



JOSH SHAPIRO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2019

[View Online](#)

AG Shapiro, Gov. Wolf: 80% Receivers Are Firearms

Harrisburg, PA – Amidst a gun violence epidemic, Attorney General Josh Shapiro and Gov. Tom Wolf today [outlined](#) a new legal opinion from the Attorney General’s Office addressing the classification of “80% receivers,” which are most commonly used to make unserialized “ghost guns.” The opinion clarifies that, under the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act, these receivers are properly classified as firearms in Pennsylvania. This opinion, in accordance with the Commonwealth Attorneys Act, was issued to tackle the growing use of untraceable “ghost guns” and to further assist law enforcement officials to protect people and save lives.

A receiver, or frame, is the part of the firearm that houses the internal firing components. A gun cannot function without a receiver. A so-called “80% receiver” is one that is in an incomplete stage of manufacture; however, they can easily be turned into a [functioning firearm](#). 80% receivers are commonly unserialized. Until this opinion, there was uncertainty over whether 80% receivers can be regulated the same way as fully finished receivers. This gap in enforcement made these weapons easily accessible to criminals and those prohibited from purchasing firearms in the Commonwealth, including convicted felons and domestic abusers.

“My Office is taking the initial step of clarifying - through my official, legal opinion - that under Pennsylvania law, 80% receivers are firearms and can be treated, regulated, and enforced as such,” AG Shapiro said today during a Capitol news conference with Governor Wolf and the PA State Police. “The proliferation of these untraceable weapons strikes at the heart of our public safety, hindering law enforcement’s ability to protect our communities.

“If we don’t recognize that 80 percent receivers are firearms under Pennsylvania law, we are creating a giant loophole that allows criminals to skirt our agreed-upon laws that keep people safe,” said Gov. Wolf. “Changing this classification will not hurt legal, responsible gun owners – This change will stop criminals, terrorists and other people who can’t pass a background check from acquiring a gun through the loophole.”

Following this legal opinion issuance, the Office of Attorney General and Pennsylvania State Police will now work together on an implementation strategy to ensure that these weapons do not end up in the hands of criminals, convicted felons or prohibited purchasers.

Currently, 80% receivers can be purchased at gun shows, brick-and-mortar vendors and online. The buyer can assemble the weapon soon after purchase and have a live, untraceable gun at their disposal. In Philadelphia alone, over 100 ghost guns have been recovered that started as 80% receivers.

Shapiro issued his opinion today on 80% receivers at the request of the Pennsylvania State Police, who asked for formal guidance on how to classify these products under Pennsylvania's Uniform Firearms Act. Under the Commonwealth Attorney Act, any state agency or the governor can formally request the Office of Attorney General to interpret state law. After an examination of a statute, the expressed opinion is binding on the agency requesting it.

"Under the statute, it doesn't matter that these are not fully finished products," The Attorney General said. "They are receivers and, therefore, they are firearms. Pure and simple."

Shapiro said this opinion does not make any firearm products illegal, and by issuing it, his office is not infringing on lawful gun owners' Second Amendment rights.

"We're here because too many criminals have taken advantage of these loopholes to gain access to guns that they should never have had to begin with. We've read the same headlines, had the same emotional reactions, submitted to the same numbness, rinse and repeat," Shapiro said. "Hopefully, with today's interpretation, we can add onto the wide array of efforts my Office – in partnership with entities like the Pennsylvania State Police and the Governor's Office – have undertaken to save lives."

MEDIA CONTACT: J.J. Abbott, 717-783-1116

###