Buying or Transferring NFA Items in Connecticut: Why the Process Hasn't Changed

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If you've seen the headlines, you might think you can walk into a Connecticut gun shop and take a suppressor home the same day. You can't, at least not yet. On October 9, 2026, ATF stopped enforcing NFA registration for suppressors, short-barreled rifles (SBRs), short-barreled shotguns (SBSs) and "any other weapons" (AOWs). That change is federal. Connecticut's own laws didn't change, and they still depend on federal NFA approval. For Connecticut residents, buying or transferring an NFA item works the same way it did before: Form 4, fingerprints, approval, then pickup.

Why Connecticut is different

Connecticut is one of 15 states whose laws tie possession of NFA items to federal compliance. Under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-211, owning or possessing a suppressor or a sawed-off shotgun is a class D felony. The exception covers anyone "licensed or otherwise permitted by federal or state law."

The open question is whether ATF choosing not to enforce counts as being "permitted" by federal law. Nobody has said it does. ATF says it can't interpret state law. The Firearms Policy Coalition asked Attorney General William Tong on October 9 to stop enforcing the NFA-linked law, and no reply had been reported as of mid-October. Until that changes, an approved Form 4 remains the clearest proof that you're federally permitted. That's why dealers like Silencer Shop still list Connecticut as an "NFA state" where a Form 4 is required for suppressors and AOWs.

Step by step: how a Connecticut NFA transfer works today

Here's the process for buying a suppressor from a Connecticut dealer. SBSs and AOWs follow the same path, with the extra state checks noted in step 1.

1. **Confirm the item is legal in Connecticut.** Federal approval doesn't override state law. Suppressors can be owned, but not used for hunting. Most SBRs and many short shotguns are banned as assault weapons under Connecticut's feature rules. If the item is a firearm under state law, like an SBS, you also need your Connecticut pistol permit or long gun eligibility certificate, just as for any other long gun.
2. **Decide how you'll own it: as an individual or through a trust.** An individual owner is simplest. A gun trust lets more than one person legally possess the item, but every "responsible person" on the trust has to submit their own fingerprints, photo and a responsible person questionnaire (ATF Form 5320.23).
3. **Pay for the item and leave it with the dealer.** The item stays in the dealer's inventory until ATF approves the transfer. You can't take it home in the meantime.
4. **The dealer starts the eForm 4.** Your dealer fills in the item details (make, model, serial number) on ATF's eForms system and sends it to you to complete.
5. **Submit your fingerprints and photo.** You'll need fingerprints (electronic or on two FD-258 cards) and a recent 2×2-inch photo. Many shops can take both in the store or at a kiosk.
6. **Notify your chief law enforcement officer (CLEO).** Send a copy of your Form 4 to your local police chief, or to the state police if you don't have a local department. This is a notice, not a request: the CLEO doesn't have to sign or approve anything.
7. **Certify and sign the application.** Check your eForms account, confirm that everything is correct and e-sign. The tax is now $0, but the stamp is still issued with the approval.
8. **Wait for ATF approval.** ATF runs its background check and reviews the application. Wait times vary, so ask your dealer for the current estimate.
9. **Pick it up.** Once the Form 4 is approved, return to the dealer, complete Form 4473 and take your item home.
10. **Keep your approved Form 4.** Store a copy in a safe place and carry one when you have the item away from home, such as at the range. In Connecticut, that approval is your proof that you're permitted under § 53a-211.

A few related situations follow the same logic:

- **Building your own (Form 1):** Get an approved Form 1 before you start making the item. The same § 53a-211 reasoning applies.

- **Moving to Connecticut with NFA items:** Make sure each item is registered and legal under Connecticut law before it comes into the state. For SBRs and SBSs, file a Form 20 before moving them across state lines.
- **Private sales:** NFA items have to be transferred through an approved Form 4. In Connecticut, run any private sale through a dealer.

Item by item in Connecticut

Item	Can you own one in CT?	Transfer process in CT
Suppressor	Yes, but no hunting with it (§ 26-75)	Form 4 approval before pickup; § 53a-211 applies
Short-barreled shotgun	Only if it isn't a state assault weapon	Form 4, plus Connecticut long gun eligibility; § 53a-211 applies
Short-barreled rifle	Rarely: a semi-auto centerfire rifle under 30 inches overall is an assault weapon	Form 4 (or Form 1), and only for configurations Connecticut allows
AOW	Restricted; check the assault weapon definitions	Form 4 before pickup
Machine gun	Only pre-1986 transferable guns, and select-fire guns are assault weapons in CT	Full NFA process, unchanged federally, plus state registration within 24 hours and every July 1 (§ 53-202)

Machine guns and destructive devices were never part of the October change. They still carry the $200 tax and full federal registration.

Why registering is still the smart move

Even setting Connecticut aside, ATF's change is an enforcement policy, not a repeal. A future administration could reverse it. ATF has warned that owners of unregistered items wouldn't automatically be grandfathered in if that happened, and the law generally doesn't allow registering an item after the fact (Legal Insurrection). Filing a Form 4 now costs nothing in tax and protects you under both federal and Connecticut law.

This could change if the General Assembly removes the NFA references from state law, or if the Attorney General says ATF's non-enforcement satisfies § 53a-211. Until one of those happens, assume the process hasn't changed. This post is general information, not legal advice. Talk to a Connecticut firearms attorney about your situation.

Sources

- Silencer Shop: NFA Ruling FAQ
- AmmoLand: State NFA Laws After ATF's Registration Retreat
- Popular Suppressors: State Suppressor Rules After the NFA Ruling
- Rifle Configurator: Connecticut Suppressor Laws
- Giffords Law Center: Machine Guns in Connecticut
- Legal Insurrection: ATF Ends Suppressor Registration Enforcement

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