1 GERMAIN D. LABAT (SBN 203907) germain.labat@gmlaw.com 2 PUNEET BHULLAR (SBN 329733) puneet.bhullar@gmlaw.com 3 GREENSPOON MARDER LLP 1875 Century Park East, Suite 1900 4 Los Angeles, California 90067 Telephone: (323) 880-4520 5 Facsimile: (954) 771-9264 6 JAMES J. McGUIRE (New York SBN 2106664) 7 (Pro Hac Vice Application Pending) iames.mcguire@gmlaw.com 8 MICHAEL MARRON (New York SBN 5146352) (Pro Hac Vice Application Forthcoming) 9 michael.marron@gmlaw.com GREENSPOON MARDER LLP 10 590 Madison Avenue, Suite 1800 11 New York, New York 10022 Telephone: (212) 524-5040 12 Facsimile: (212) 524-5050 13 Counsel to Defendant Polymer80, Inc. 14 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 15 FOR THE COUNTY OF ORANGE 16 FRANCISCO GUDINO CARDENAS, an Case No. JCCP 5167 17 individual; and [Coordinated Cases CIVDS 1935422 date 18 TROY MCFADYEN, in his Individual Capacity, filed 11/14/2019, and 30-2019-01111797and as Heir at Law and Successor in Interest to *CU-PO-CJC* date filed 11/14/2019 19 MICHELLE MCFADYEN, Deceased, ET AL. [Assigned for all purposes to Hon. William 20 Plaintiffs, Claster, Department CX 1041 21 VS. Filing Date: March 22, 2021 Trial Date: Not Yet Set 22 GHOST GUNNER INC., d/b/a GHOSTGUNNER.NET; DEFENSE MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND 23 DISTRIBUTED d/b/a GHOSTGUNNER.NET; AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF CODY WILSON d/b/a GHOSTGUNNER.NET; MOTION OF POLYMER80, INC. 24 BLACKHAWK MANUFACTURING GROUP FOR DISMISSAL, ATTORNEYS' INC., d/b/a 80PERCENTARMS.COM; RYAN FEES, AND OTHER SANCTIONS, 25 BEEZLEY and BOB BEEZLEY d/b/a PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA CODE RBTACTICALTOOLING.COM; GHOST OF CIVIL PROCEDURE SECTION 128.7 26 AMERICA LLC, d/b/a GHOSTGUNS.COM; GHOST GUNS LLC, d/b/a GRID DEFENSE and 27 GHOSTRIFLES.COM; JUDGGERNAUT RES. ID: 73664942 28

1	TACTICAL INC. d/b/a JTACTICAL.COM; MFY TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS LLC, d/b/a
2	5DTACTICAL.COM; TACTICAL GEAR HEADS LLC, d/b/a 80-LOWER.COM; AR-
3	15LOWERRECEIVERS.COM and 80LOWERJIG.COM; JAMES TROMBLEE, JR.,
4	d/b/a USPATRIOTARMORY.COM; INDUSTRY ARMAMENT INC., d/b/a
5	AMERICANWEAPONSCOMPONENTS.COM; THUNDER GUNS LLC, d/b/a
6	THUNDERTACTICAL.COM; POLYMER80, INC.; and DOES 2 through 100, inclusive,
7	Defendants.
8	Defendants.
9	
10	INTRODU
11	INTRODE
	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80
12	
12 13	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80
12 13 14	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support
12 13 14 15	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking d
12 13 14 15 16	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking d sanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel. For remainder of the record of this matter, this Motion is
12 13 14 15 16	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking d sanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel. For remainder of the record of this matter, this Motion i it.
112 113 114 115 116 117 118	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking d sanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel. For remainder of the record of this matter, this Motion is
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking d sanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel. For remainder of the record of this matter, this Motion i it.
111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 21	Defendant Polymer80, Inc. ("Polymer80 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7,1 seeking disanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel. For remainder of the record of this matter, this Motion is it. PRELIMINARY

23

24

25

26

27

28

Date: January 14, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m. Dept: CX104

Honorable William Claster

TRODUCTION

lymer80" or "Company") respectfully submits this support of its motion ("Motion"), pursuant to California eeking dismissal of this action, attorneys' fees, and other nsel. For all of the reasons set forth below and in the Motion is meritorious, and the Court should entirely grant

INARY STATEMENT

Motion are few and largely undisputed. In November rampage that killed or injured a number of persons. In November 2019, aggrieved plaintiffs commenced the nearly identical McFadyen and Cardenas actions arising out of that rampage, lodging the same six causes of action in the two cases against numerous defendants. Thereafter, said plaintiffs added Polymer80 as a defendant in both, and the actions were eventually coordinated for discovery purposes in this Court. To this day, neither

¹ Polymer80 emphasizes that this Motion is not a demurrer and, accordingly, reserves its right to file a demurrer in accordance with the Court's recent ruling and direction as to the timing and contents of all defendants' demurrers.

Complaint whispers a word specifically about the Company beyond naming it as a defendant. Nor does either Complaint identify what specific items or products of Polymer80 (or, indeed, of any defendant) Mr. Neal wrongfully utilized in November 2017. Plainly, counsel to plaintiffs in both proceedings have been unable or unwilling to determine the source(s) of Mr. Neal's guns. Yet, they have seen fit to sue in blunderbuss fashion a significant portion of the supposedly relevant and responsible industry upon a legal hypothesis founded completely upon probability, speculation, and "market share liability." To add insult to injury, the many dubious averments in the Complaints are asserted, in substantial part, upon "information and belief."

After scrutinizing the Complaints, studying the publicly available police photographs depicting the rifles apparently used by Mr. Neal in November 2017, seeking expert advice with respect to those photographs, and examining the governing California law, counsel to Polymer80 in two letters, both dated August 27, 2021, ("August 27 Letters"), advised counsel to plaintiffs in crystalline language that "Mr. Neal did not perform, and could not have possibly performed, his acts with or through the use of any Company product." Indeed, the rifles depicted in those police photographs were unequivocally *not* built from or connected with Polymer80 products of any kind for two major reasons, both of which could easily have, and thus should have, been ascertained by plaintiffs' counsel before initiating these cases against Polymer80:

- The first reason was and is that the subject police photographs reveal rifles with lower receivers unquestionably made from metal. However, Polymer80 does *not* make or distribute, and *never* has made or distributed, any such metal part or product.
- The second reason was and is that the rifles shown in those photographs do *not* bear the distinctive "P80" or "Polymer80" markings/logos placed on every rifle built from a relevant Polymer80 product.

As a result, counsel to Polymer80 asked that counsel to plaintiffs withdraw the Complaints. Plaintiffs' counsel elected not to respond and stood by the Complaints. As such, some four months later, counsel to Polymer80 served a draft of this Motion, along with supporting Declarations from a highly experienced and qualified expert (a former federal government firearms agent) and a senior Company Executive Vice President and demanded that the Complaints be withdrawn pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7. The twenty-one (21) day "safe harbor" required by that provision has now come and gone. Still, those grievously defective Complaints against Polymer80 persist. Consequently, the Company has had no choice but to file this Motion.

As illustrated below and upon the background summarized above, plaintiffs and their counsel *never* had a good faith basis to name Polymer80 in either action. Nor was any "inquiry reasonable under the circumstances" conducted before the actions were filed. Nor did plaintiffs' counsel after receipt of the August 27 Letters, as they "must" have done under California law, take "into account [the Company's] evidence." Thus, as we also proceed to establish herein, the pending Complaints are "legally and factually frivolous" as to Polymer80 and should be dismissed forthwith, with prejudice. And, in the demonstrably egregious and tawdry premises, the Court has ample discretion and record evidence with which to seriously sanction plaintiffs and their counsel, for whose conduct thus far as to Polymer80 there is simply no excuse.

RELEVANT FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

A. Plaintiffs Filed Nearly Identical Complaints In November 2019 Against The Same Thirteen Named Defendants (But Not Polymer80) As To Kevin Neal's Despicable November 2017 "Rampage Shooting Spree."

On or about November 13-14, 2017, Mr. Neal is alleged to have tragically "engaged in a rampage shooting spree" that "killed or injured [p]laintiffs or their loved ones." *McFadyen* Compl. ¶¶ 13, 78.² On November 14, 2019, the *McFadyen* plaintiffs filed an action in the Superior Court of California for San Bernardino County, and the *Cardenas* plaintiff filed another in the Superior Court of California for Orange County, against the same thirteen (13) named defendants (as well as fifty (50) "Does"). Both proceedings alleged the same six causes of action in connection with said "shooting spree": (i) negligence, (ii) negligence *per se*, (iii) negligent entrustment, (iv) public nuisance, (v) violation of Business and Professions Code Section 17200 (unfair and unlawful sales practices), and (vi) contravention of Business and Professions Code Section 17200 (unfair marketing tactics). The *McFadyen* and *Cardenas* actions were eventually coordinated for discovery purposes under Docket Number JCCP 5167.

At bottom, the now-coordinated Complaints aver that defendants bear responsibility for Mr. Neal's conduct, because they purportedly manufactured, distributed, and/or sold "kits and firearms parts that are easily assembled by the purchaser into fully functioning weapons, including AR-15 style assault weapons . . . to California residents leading up to November 2017." *McFadyen* Compl.

² Citations and references to the "McFadyen plaintiffs," "McFadyen Complaint," and "McFadyen action" relate to the case initiated by plaintiffs Troy McFadyen, et al., in the Superior Court of California for the County of San Bernardino, Docket Number CIVDS 1935422. Citations and references to the "Cardenas plaintiff," "Cardenas Complaint," and "Cardenas action" relate to the case brought by plaintiff Francisco Gudino Cardenas in the Superior Court of California for the County of Orange, Docket Number 30-2019-01111797-CU-PO-CJC. Insofar as the two actions have been coordinated and their respective plaintiffs and pleadings proffer nearly identical theories of liability against defendants, they hereinafter are referred to in the aggregate as the "Complaints" and "Actions."

¶¶ 2, 11; Cardenas Compl. ¶¶ 2, 11. And, plaintiffs maintain that Mr. Neal "used these parts/kits to assemble at least two AR-15 style 'ghost gun' rifles barred under California's prohibition on assault weapons." See McFadyen Compl. ¶¶ 13, 96; Cardenas Compl. ¶¶ 13, 80.³ However, these Complaints do not specifically identify which of defendants' products Mr. Neal supposedly used. Instead, plaintiffs expressly concede that "[i]t is unknown how and where Neal acquired the 'ghost gun' parts/kits used to assemble the weapons used in the attack," and that "it may be impossible to determine the exact manufacturer(s)/seller(s) of the 'ghost gun' parts/kits Neal used to assemble the AR-15 style 'ghost gun' rifles used in the attack." McFadyen Compl. ¶ 98; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 82. Moreover, the subject Complaints do not allege that plaintiffs undertook any investigation or efforts to identify the source of the "two AR-15 style semiautomatic rifles" that Mr. Neal "was in possession of and used . . . [d]uring his rampage." McFadyen Compl. ¶ 96; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 80.

Unable (or unwilling) to determine the source(s) of Mr. Neal's rifles, plaintiffs have sweepingly sued a large portion of the entire parts/kits industry upon a legal hypothesis wholly tethered to probability and market share liability and largely asserted upon information and belief. Indeed, plaintiffs allege merely (upon information and belief) that "there is a substantial probability that one or more of the Defendants sold Neal" and "shipped... to Neal's California residence... one or more 'ghost gun' parts/kits used to assemble the AR-15 style rifles used in the attack." McFadyen Compl. ¶¶ 106-07 (emphasis supplied); Cardenas Compl. ¶¶ 90-91 (emphasis supplied). That "information and belief" as to this "substantial probability" is founded, in turn, upon a further averment, itself tendered "upon information and belief," that defendants "in aggregate, were responsible for manufacturing and/or selling a substantial percentage of all 'ghost gun'

³ Plaintiffs also allege that defendants "designed, advertised, [and] marketed" these so-called "'ghost gun' kits/parts" to "criminals, killers, and others whose possession of firearms pose an unacceptably high threat of injury to others" by "intentionally emphasiz[ing] that 1) their products can be used to assemble untraceable weapons and 2) enable the purchaser to evade background checks and interaction with [a Federal Firearms Licensee]." *McFadyen* Compl. ¶¶ 4, 7, 11; *Cardenas* Compl. ¶¶ 4, 7, 11.

parts/kits enabling assembly of AR-15 style 'ghost gun' rifles which entered into California leading up to and during November 2017." *McFadyen* Compl. ¶ 105; *Cardenas* Compl. ¶ 89. Thus, plaintiffs endeavor to hold all defendants liable in the "aggregate" on a market-share construct owing to the purported fungibility of defendants' products. In this respect, the Complaints allege as follows:

"Ghost gun" parts/kits that can be used to assemble unserialized AR-15 style rifles are fungible products. Such parts/kits share the same core characteristics and present an equivalent risk of danger to members of the public like PLAINTIFFS. These products provide dangerous parties like NEAL with an identical capability to possess untraceable assault weapons without going through an FFL and in violation of California's assault weapons ban.

McFadyen Compl. ¶ 108; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 92.

Nonetheless, plaintiffs tacitly acknowledge that their market-share and fungibility-based legal theory is infirm, insofar as they know that specific defendants *must* have proximately caused the cited harm for the injury to be legally cognizable. Therefore, plaintiffs assert, as they are constrained to do, that "[w]hichever Defendant or Defendants are responsible, either directly or as an accomplice, for selling Neal one or more 'ghost gun' parts/kits in violation of one or more statutes including, at minimum, California's assault weapons ban, breached the standard of care imposed by statute." McFadyen Compl. ¶ 137; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 118. Accord, McFadyen Compl. ¶ 155 ("Whichever Defendant or Defendants sold or shipped one or more 'ghost gun' parts/kits... to Neal... were... negligently entrusting these one or more items."); Cardenas Compl. ¶ 133.4

⁴ See also, e.g., McFadyen Compl. ¶¶ 117-27 (alleging that "the actions and conduct of Defendants, which granted Neal access to . . . dangerous weapons" caused Plaintiffs' harm); Cardenas Compl. ¶¶ 101-08; McFadyen Compl. ¶ 179 ("Defendants' unlawful, negligent and/or intentional creation and maintenance of the public nuisance directly and proximately caused significant harm, including serious physical injury and associated harm to Plaintiffs that is different from the harm suffered by other members of the public"); Cardenas Compl. ¶ 154; McFadyen Compl. ¶ 185 ("By selling to Neal . . . 'ghost gun' parts/kits . . . Defendants engaged in business practices that were unlawful, immoral, unethical, oppressive, and unscrupulous"); Cardenas Compl. ¶ 160; McFadyen Compl. ¶ 5 [sic] ("[H]ad Defendants not violated California's prohibition on such unethical and unlawful marketing and business practices, Neal could not have acquired the parts/kits used to assemble his AR-15 style 'ghost gun' rifles or used these weapons to harm Plaintiffs."); Cardenas Compl. ¶ 170.

18

27 28

Notably, there is *not one* allegation in either of the pending Complaints specifically concerning Polymer80, its products, or its purported actions.⁵ Nor could there have been. The Company was not initially named in either of the now-coordinated Actions but was later added by and through amendments in both as "Doe 1." But tellingly, plaintiffs have not since then amended those Complaints to add any averment (or anything) specific to Polymer80 and have elected to proceed solely upon their allegations against "Does 1-100," which state, *inter alia*, as follows:

> PLAINTIFFS are informed and believe and thereon allege that each of the DEFENDANTS designated herein as a DOE is negligently, intentionally, or in some other manner, responsible for the events and happenings herein referred to and negligently, intentionally, or in some other manner, caused injury and damages proximately thereby to the PLAINIFFS [SIC] as herein alleged.

McFadyen Compl. ¶ 48; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 32. As will be further explicated, upon these scant allegations plaintiffs cannot possibly responsibly maintain their "belie[f]" that the Company is in any way "responsible" for the events or injuries here.

Polymer80 Is A Purveyor Of Gun-Related Products, Components, And Accessories That Mr. Neal Definitely *Did Not* Use During His 2017 Shooting Rampage, As Anyone, Particularly Plaintiffs' Counsel, Could Have Easily Determined And Verified By And Through Multiple Independent Methods.

Polymer80 is a Dayton, Nevada-based entity that designs, develops, and manufactures innovative gun-related products, components, and aftermarket accessories. A core principle of the Company's business is the empowerment of its customers to exercise their constitutional rights to gun ownership and to enjoy lawful engagement with its products. A material part of Polymer80's commercial activities is the distribution of components "that provide ways for [its] customer[s] to participate in the build process, while expressing their right to bear arms," as enshrined in the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. See About Polymer80, https://www.polymer80.com/about-us (last accessed November 19, 2021).

⁵ This is in stark contrast to other defendants, whose websites counsel to plaintiffs quoted and even provided pictures of in the Complaints. See McFadyen Compl. ¶ 73; Cardenas Compl. ¶ 57.

Lest there be any uncertainty, the centerpiece of this Motion is the unassailable fact that the unidentified AR-15 style rifles that Mr. Neal used and the police recovered were unequivocally and definitely not built from Polymer80 kits or components. This fact can be -and should long ago have been -- ascertained through an elementary inquiry -- simply by studying the photographs the police took of those rifles and comparing them with the Company's website. See photographs produced by the County of Tehama's Office of County Counsel ("Photographs"), copies of which are annexed to the concurrently filed Declaration of Germain D. Labat, Esq., dated December 9, 2021, (Labat Declaration") as Exhibit A.

Two crucial realities buttress this dispositive fact. The first is that the Photographs reflect rifles with lower receivers made from metal. Polymer80 does not make, or distribute, and has **never made or distributed, such metal products.** Just by looking at the Photographs, an independent firearms consultant who spent approximately fifteen years working for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Richard Vasquez, has determined that Mr. Neal's unidentified rifles were not made from polymer but from metal. See Declaration of Richard Vasquez, dated November 19, 2021, ("Vasquez Declaration"), a copy of which is annexed to the Labat Declaration as Exhibit B, ¶¶ 2, 6-8, at pp. 2-10.6 Moreover, Polymer80 Executive Vice President Daniel L. McCalmon has stated under penalties of perjury that the Company has never manufactured, distributed, sold, advertised, or marketed metallic or aluminum lower-receiver-style components for AR-15 type rifles, either alone or as part of any "kit." See Declaration of Daniel Lee McCalmon, dated November 19, 2021, ("McCalmon Declaration"), a copy of which is annexed to the Labat Declaration as Exhibit C, ¶¶ 1-3, at p. 2. Mr. McCalmon further testified that "[a] review of the Company's website clearly demonstrates, and would demonstrate, this fact." *Id.* ¶ 3, at p. 2.

28

⁶ Mr. Vasquez also determined from the Photographs that Mr. Neal used a handgun manufactured by Glock and a metalbased rifle manufactured by Bushmaster. See id. at ¶¶ 6-8, pp. 3-10. Obviously, these are not Polymer80 products, and the Complaints do not allege that they were manufactured by any current defendant.

2

3

4

The second key reality is that the Photographs depict rifles that do not bear important hallmarks of every rifle made from the Company products, namely, a distinctive "P80" or "Polymer80" marking or logo. Mr. McCalmon has testified that every single Company AR-15 product somewhere contains a "P80" or "Polymer80" marking. Id. ¶ 4, at p. 2. And, because the Photographs feature rifles that do not, those rifles cannot have been (and were not) built by or from Company components. Id. ¶ 6, at p. 3. Furthermore, Mr. McCalmon has testified that Polymer80 AR-15 products have special aesthetics that, although perhaps not easily discernible to a lay-person, do not exist on the rifles in the Photographs. *Id.* Accordingly, Mr. McCalmon has asserted with 100% certainty that the unidentified AR-15 style rifles that Mr. Neal used, as shown in the Photographs, were and are *not* Company products. *Id.* Similarly, Mr. Vasquez has testified that when reviewing the Photographs he "did not observe any firearms bearing a mark of 'P80' or 'Polymer80.'" Vasquez Decl. ¶ 9, at p. 10. Owing to this fact, and his observation "from a review of the Photographs that the unidentified rifles police recovered after Kevin Neal's shooting spree have lower receivers that appear to be made from metal, not polymer," Mr. Vasquez has similarly "conclude[d] that the unidentified AR-15 style rifles . . . are not Company products." *Id.* ¶¶ 8-10, at pp. 9-10.

C. Long Ago, Polymer80 Warned Plaintiffs' Counsel That The Company Was And Is Not A Proper Party To The Actions, Because The Rifles That Mr. Neal Used And That The Police Recovered Had Metallic Receivers, And That The Company Has Never Made Or Sold Any Such Products.

Over three months ago, counsel to Polymer80 sent the August 27 Letters to both counsel to the *McFadyen* plaintiffs and counsel to the *Cardenas* plaintiff, explaining that there is not, and never has been, any "good faith basis upon which to commence and/or prosecute [the Actions] against Polymer80" and "demand[ing] that [they] cause [them] to be voluntarily dismissed forthwith." *See* Letter from James J. McGuire, Esq. to Gerald B. Singleton, Esq. and Ben Rosenfeld, Esq., dated August 27, 2021; and Letter from James J. McGuire, Esq. to Douglas Mudford, Esq., Estee Lewis,

24

26

28

Esq., Catie Barr, Esq., and Brandon Storment, Esq., dated August 27, 2021, copies of which are annexed to the Labat Declaration as Exhibit D. No such good faith basis existed upon commencement of the Actions or exists today, since "photographs of AR-15 style rifles used by Mr. Neal and recovered by the Tehama County Sheriff's Office . . . reveal that each of those rifles contained a plainly metallic (apparently aluminum) lower receiver" and "Polymer80 does not manufacture or distribute (and never has manufactured or distributed) metallic or aluminum lower receivers, either alone or as part of any 'kit.'" Id. at 2. Accordingly, the August 27 Letters asserted that "Mr. Neal did not perform, and could not have possibly performed, his acts with or through the use of any Company product." *Id.* In addition, counsel to the Company further stated that the extant evidence defeats any of plaintiffs' market share or fungibility liability theories. See id. at 2-3. As a result, these Letters made clear that plaintiffs and their counsel had (and have) violated their legal obligations pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7(b)(3). See id. at 3-4. Therefore, counsel to the Company demanded that plaintiffs and their counsel "dismiss voluntarily" the Actions "against Polymer80" by September 7, 2021. *Id.* at 4.

On November 19, 2021, Polymer80 Served This Motion D. Upon Plaintiffs' Counsel, Providing Them With A 21-Day Safe Harbor Within Which To Withdraw The Complaints.

California Code of Civil Procedure ("CCP") Section 128.7(c)(1) provides for a 21-day safeharbor window, during which a plaintiff served with a Section 128.7 application may avoid the prospect of sanctions by withdrawing the subject pleading. Polymer80 served a draft of this Motion upon counsel to plaintiffs on November 19, 2021.

At 10:23 p.m. EST on December 9, 2021, literally late on the twentieth (20th) day of the safe harbor period and more than one hundred (100) days since the forwarding of the August 27 Letters, counsel to plaintiffs issued a letter raising certain objections and comments with respect to the draft of the Motion with which they had been served. Suffice to say, all of those objections and comments

were and are without merit and will be addressed in detail, as necessary and/or appropriate, in the proper manner at the proper time.

Thus and notwithstanding counsel's eleventh (11th) hour fifty-ninth (59th) minute, baseless apologia, the Complaints have not been withdrawn and remain on file. As such, this Motion timely and rightly ensued on December 15, 2021.

ARGUMENT

An attorney filing a pleading must make "an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances" to ensure that its "claims, defenses, and other legal contentions therein are warranted" and that "allegations and other factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery." CCP § 128.7(b)(2)-(3). Moreover, it is well settled that "to satisfy [the] obligation under [section 128.7] to conduct a reasonable inquiry to determine if his [or her] client's claim was well-grounded in fact, the attorney must take into account [the adverse party's] evidence." *Bucur v. Ahmad*, 244 Cal. App. 4th 175, 190 (2016) (alterations in original) ("*Bucur*"). Counsel to plaintiffs have utterly failed to satisfy this obligation, and so sanctions should issue. In sum, any objectively reasonable lawyer would have known at the time of adding Polymer80 to the Actions, and certainly after receipt of the August 27 Letters, that Mr. Neal's recovered rifles were *assuredly not* Polymer80 products. Consequently, there is and can be no factual or legal basis for the Company to be named in this case. Yet, those Complaints persist as of the filing of the instant Motion.

THE LEGAL STANDARD UPON A SANCTIONS MOTION PURSUANT TO CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE SECTION 128.7 IS SETTLED.

The Supreme Court of California has articulated that California Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7 "provides a remedy for improperly speculative pleading." *Bockrath v. Aldrich Chem. Co.*, 21 Cal.4th 71, 82 (1999) ("*Bockrath*"). That provision "enables courts to deter or punish frivolous filings which disrupt matters, waste time, and burden courts' and parties' resources." *In re Mark B.*, 149 Cal. App. 4th 61, 76 (2007). *Accord, In re Marriage of Falcone & Fyke*, 164 Cal. App. 4th 814, 826 (2008) ("The purpose of section 128.7 is to deter frivolous filings."). Indeed, Section 128.7 permits a California Court to "impose sanctions for filing a pleading if the court concludes the pleading . . . was indisputably without merit, either legally or factually" or, in other words, "legally and factually frivolous." *Peake v. Underwood*, 227 Cal. App. 4th 428, 439 (2014) ("*Peake*"). The Fourth District Court of Appeal has further elucidated the concept of frivolity as follows:

A claim is factually frivolous if it is not well grounded in fact and it is legally frivolous if it is not warranted by existing law or a good faith argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law. In either case, to obtain sanctions, the moving party must show the party's conduct in asserting the claim was objectively unreasonable. A claim is objectively unreasonable if any reasonable attorney would agree that [it] is totally and completely without merit.

Id. (internal citations and quotation marks omitted). *Accord*, *McCluskey v. Henry*, 56 Cal. App. 5th 1197, 1206 (2020) (same).

As a consequence, "when establishing a claim is factually or legally without merit under Code of Civil Procedure section 128.7, it is not necessary to show the party acted with an improper motive or subjective bad faith." *Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 449. A plaintiff's unreasonableness in filing and maintaining a claim is evaluated in connection with any new evidence that comes to the fore. "[E]ven though an action may not be frivolous when it is filed, it may become so if later-

acquired evidence refutes the findings of a prefiling investigation and the attorney continues to file papers supporting the client's claims. Thus, a plaintiff's attorney cannot 'just cling tenaciously to the investigation he had done at the outset of the litigation and bury his head in the sand." *Bucur*, 244 Cal. App. 4th at 190 (alterations in original), quoting *Childs v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 29 F.3d 1018, 1025 (5th Cir. 1994). Unquestionably, a Court finding a violation of Section 128.7(b) may award sanctions, including dismissal and attorneys' fees, from counsel. CCP § 128.7(c)-(d); *Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 432-33, 448-50 (affirming lower Court's sanctions of dismissal and attorneys' fees pursuant to Section 128.7). *See also Averill v. Superior Court*, 42 Cal. App. 4th 1170, 1176 n.2 (1996) ("*Averill*") ("We note that under these circumstances section 128.7 might provide an alternative basis for dismissing this suit."). This Court should levy such sanctions here against plaintiffs and their counsel.

II

AT MINIMUM, THE SANCTIONS OF DISMISSAL AND ATTORNEYS' FEES ARE WARRANTED HERE, BECAUSE MR. NEAL CONCLUSIVELY DID NOT USE COMPANY PRODUCTS, AS PLAINTIFFS' COUNSEL LONG AGO COULD EASILY HAVE LEARNED.

This Court, at the very least, should impose the sanctions of dismissal and attorneys' fees, because counsel to plaintiffs have acted "objectively unreasonabl[y]" by not conducting an "inquiry reasonable under the circumstances" that would have easily and incontestably demonstrated that Polymer80 should not be a party to these Actions. Thus, counsel to plaintiffs should quickly have found out and known that the rifles recovered from Mr. Neal were surely not Polymer80 products. CCP § 128.7(b); *Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 439. *See also, supra*, Statement of Facts, Section B. Plaintiffs' counsel's cavalier addition of Polymer80 to the Actions absent an amendment of their Complaints to set forth facts specific to the Company illuminates counsel's utter and disabling

⁷ It is black-letter law that "federal case law construing rule 11 is persuasive authority on the meaning of section 128.7," because the California "Legislature enacted section 128.7 based on rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (28 U.S.C.), as amended in 1993." *Bucur*, 244 Cal. App. 4th at 190. *Accord*, *Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 440 (same).

information from other defendants' websites, those pleadings treat Polymer80 simply as "Doe 1." *See, supra*, Statement of Facts, Section A. Had counsel to plaintiffs actually expended the minimal effort needed to scrutinize the Company website and compare Polymer80's products to the rifles shown in the Photographs, said counsel would have quickly realized that the Company could not possibly be liable in the Actions. Once again, the rifles depicted do *not* contain Polymer80 markings and are made of a material that the Company does *not* employ in its AR-15 style components. *See* Labat Decl., Exs. B, C.

failure to conduct any reasonable inquiry about the Company. Whereas the Complaints include

But, even assuming, *arguendo*, that counsel to plaintiffs somehow could credibly contend that adding Polymer80 to the Actions was not sanctionable because of information in their possession as of the filing of the Complaints against the Company, counsel cannot erase their sanctions-worthy failure to respond rationally (or at all) to the August 27 Letters until late on the day before the end of the safe harbor period. As will be described more fully below, the rank omission by counsel to plaintiffs of conducting even the "most minimal investigation" in the face of "[the adverse party's] evidence" makes their conduct objectively unreasonable and legally sanctionable. *Bucur*, 244 Cal. App. 4th at 190; *Jones v. Int'l Riding Helmets, Ltd.*, 145 F.R.D. 120, 124 (N.D. Ga. 1992), *aff'd*, 49 F.3d 692 (11th Cir. 1995) ("*Jones*"). In actuality, once counsel received those Letters, they could have, *inter alia*, compared the pertinent Photographs to Polymer80's website, conducted an inspection of Mr. Neal's recovered weapons, hired an expert, and/or reached out to counsel to Company counsel for further information and colloquy. They apparently did none of that, effectively buried their heads in the sand, and hoped for the best from their perspective.⁸ *See Bucur*, 244 Cal.

⁸ If plaintiffs' counsel argue that they *did* conduct an inquiry and learn these facts, then they should be sanctioned for maintaining this suit "for an improper purpose." *Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 440. *See also* CCP § 128.7(b)(1).

App. 4th at 190. In these premises, dismissal and monetary sanctions are two correct (and appropriate) results.

The California Supreme Court's analysis in *Bockrath* is particularly germane here. In that case, plaintiff contracted cancer and sued "at least 55 defendants . . . alleg[ing] that the disease arose through his exposure to harmful substances in their products." *Bockrath*, 21 Cal.4th at 77. While addressing defendants' contentions, the Court stated that a "concern about overbroad litigation is wholly understandable," because the "law cannot tolerate lawsuits by prospecting plaintiffs who sue multiple defendants on speculation that their products may have caused harm over time through exposure to toxins in them, and who thereafter try to learn through discovery whether their speculation was well-founded." *Id.* at 81. The Court expressly noted that the "law provides a remedy for" such "improperly speculative pleading" -- "Code of Civil Procedure section 128.7." *Id.* at 81-82. And, the Court further found as follows:

[I]t is sharp practice to implead defendants in a products liability suit alleging long-term exposure to multiple toxins unless, after a reasonable inquiry, the plaintiff actually believes that evidence has been or is likely to be found raising a reasonable medical probability that each defendant's product was a substantial factor in causing the harm, as the latter term is defined in *Rutherford [v. Owens–Illinois, Inc.* (1997) 16 Cal.4th 953]. The actual belief standard requires more than a hunch, a speculative belief, or wishful thinking: it requires a well-founded belief. We measure the truth-finding inquiry's reasonableness under an objective standard, and apply this standard both to attorneys and to their clients.

Id. at 82.

The *Bockrath* Court went on to state that "[i]f a lawyer is found to have deliberately filed a products liability suit of the type under discussion on a lesser basis, he or she can be sanctioned (Code Civ. Proc., § 128.7, subd. (c)) and is subject to other disciplinary action," because these are some of the "deterrents that state law provides for dishonest, reckless, or negligent pleading practice." *Id.* at 82-83. Finally and most revealingly upon the record before it, the Court, while

addressing a hypothetical posed by defendants' counsel, stated that "[a] cancer-afflicted plaintiff suing every manufacturer of an airborne substance found in the Los Angeles basin probably would be exposed to sanctions for the suit, even if certain defendants eventually were found to have made a product that was a substantial factor in the onset of the plaintiff's cancer." Id. at 83 (emphasis supplied).

The conduct against which the California Supreme Court railed in *Bockrath* is directly and substantially analogous to that of counsel to plaintiffs in the Actions. Said counsel have essentially sued the *entire* industry of so-called "ghost gun" manufacturers, admittedly asserting that they "in aggregate, were responsible for manufacturing and/or selling a substantial percentage of all 'ghost gun' parts/kits enabling assembly of AR-15 style 'ghost gun' rifles which entered into California leading up to and during November 2017," *before* adding Polymer80 to the Actions. *McFadyen* Compl. ¶ 105; *Cardenas* Compl. ¶ 89. But plainly, the Company is not a proper party to this suit, therefore rendering plaintiffs and their counsel "exposed to sanctions." *Bockrath*, 21 Cal.4th at 83.9

To be sure, Courts award sanctions in situations where, as here, a plaintiff unreasonably sues the wrong party and should have known not to do so. For instance, in *Eichenbaum v. Alon*, 106 Cal. App. 4th 967 (2003), plaintiff sued one Barry Alon, who "died shortly after the first amended complaint was filed." *Id.* at 970. The Court then substituted Mr. Alon's sister in his place, but plaintiff still named "the deceased Barry Alon" in multiple subsequent Complaints. *Id.* at 970-71. In this setting, the Second District Court of Appeal affirmed the trial Court's grant of Section 128.7 sanctions against plaintiff and counsel in part owing to the "frivolousness of any claim against a deceased individual." *Id.* at 976. Likewise, in *Shek v. Children Hosp. Research Ctr. in Oakland*, No.

⁹ Sensibly, counsel to plaintiffs in the separate *O'Sullivan* action have, as this Court has recognized, "represent[ed]... that they understand defendants' products may be distinguishable, and if so, they are willing to proceed against only those parties whose component parts were used in [plaintiff] Officer O'Sullivan's death." Minute Order, dated November 12, 2021. The refusal by plaintiffs' counsel in these Actions to follow that or any other commonsense approach underscores their gross negligence in continuing to promulgate this action against Polymer80 despite knowing that Company products were not involved in Mr. Neal's rampage.

12-cv-04517, ECF No. 66 at 3-4 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 13, 2012) ("Shek"), where plaintiff "knowingly persisted in serving process against Mr. Joseph L. Robinson, the wrong defendant" and thereby "forced Mr. Robinson to needlessly incur litigation-related expenses and stress," the Court held that "[t]he failure of plaintiff to discontinue the action against Mr. Robinson, after knowing that he was not the intended defendant, violated Rule 11 of the FRCP." Similarly, in the Actions at bar, plaintiffs and their counsel should have known at the time of adding Polymer80, and definitely knew after receiving the August 27 Letters, that the Company did not manufacture or distribute the AR-15 style rifles used by Mr. Neal. Their refusal and "failure . . . to discontinue the action against" Polymer80 violates Section 128.7 and consequently triggers, as it were, sanctions. Shek, No. 12-cv-04517, ECF No. 66 at 3-4.

Furthermore, sanctions are warranted in situations, as in the one at hand, where a simple investigation by plaintiff's counsel would have revealed that there should not be a suit against a particular party. For instance, in *Jones*, plaintiff brought a products liability proceeding against several manufacturers for an allegedly defective helmet purchased in 1985. 145 F.R.D. at 123-24. The Court sanctioned plaintiff for bringing suit against a helmet manufacturer ("International") that was not incorporated until 1986 and accordingly could not have made the helmet, stating that "[t]he most minimal investigation, such as checking International's certificate of incorporation, would have revealed the 1986 incorporation date." *Id.* at 124. In a similar vein, the Ninth Circuit has upheld sanctions against a plaintiff's attorney for filing a copyright case concerning dolls "without factual

¹⁰ See also, e.g., Roor Int'l BV v. Ullah Bus. Inc., 2019 WL 5088608, at *1 (M.D. Fla. Aug. 30, 2019) (noting Court "ordered Plaintiffs' counsel to pay [certain defendants'] costs and attorney fees as Rule 11 sanctions" after "Plaintiffs acknowledged [those defendants'] innocence and dropped them from the case"); Roor Int'l BV v. Ullah Bus. Inc., No. 19-cv-00222, ECF No. 41 at 1-2 (M.D. Fla. July 31, 2019) (awarding Rule 11 sanctions, where certain named defendants did not own store at time of incident, and therefore "the original Complaint was objectively baseless"); Shek v. Children Hosp. Research Ctr. in Oakland, 2013 WL 6512650, at *1 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 12, 2013) (noting "plaintiff was sanctioned for intentionally serving the wrong person and causing that person grief and trouble").

foundation," where "he would have been able to discover the copyright information simply by examining the doll heads." *Christian v. Mattel, Inc.*, 286 F.3d 1118, 1129 (9th Cir. 2002). 11

In this matter and as set forth above, plaintiffs' counsel easily could have reviewed Polymer80's website, including previous iterations thereof, to learn that the Company has *never* made or sold metallic AR-15 receivers, as with the rifles used by Mr. Neal, and that Mr. Neal's weapons did not include the "Polymer" or "P80" markings that all Company products do. It is undisputed that counsel to plaintiffs did not do so. And, once the August 27 Letters vividly alerted them to the fact that the Company was and is not a proper party to the Actions, there were any number of steps plaintiffs' counsel could have taken to verify this fact and then do the right thing. In response, they, once more, did not engage in even "[t]he most minimal investigation." *Jones*, 145 F.R.D. at 124. Simply stated, counsel to plaintiffs did not fulfill their Section 128.7 obligations to make an "inquiry reasonable under the circumstances," making sanctions in order.

Finally, considering that Polymer80 did not make, sell, or distribute any of Mr. Neal's weapons recovered by the police, the Complaint against the Company is legally frivolous. Plaintiffs just cannot substantiate any legal theory that involves Polymer80 manufacturing, selling, distributing, designing, advertising, or marketing the actual kits and/or firearms that Mr. Neal used. *See, supra,* Statement of Facts, Sections A, B. Moreover, even if plaintiffs' market share and fungibility-based legal salvos were valid, they would still be vacuous as against Polymer80, insofar as the Company has "demonstrate[d] that it could not have made the product which caused

¹¹ There are numerous other decisions to the same effect. *See, e.g., Terran v. Kaplan*, 109 F.3d 1428, 1434-35 & n.7 (9th Cir. 1997) (upholding award of Rule 11 sanctions, where plaintiff alleged mental and emotional stress but his counsel never spoke with the relevant medical doctor or reviewed his medical records); *Chapman & Cole v. Itel Container Int'l B.V.*, 865 F.2d 676, 683-84 & n.11 (5th Cir. 1989) (upholding Rule 11 sanctions, since plaintiff's counsel "filed the complaint based on unverified hearsay" and "rumors," and counsel "admitted that she did not ask [a witness] about the names, dates, places, or circumstances underlying the rumors that he had heard" and "thus failed to explore readily available avenues of inquiry and on that basis alone could be sanctioned for filing a factually frivolous appeal"); *Abner Realty, Inc. v. Adm'r of Gen. Servs. Admin.*, 1998 WL 410958, at *4-5 (S.D.N.Y. July 22, 1998) (imposing Rule 11 sanctions, where plaintiff "could easily have determined who owned title to [a] New Jersey building by accessing the LEXIS/NEXIS database, the Internet, or by obtaining a copy of the current deed to the property from the Registrar of Deeds in East Orange for a modest fee").

[plaintiffs'] injuries." *Sindell v. Abbott Labs.*, 26 Cal.3d 588, 612 (1980). Because plaintiffs have no legal basis to continue their suit against Polymer80, this Court should dismiss the Complaints, *with prejudice*, against the Company. *See Peake*, 227 Cal. App. 4th at 432-33, 448-50; *Averill*, 42 Cal. App. 4th at 1176 n.2.

CONCLUSION

For all of the foregoing reasons and those arising from the remainder of the record of the Actions, the Court should grant the instant Motion pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 128.7, dismiss the Complaints against Polymer80, award the Company its attorneys' fees, and grant such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.¹²

Dated: December 16, 2021 GREENSPOON MARDER LLP

GERMAIN D. LABAT

Counsel to Defendant Polymer80, Inc.

¹² Polymer80 respectfully believes that this Memorandum of Points and Authorities is an appropriate length pursuant to the Code of Civil Procedure and is amenable to plaintiffs' filing an opposition brief of the same length.

1	SERV	ICE LIST
2	Francisco Gudino Cardenas, et al. v. Ghost Gunner Inc., et al.	
3	Case No. JCCP 5167	
4	Amy K. Van Zant, Esq. Shayan Said, Esq.	Attorneys For Plaintiffs Francisco Gudino Cardenas and McFadyen, et al.
5	Anna Z. Saber Ric T. Fuckushima	ci ui.
6	ORRICK, HERRINGTON & SUTCLIFFE LLP	
7	1000 Marsh Road	
8	Menlo Park, CA 94025-1015 Tel: 650.614.7400	
9	Facsimile: 650.614.7401	
10	E-Mail: avanzant@orrick.com ssaid@orrick.com	
11	annasaber@orrick.com rfukushima@orrick.com	
12		
13	Cody R. Wilson Craig A. Livingston	Attorney for Defendant TACTICAL GEAR HEADS LLC
14	Chrystal L. Van Der Putten LIVINGSTON LAW FIRM	
15	1600 South Main Street, Suite 280 Walnut Creek, CA 94596	
16	Tel: 925.952.9880	
17	Fax: 925.952.9881 E-Mail: clivingston@livingstonlawyers.com	
18	cvanderputten@livingstonlawyers.com	
19	Michael E. Gallagher	Attorneys for Defendant Juggernaut Tactical,
20	Nicholas T. Maxwell Kyle JH. Gaines	Inc.
21	EDLIN GALLAGHER HUIE	
22	& BLUM LLP 515 S. Flower St., Ste. 1020	
23	Los Angeles, CA 90071	
24	E-Mail: mgallagher@eghblaw.com nmaxwell@eghblaw.com kgaines@eghblaw.com	
25		
26		
27		
28		

1	<u>s</u>	SERVICE LIST	
2	Francisco Gudino Cardenas, et al. v. Ghost Gunner Inc., et al.		
3	Case No. JCCP 5167		
4	Grant D. Waterkotte Tina M. Robinson	Attorneys for Defendants Defense Distributers	
5	PETTIT KOHN INGRADDIA		
6	LUTZ & DOLIN, PC 5901 W. Century Blvd., Ste. 1100		
7	Los Angeles, CA 90045 E-Mail: gwaterkotte@Pettitkohn.com		
8	trobinson@pettitkohn.com		
9	Christopher Renzulli	Attorneys for Defendant Juggernaut Tactical,	
10	Howard B. Schilsky RENZULLI LAW FIRM, LLP	Inc.	
11	One North Broadway, Ste. 1005 White Plains, NY10601		
12	E-Mail: crenzulli@renzullilaw.com		
13	hschilsky@renzullilaw.com		
14	C.D. Michael Sean A. Brady	Attorney for Defendants Ghost Firearms, LC, Thunder Guns, LLC,	
15	MICHEL & ASSOCIATES, P.C. 180 E. Ocean Blvd., Suite 200	Ryan Beezley and Bob Beezley, and MFY Technical Solutions, LLC	
16	Long Beach, CA 90802	Technical Solutions, LLC	
17	E-Mail: cmichel@michellawyers.com sbrady@michellawyers.com		
18	serial y e intenent in your seem		
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			

1	SERVICE LIST		
2 3	Francisco Gudino Cardenas, et al. v. Ghost Gunner Inc., et al. Case No. JCCP 5167		
	Amy V. Von Zont, Egg	Attorneys For Plaintiffs	
4	Amy K. Van Zant, Esq. Shayan Said, Esq.	Auorneys Por Punniggs	
5	Anna Z. Saber		
6	Ric T. Fuckushima ORRICK, HERRINGTON		
7	& SUTCLIFFE LLP		
	1000 Marsh Road		
8	Menlo Park, CA 94025-1015		
9	Tel: 650.614.7400 Facsimile: 650.614.7401		
10	E-Mail: avanzant@orrick.com		
	ssaid@orrick.com		
11	annasaber@orrick.com rfukushima@orrick.com		
12			
13	Dugan Barr Douglas Mudfor Estee Lewis		
14	Catie Barr		
15	Brandon Storment BARR & MUDFORD, LLP		
16	1824 Court Street P.O. Box 994390		
17	Redding, CA 96099-4390 E-Mail: doug@ca-lawyer.com;		
18	estee@ca-lawyer.com;		
19	brandon@ca-lawyer.com; catie@ca-lawyer.com		
20	Gerald B. Singleton		
21	SINGLETON LAW FIRM 450 A Street, 5 th Floor		
22	San Diego, CA 92101 E-Mail: gerald@SLFfirm.com		
23	Ben Rosenfeld		
24	ATTORNEY AT LAW 1151/2 Bartlett St.		
25	Sand Francisco, CA 94110 E-Mail: ben.rosenfeld@comast.net		
26	gsingleton@ssmsjustice.com		
27			
28			

Lorraine Corrales

From: donotreply@occourts.org

Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2021 12:15 PM

To: Lorraine Corrales

Subject: Superior Court of Orange County - Motion Reservation Request - CONFIRMATION

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Flagged



Superior Court of California, County of Orange RESERVE A MOTION DATE

Your reservation request has been **CONFIRMED** by the Superior Court. The hearing date and time below has been reserved. You will be asked to provide your reservation number to the court at a later date.

MOVING PAPERS **MUST** BE E-FILED WITHIN **24 HOURS** AFTER COMPLETING THE ON-LINE RESERVATION. Failure to submit your moving papers within 24 hours will result in the automatic **CANCELLATION** of the reservation.

NOTE: To EXPEDITE your MOTION filing place the appropriate Court Reservation number (e.g. 7XXXXXXX) on each Motion being submitted.

Please do not reply to this email.

Reservation Number:	73664942
Hearing Date: Hearing Time:	January 14, 2022 9:00 AM
Department:	CX104
Motion Type:	Motion for Sanctions
Case Number: Case Title: Judicial Officer:	JCCP 5167 Ghost Gunner Firearms Cases Hon. William Claster
Email: Requestor Name: Requestor Phone: Filing Party:	lorraine.corrales@gmlaw.com Lorraine Corrales 3238804520 Polymer80, Inc.
Date of Request: Time of Request: Transaction Number:	December 16, 2021 12:13 PM 1000247974

Superior Court of California • County of Orange