military-style features."

Brady Background Check — when an individual goes to a federally licensed firearm retailer to purchase a gun, the retailer must contact the FBI to run a background check on the purchaser. The FBI then consults the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) to determine if the buyer is a prohibited purchaser.

Bump Stock — an attachment that allows a semi-automatic rifle to mimic a fully automatic weapon's "cyclic firing rate to mimic nearly continuous automatic fire," according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

NICS — National Instant Criminal Background Check System - The NICS is a national system that checks available records on persons who may be disqualified from receiving firearms. The FBI developed the system through a cooperative effort with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and local and state law enforcement agencies. The NICS is a computerized background check system designed to respond instantly on most background check inquiries, so sellers receive an almost immediate response.



The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Reform Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.



Fully Automatic Firearm – an automatic firearm continuously fires rounds as long as the trigger is pressed or held and there is ammunition in the magazine/chamber.

Prohibited Purchaser – federal law prohibits the purchase and possession of firearms by people who fall within certain categories, such as convicted felons, domestic abusers, and people with specific kinds of mental health histories.

Federal Firearms License: a license in the United States that enables an individual or a company to engage in a business pertaining to the manufacture or importation of firearms and ammunition, or the interstate and intrastate sale of firearms.