

SUPPRESSORS:

LET'S "SILENCE" THE POLITICS IN IOWA

BY MICHAEL WARE

SUPPRESSORS... While they are a common item to use, discuss, sell, and service in our shop, Iowans in general don't talk about them much. Iowans have been denied the ability to purchase and utilize this weapon muffler for decades. Unlike nearly 80% of the United States, Iowa listed them as "Offensive Weapons" in 1983 and placed them on the naughty list barring you from ownership.

The ATF refers to them as "Silencers" on their forms and paperwork, but we all know you can't silence the sonic crack of a bullet breaking the sound barrier. Most folks in the know refer to them as suppressors as such. These gadgets, while incapable of actually firing a bullet in the conventional sense of what constitutes a weapon, are serial numbered just like any weapon. They are commonly regulated items under ATF just like many other weapons.

We're essentially talking about a muffler for your gun. For example, the roar of a 747 during take off is just under 160 decibels and akin to the same sound pressure level of the average centerfire rifle. Most suppressors can remove about 30 decibels and tame that irreversible hearing damage down to around 130db. This sound pressure level would be

similar to that of a Harley Davidson roaring in your ear at full throttle. While the addition of a suppressor in a situation like this doesn't make your weapon 'hearing safe' to the point you can stop wearing ear protection, it certainly goes a long way towards it.

The facts are really simple. These are commonly used all over the United States on ranges, during hunting, and in competition. Many European nations require them just to hunt and without showing proof of suppressor use, these countries won't issue you a hunting tag. The decreased noise allows you to communicate better. Better communication is always a plus and number one on our safety list when we're at the range or hunting. How many of my friends have come back from fighting in the Middle East and gone to the VA for hearing aids? I've lost

track, so we don't need to debate the validity of hearing loss and how precious our hearing is.

The motion pictures, film, and television have created a persona around suppressors that has to be straightened out. Suppressors simply don't silence anything. While the folks gathering their intel from Hollywood may think otherwise, they simply aren't familiar with the facts. When we use a suppressor, we're allowing the hot gases and pressure to expand and fill a series of chambers known as baffles. The cooling and expansion of the gas dampens the sound. This is no different than the muffler on your truck. In fact Hiram Percy Maxim, son of the Maxim machine gun's inventor Hiram Stevens Maxim, designed the original suppressor for weaponry. Henry Ford picked up this invention in 1902 and it became the first vehicle muffler in following years. Cans, the slang term for suppressors contain no magic. There's no voodoo packed inside either. They are just a simple muffler and true gentlemen's attire.

The myths are wide spread in some circles. There is the silly notion around that the use of suppressors will somehow turn

you into a hit man. Heck, maybe you'll magically become a poacher. This hasn't happened in the 39 other states that respect their citizens with ownership, many of which surround Iowa.

I listened to a DNR person ramble on the other day about how these silent weapons caused an unsafe scenario. He was telling me there was no reason to own a soundless weapon and use it in hunting. After I reminded him that having manufactured, used, and sold suppressors for years coupled with testing them at the range and being downrange when they were fired in my direction, there was absolutely nothing silent about a screeching bullet, he continued.

It wasn't until I asked him if he was going to ban the use of bows that he actually stopped running his yap and thought for a moment. It was as if a light bulb had been switched on. For a brief moment he got it.

He actually understood the analogy, accepted the logic, knew he'd been incorrect, and that his judgment had been flawed. In typical "I'm smarter than you, cause I werk fer the

gubment" fashion, the light bulb quickly dimmed, and just as if he'd tripped over the truth and fallen down, he quickly jumped up and brushed himself off and discarded the facts as if nothing had ever happened. Oh well. You can't reason with all of them I thought as I giggled at him. The small gathering of other DNR folks that had surrounded me did get it though, and I know they understood. They might not have been able to say it in front of their boss, but they agreed with me.

The ownership process in states that allow cans is pretty straightforward. A friend sent me this information the other day

MOST SUPPRESSORS CAN REMOVE ABOUT 30 DECIBELS AND TAME THAT IRREVERSIBLE HEARING DAMAGE DOWN TO AROUND 130DB.

and it summarizes the flow of paperwork, prerequisites, and overall process pretty well:

Individuals, Corporations, and Trusts can legally own silencers in the following states:

AL, AK, AZ, AR, CO, CT, FL, GA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WV, WI, and WY.

Typically, it is akin to getting your permit to carry with some additions. The usual process includes submitting two simple forms, two sets of fingerprint cards, two passport photos, a citizenship declaration form, and a signature from a chief law enforcement officer in your home jurisdiction.

For an individual to legally purchase or possess a silencer, you must be a citizen of

the United States. You must be at least 21 years of age to purchase a silencer from a dealer. You must be at least 18 years of age to purchase a silencer from an individual on a Form 4 to Form 4 transfer (contingent on state laws). You must be at least 18 years of age to possess a silencer as a beneficiary of a trust or as a member of a corporation (contingent on state laws). You cannot be a felon. If you do not meet all five requirements, you may NOT legally obtain a silencer.

Steps to completing your ATF form 4 as an individual include obtaining the ATF Form 4 (5320.4) (Application for Tax Paid Transfer and Registration of Firearm) from your dealer in duplicate. Some information should be pre-filled by your dealer, such as the dealer's name and address, the model of the silencer you are purchasing, the overall length of the silencer, the caliber of the silencer, the serial number of the silencer, and the manufacturer's information. Make sure the dealer signs the appropriate fields. Remember to complete all information in duplicate. ATF is big on duplicate information, so many of my customers actually fill out a third set to retain so they have a copy of everything they are submitting to Uncle Sam.

You'll fill out the required information on the front of the form, including your name and address. Complete the back by answering the questions and stating the reason you are acquiring the silencer. Sign and date the back of the form. Again, remember to complete all information in duplicate. Affix a recent color passport-sized photograph of yourself on the back of each copy of the form. Acquire a signature of the chief law enforcement officer of your county or your local sheriff. Don't let this step scare you; this is a routine request. While you are at the station obtaining the required signature, ink up your fingers and get two copies of FBI fingerprint cards (FBI Form FD-258) that you will send in with the two duplicates of Form 4. If I remember correctly the fingerprint cards commonly asked for are the "blue" stock. So while many departments

have red or black forms, the 'blue' forms work the best for processing. Fill out the ATF Form 5330.20 (Certification of Compliance). This form does not have to be in duplicate.

Place both completed copies of Form 4, the two copies of FBI fingerprint cards, and the completed Certification of Compliance form in an envelope, along with a check or money order (payable to Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives) for \$200 and mail to the address listed on Form 4. I'd recommend that you use a check and not a money order so you can see when the ATF cashes your check. This is a great way to confirm if the form actually arrived and is being processed. Otherwise, you may just be waiting for two to nine months for approval, when, in fact, your paperwork never arrived.

After the ATF approves Form 4, they will put a stamp on one of the two copies you sent them and then send it to the dealer where you purchased the silencer. The dealer will then notify you that the paperwork has returned and that the silencer is ready to pick up. There is a similar process for Trusts and Corporation ownership that includes the list of prerequisites, photos, and fingerprint cards, etc. Lots of people set up 'gun trusts' and this is a good idea for your collection. I think it is a wise move to look into some sort of trust and future planning regardless. I've seen too many folks who don't have their affairs in order have their collections and valuables, regardless of size or value, end up in other places than they intended because they didn't act when they have the time and inclination. Don't put this off.

As you can see, no criminal is going to turn in photographs of him or herself, fingerprint cards, spend \$200 on a tax stamp, incur the costs of threading a barrel to accept the suppressor, spend a grand on the can itself, and then wait nine months for ATF to do their paperwork.

We get questions all the time about cans. Do they impact accuracy? All things being equal, the answer is no. Most quality

weapons and suppressors mate up nicely and we don't see routine accuracy issues. In some cases accuracy is increased, as the suppressor itself tends to reduce recoil. The point of impact you've been seeing on your target may shift when a can is added, so keep that in mind. We're asked often how long do they last. This depends on how they are used, but the vast majority will last several thousand rounds. We have some in the shop that have been used on short-barreled M16 variants for nearly 15,000 rounds and are still performing well. Cans tend to have a slight 'free bore' boost as the gases push the projectile a bit while passing through the bore – this equates to slight velocity increases, when most folks assume a can will cut velocity. In centerfire rifles we see anywhere from 25 to 45 feet per second increases in bullet speed at the muzzle.

Questions about cleaning come up from time to time as well. We see some cans that are capable of being taken apart for cleaning, but most aren't. Frankly, as the baffle material gets eroded, the can is adding back weight in the form of carbon and deposits. In response, we weigh our cans when they are new and record the weight. As the heavier material like the steel and titanium used for baffles is eroded the carbon is built up. The carbon while being added is lighter than the baffle material, so when we see a substantial net loss in can weight, we sonic clean them or dunk them in a solution. This happens over the course of thousands of rounds and not one trip to the range.

It is your turn Iowa. Let's make this work. NRA (The National Rifle Association), ASA (American Silencer Association), and IFC (The Iowa Firearms Coalition) have worked tirelessly on this at your request. The number of volunteers, members, and supporters of this movement are too many to list. It is high time we proudly join the overwhelming majority of the rest of the country and enjoyed these liberties. Come on in for the big win Iowans. I'm proud of you. 🇺🇸



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