

CRIMINAL LAW

What States Are Glock Switches Legal In?

Understand the legal status of Glock switches. Learn why these firearm modifications are universally prohibited under federal law across the U.S.



[LegalClarity Team](#)

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Glock switches are small devices that can convert a semi-automatic Glock pistol into a fully automatic firearm. This modification allows the weapon to fire multiple rounds with a single pull of the trigger. Understanding the legal landscape surrounding these devices is important for anyone seeking information on firearm regulations in the United States.

Defining Glock Switches

A Glock switch is a compact mechanical device designed to attach to the rear of a Glock handgun's slide. Its function is to interfere with the internal trigger mechanisms, preventing them from resetting after each shot. This modification enables the pistol to fire continuously as long as the trigger is depressed, transforming it into a machine pistol. These devices are sometimes referred to as auto sears, giggle switches, or selector switches.

Federal Regulation of Glock Switches

Under federal law, Glock switches are classified as "machineguns" by the ATF, even if not installed on a firearm. This classification falls under the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934, which defines a machinegun as any weapon designed to shoot, or readily restored to shoot, automatically more than one shot by a single function of the trigger. The definition also includes any part designed and intended solely for converting a weapon into a machinegun.

The federal classification means that Glock switches are illegal for private citizens to possess, manufacture, or transfer without proper registration and licensing. The Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986 banned the civilian ownership of newly produced machine guns manufactured after May 19, 1986. Only certain licensed entities, such as military and law enforcement agencies, or federally registered manufacturers, can legally possess or handle these devices under strict ATF regulation.

State Approaches to Glock Switches

Due to their classification as machineguns under federal law, no U.S. state permits the legal possession or use of Glock switches for private citizens. The federal prohibition effectively makes these devices illegal nationwide. While some states may have their own specific laws prohibiting or regulating machineguns and conversion devices, these state laws typically align with or reinforce the existing federal prohibitions.

Many states have enacted their own legislation specifically outlawing Glock switches, often mirroring federal definitions and penalties. This growing trend reflects a concerted effort to address the increasing presence of these devices. Even in states where specific laws might not explicitly name “Glock switches,” the federal classification ensures their illegality. The federal framework establishes a baseline prohibition that all states must adhere to, regardless of their individual statutes.

Possession and Use Considerations

Possessing a Glock switch carries severe legal ramifications, as it is treated as possession of an unregistered machinegun under federal law. This offense is a serious federal felony. Penalties for conviction can include imprisonment for up to 10 years and fines up to \$250,000.

Even without intent to use the device in a crime, mere possession can lead to these significant consequences. A felony conviction also results in the permanent loss of firearm rights.