

Senate Judiciary Committee

Brendan Bunnell 271-4063

SB 466-FN, relative to the possession of a firearm without a serial number.

Hearing Date: January 20, 2026

Time Opened: 2:26 p.m.

Time Closed: 2:41 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, Abbas, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Carson

Bill Analysis: This bill makes it a class A felony to change, alter, remove or obliterate the name of the maker, model, manufacturer's number, or other mark of identification on a firearm.

Sponsors:

Sen. Gannon

Sen. Birdsell

Sen. Lang

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Rosenwald

Rep. Harvey-Bolia

Rep. M. Pearson

Rep. L. Walsh

Who supports the bill: Senator Bill Gannon, Captain Bob Gravelle (Manchester PD), Elizabeth Sargent (NH Assoc. of Chiefs of Police), and David Jenkins.

Who opposes the bill: Daniel Richardson

Who is neutral on the bill: J.E. Simkin

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Gannon (SD-23), explained that the amendment to this bill would fundamentally alter its content to make it a felony to possess a firearm without a serial number. A prior version of the bill had sought to make it a felony to damage or alter the serial number on a firearm. He introduced Officer Bob Gravelle.

Captain Bob Gravelle, a member of the Manchester Police Department spoke in support of the bill. He stated that the legislation sought to improve the ability of Law Enforcement to carry out their duties by clearing up an existing discrepancy in the law.

- Stated that this bill would make it a class A felony to possess a firearm with destroyed identifying markings.

- Explained that stolen firearms were logged in a national database called the NCIC. This database is used by law enforcement to identify stolen firearms, the possession of which carries a penalty equivalent to a class A felony. He explained that the current penalty for possession of a firearm with a damaged serial number is equivalent to a class A misdemeanor, effectively rewarding the destruction of the serial number on a stolen firearm.
- Explained that serial numbers are important for tracking firearm transactions and that the anonymity of a damaged serial number made it impossible for law enforcement to track straw purchases and make further investigations. Concluded by arguing that holding criminals accountable can only make our state safer.
- Senator Altschiller asked for clarification on the change in wording within the amendment.
 - Senator Gannon answered that the amendment would change the felony to concern the possession of a firearm without a serial number. He explained that this was due to the uncertainty of whether the person in possession of a firearm with an altered serial number had been the one to remove the identifying marks.
- Senator Altschiller asked for clarification around which line of the bill was being altered.
 - Senator Gannon answered that it was within line three, where the wording was changed to include “no person shall possess” without the following words, “alter, remove, or obliterate.”
- Senator Altschiller asked whether adding the word “shall” after “possess” and retaining the rest of the sentence would be appropriate for the purposes of the bill.
 - Captain Gravelle answered that it would be and stated that the purpose of the bill was to target the possession of such a firearm without including who altered it.
- Senator Abbas asked if this bill would include “ghost guns” that were created without an original serial number or identifying marks.
 - Captain Gravelle answered that this bill would not include ghost guns and would only alter the penalty for the possession of a firearm that had originally featured a serial number.

- Senator Abbas asked if there was another law in New Hampshire that prohibited the possession of ghost guns.
 - Senator Gannon and Captain Gravelle confirmed that there was not, but that the possession of such firearms was prohibited by federal law.

J.E. Simkin, a firearms retailer expressed his concerns with the current state of the bill and argued that it required further amendments to make it more useful.

- Stated that the bill in this current form effectively replicated 18 U.S. Code Section 922, and explained that there was currently no federal regulation that required a firearms seller across State borders to include any documentation with the technical features of the firearm that they are selling. He stated that neither he nor a member of the ATF that he had spoken with knew of any uniform standard for keeping firearm records.
- Proposed that an amendment be introduced to recognize the lack of a serial number on some firearms prior to the Gun Control Act of 1968. He argued that there are millions of firearms that have never had a serial number but which are legal to possess. He stated that including this detail would reduce the risk for the owners of said firearms being engaged in the costly process of having to prove the legality of their ownership.
- Proposed that the word “knowingly” be inserted into the bill’s second line to read “knowingly to transport” instead. He stated that this would better align with federal law.
- Explained that many firearms possess serial numbers in areas not within sight. He relayed the story of one such firearm with an ivory grip that would have needed to be dismantled to view the serial number.
- Proposed that the bill include an exception for serial numbers damaged via natural corrosion. He argued that millions are made out of steel, which is liable to rust and damage the identifying markings. He relayed that he had once been offered to take possession of a firearm from a police department, but had refused as the serial number was rusted and he legally could possess it.
- Proposed that the bill include an exemption for law enforcement acting in performance of their duties. He argued that this would protect them from legal difficulties if they were required to seize a firearm without a serial number. He stated that the current unambiguous wording of the bill gave police officers no lawful authority to possess such a firearm.
- Expressed his skepticism for how many cases there are of persons charged with possession of the lack of a serial number and nothing else. He said that he

doubted their were many cases on account of the expenses for the investigators and prosecutors involved.

JT

Date Hearing Report completed: January 23, 2026