

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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July 29, 2016

The Honorable Maura Healey
Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108-1508

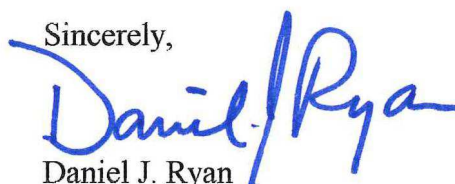
Dear Attorney General Healey:

As a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, I want to thank you for your courage and diligence in a long overdue interpretation of the Commonwealth's definition of assault weapons, duplicates and copy cats. Our federal system of government, along with its system of checks and balances allows for and in some cases requires one segment of our vast system to move the ball down the field when there is an obstinate refusal by one level or branch of government to address issues of national importance. In this case, the federal government has refused to address the lack of a national standard as to the definition of an assault weapon and to regulate the inter-state commerce thereof. This lack of action has drastically hampered our state's ability to regulate our own security despite great efforts by the legislature, chief executive, law enforcement, municipal leaders, community activists and even gun-owners to bring our gun laws up to date.

Your interpretations of the Massachusetts Assaults Weapons Ban offered an appropriate explanation to the lapses in consistency in our national gun laws. This national lack of action has allowed for "state compliant" versions of otherwise banned weapons. Your guidelines have helped clarify the intent of both the federal assault weapons ban, which has since sunset, and our own state law. In layman's terms, you have successfully laid out the difference between how an assault weapon operates and how one looks. An esthetic change to an assault weapon does not change its lethality. Furthermore, it appears that these minor changes to the weapons at issue were done by manufacturers and retailers in a deliberate attempt to skirt the law in Massachusetts. Your decision to clarify and enforce these decades' old laws going forward rather than retro-actively was judicious and fair to the industry. In a reasonable world, where reasonable debate is possible, these courageous actions by your office would be considered a fair warning to an industry that has a national strangle-hold on reasonable debate.

But, these are not reasonable times. I support your willingness to proactively address the proliferation of assault weapons, an issue that the majority of citizens and even the majority of gun owners around the country want to see proactively addressed. It is my belief that the pushback to address this harrowing issue is fueled by a vocal minority of citizens that represent a vocal minority of gun owners. At this point we need to use every tool in the toolbox to move the national discourse on guns, particularly assault weapons, forward. I stand with you in your efforts to use the powers vested in the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General to interpret and enforce the laws put forth in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel J. Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Daniel" and last name "Ryan" clearly legible.

Daniel J. Ryan
State Representative
2nd Suffolk District