



An Extended Guide · No. 1853

Camera Brands Barred from Government Work — What It Means for You

The 'banned' camera brands, explained
calmly for a private business

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — it's about people, not just pictures

Before the gear, a word that matters more than any camera: with a business you are recording other people — customers, staff, people walking by — so where you point a camera, and whether it picks up sound, is as important as the picture. As a rule, keep cameras on general work and public areas, never on restrooms, changing areas, or anywhere someone expects privacy, and be very careful about recording audio. This guide gives you plain-English general information, not legal advice. For your own situation — especially anything to do with employees, audio, or the law — check with an attorney who knows Ohio. This guide is about federal rules that mainly bind the government and its contractors — not a law that makes it a crime for a private shop to own a camera.

Those 'banned' cameras — let's sort fact from fear

You've probably heard that certain popular camera brands are 'banned' in the U.S. — maybe a vendor said it, maybe you read it online. There's a real story here, but it's narrower and calmer than the headlines, and this guide lays it out in plain English so you can make a clear-eyed decision for your own business.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks understand the technology around them without the hype. I'm not a lawyer, and nothing here is legal advice — but I can walk you through the facts as they stand so you know what actually applies to a small business like yours.

The short version: there are two separate federal rules, they name the same handful of companies, and they're aimed mostly at the government and the companies that sell to or work for the government. Whether they touch you depends a lot on whether you do any government work. We'll untangle it.

★ Don't rip anything out in a panic

If you already own one of these cameras, take a breath — for most private businesses it is not illegal to keep using it. There are still good reasons to weigh your options, and we'll cover them fairly. Want to talk it through for your situation? Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole story, on one page

If you remember only these points, you'll already understand this better than most of what gets said about it.

- ❑ The FCC keeps a 'Covered List' of gear seen as a national-security risk. It names five China-based makers: Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hikvision, Dahua.
- ❑ In November 2022, under the Secure Equipment Act, the FCC stopped approving NEW U.S. sales and imports of covered gear from these makers.
- ❑ A SEPARATE rule, Section 889, bars federal agencies, their contractors, and many grant recipients from buying or using this gear.
- ❑ If you do NOT do government work, these federal rules generally do NOT make it illegal to own or use these cameras privately.
- ❑ There are still fair reasons to think twice: a future government contract, a landlord or insurer rule, and long-term support worries.
- ❑ This is general information, not legal advice — if government contracts or grants are in your world, ask an attorney.

✓ The one line to hold onto

These are mostly government and government-contractor rules. For a private business with no government ties, they're a reason to weigh your choices — not a reason to believe you're breaking the law by owning a camera.

What the 'Covered List' actually is

Most of the confusion starts here, so let's be precise about what this list is and whose names are on it.

The Federal Communications Commission — the FCC — keeps an official 'Covered List' of communications equipment and services the government has deemed a risk to national security. It's a specific, published list, not a vague reputation. Being on it triggers the rules we'll walk through.

For cameras and security gear, the list names five companies based in the People's Republic of China: **Huawei**, **ZTE**, **Hytera**, **Hikvision**, and **Dahua**. It also includes some telecom carriers, but those aren't camera makers, so they're not our focus here.

A wrinkle worth knowing: many cameras sold under other brand names are actually built by Hikvision or Dahua and relabeled. So a brand that isn't on the list by name can still be covered gear underneath. That's one reason it's worth checking what you actually have — more on that later.

✓ On the list is not the same as illegal to own

Being named on the Covered List is what sets the sales and government rules in motion. It does not, by itself, mean a private person or business is breaking the law by owning or using the equipment. Keep those two ideas separate and the rest of this guide stays clear.

Why these five, and not others

You don't need the politics to make a good decision, but a little background helps the rules make sense.

The concern the government cites is national security. These are large companies tied to the People's Republic of China, and U.S. officials have worried about whether their networking and surveillance gear could be used to gather information or could be leaned on by a foreign government. Whether one agrees or not, that is the stated reason they landed on the list.

It matters that this is a **security and policy** judgment about supply chains and foreign influence — not a finding that each camera is defective or that every owner is doing something wrong. The rules flow from who makes the gear and where it's used, not from any single camera's picture quality.

★ The picture on your screen isn't the issue

Plenty of these cameras take a perfectly good picture — that was never the question. The rules are about the maker and the setting it's used in. So when you weigh your own choice, weigh the real factors in this guide, not whether the video looks fine. It usually does.

Two different rules people mix up

Almost every muddled conversation about 'banned cameras' comes from blending two separate federal rules into one. Here they are, side by side.

The **first** is the FCC's action under the Secure Equipment Act. Starting in November 2022, the FCC stopped granting NEW equipment authorizations — the approvals a product needs to be newly sold or imported in the U.S. — for covered gear from these makers. That's about the front-of-store supply going forward, not about what's already installed.

The **second** is Section 889 of a 2019 federal defense law. It bars federal agencies, the companies that contract with them, and many recipients of federal grants from buying or using covered equipment. That's about who is allowed to use the gear in connection with the government.

Rule	Who it binds	What it does
FCC / Secure Equipment Act	Sellers and importers	Blocks NEW U.S. sales
Section 889 (2019 law)	Gov't, contractors, grantees	Bars buying or using

✓ **Keep the two straight**

One rule is about new gear coming into the country; the other is about who may use it when government money is involved. Neither one is a blanket criminal ban on a private business owning a camera it already has.

Rule one: the FCC and new sales

This is the rule that changed what shows up on store shelves — and it's narrower for some makers than others.

Under the Secure Equipment Act, the FCC's November 2022 decision means covered telecom and video-surveillance gear from these makers can no longer get the new authorization needed to be freshly sold or imported here. Over time that thins out the new supply, though plenty of older stock and already-installed gear is still out in the world.

The reach isn't identical for all five. For **Huawei** and **ZTE**, essentially all of their gear is covered. For **Hytera**, **Hikvision**, and **Dahua**, the gear is covered when it's meant for government security, for physical-security surveillance of critical infrastructure, or for other national-security purposes.

! This limits selling, not your using

Read carefully: this rule is about granting approvals for NEW equipment to enter the U.S. market. It is not a statement that you, a private owner, are forbidden to keep running a camera you already bought. The two often get reported as the same thing. They aren't.

What's changing around 2026

This area is still moving, so I'll tell you the shape of the change and then, honestly, where the detail runs out.

In June 2026 the FCC voted to EXPAND the restrictions beyond just new models. The expansion reaches older, previously-approved models from these makers when they're used for the high-risk purposes we mentioned — government security and critical-infrastructure surveillance — and it was set to take effect around July 2026.

Here's the honest part: this is an evolving area, and the fine print on exactly which products and uses are swept in can shift as the rules are written and challenged. I'd rather tell you that plainly than pretend to a precision that isn't there yet. For anything that hinges on the specifics, check the current rules or ask an attorney.

★ I keep an eye on this so you don't have to

Rules like this change, and I follow them as they do. If you're trying to decide around this year's changes, call me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll tell you what I know as of right now — and point you to a pro for the legal specifics.

Rule two: Section 889 and government work

This is the rule most likely to touch a small business — but only if the government is somewhere in your picture.

Section 889, part of a 2019 federal defense law and phased in through 2019 and 2020, bars three groups from buying or using covered equipment from Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hikvision, Dahua, and their affiliates: federal agencies themselves, the companies that hold federal CONTRACTS, and, in many cases, the organizations that receive federal GRANTS.

So if you sell to or do work for a federal agency, or you run programs on federal grant money, this is the rule to take seriously — having covered cameras on the premises can put a contract or a grant at risk. If none of that is you, Section 889 is aimed somewhere else.

! The trap is the contract you take later

You might have no government work today and still trip over this tomorrow, the day you bid on a government job or accept a grant. If that's ever on your horizon, factor it in now — swapping cameras under deadline pressure is the expensive way to learn this rule.

The question you really came for

Strip away the headlines and here's the honest answer for a private small business.

If you do NOT do government work, these federal rules generally do NOT make it illegal for you to own or use these cameras privately. They mainly bind the government and the companies tied to it through contracts and grants. I want to be careful and fair here: I'm not telling you the gear is forbidden for you, because for most private owners it simply isn't.

That said, 'not illegal' and 'the best choice' aren't the same thing. There are real, practical reasons a private business might still choose to avoid or replace this gear — and real reasons it might not matter at all for you. The next few pages lay both sides out so you can decide.

! Where the government does come in

The clear exception is if you have, or might seek, federal contracts or certain federal grants — there, Section 889 can bar covered gear, and the stakes are your contract or funding. That's exactly the kind of question to put to an attorney rather than to a guide. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Two kinds of businesses, two sets of needs

Whether these rules matter to you depends less on what you sell and more on whether the government is anywhere in your business life.

If you're a private shop with no government ties

You sell to the public, take no federal contracts, and run on no federal grants. For you, these are mostly background rules about the broader market, not a law pointed at your front counter.

- Owning or using the cameras you have is generally not illegal for you.
- Weigh the practical angles — support, resale, and future plans.
- If a landlord, insurer, or big customer has rules, read those carefully.
- No need to panic-replace working gear; decide calmly and on the facts.

If you touch government contracts or grants

You bid on government jobs, subcontract to someone who does, or run programs on federal grant money. Now Section 889 is squarely in your world, and covered gear can put the work itself at risk.

- Treat covered cameras as a compliance issue, not just a tech choice.
- Inventory what you have and where it came from before you bid.
- Build any swap into your timeline — don't scramble at award time.
- Get an attorney's read on your specific contracts and grants.

★ Not sure which one you are?

Plenty of businesses are mostly private but dabble in a government job now and then — and that's exactly the gray zone worth a careful look. Tell me how your business works and I'll help you see which side of this you're on. Call (330) 200-8042.

Fair reasons to avoid them anyway

Even when it's perfectly legal for you to keep this gear, here are the honest reasons a private owner might still move away from it.

- **A government job down the road.** The day you bid on a federal contract or take a grant, covered cameras can become a problem under Section 889 — and switching on a deadline is painful.
- **Someone else's rules.** A landlord, an insurer, or a big customer may simply require compliant equipment, and their rule binds you even though the federal one doesn't.
- **Long-term support.** With new U.S. sales and imports restricted, there are real questions about updates, replacement parts, and how long the gear stays well supported here.
- **Resale and reputation.** Covered gear can be harder to sell on, and some customers simply prefer you not use it.

✓ Weigh it, don't fear it

None of these is 'it's illegal, tear it out today.' They're practical trade-offs — the same kind you'd weigh for any business purchase. Line them up against the cost and hassle of switching and make a calm call.

The long-term support and resale worry

This is the one that quietly matters most for a private business with no government ties — so it's worth its own page.

When a maker's new gear can't be freshly authorized for sale or import here, the ecosystem around it tends to thin out over time: fewer new accessories, more uncertainty about firmware updates and security patches, and dealers who drift to other brands. Your cameras keep working, but the road ahead for parts and updates gets foggier.

For security cameras, updates aren't a nicety — they're how known weaknesses get patched. A camera that stops getting security updates slowly becomes a softer target over the years. That's a genuine reason some owners plan a gradual move to a well-supported brand as gear ages out, even with no legal push to do so.

! Unsupported gear is a security question too

If your cameras no longer get updates, lock them down tightly: strong passwords, no risky remote access, and a close eye on the maker's notices. Our guide on passwords and updates walks through keeping any camera — covered brand or not — as safe as it can be.

When someone else's rule binds you

Even if the federal rules leave you alone, a rule in your lease, your insurance, or a customer's contract can reach you instead.

Landlords sometimes write equipment standards into a commercial lease. Insurers may ask about your security setup and, increasingly, about the gear's provenance. And a larger customer — especially one who does government work — may push their own requirements down to you as a supplier. Any of these can require compliant equipment regardless of federal law.

The move here is simple: before you assume you're free to use whatever you like, actually read the rules that already apply to you. A clause you didn't notice is a cheaper thing to find now than during a claim or a contract review.

★ Bring me the clause, I'll help you read the tech part

If your lease or insurer mentions security equipment and it reads like a foreign language, send it over. I can't give legal advice, but I can help you understand what the technical requirement is actually asking for. Call (330) 200-8042.

How to tell what you actually own

Before any of this applies to you, you need to know whether you even have covered gear — and that's trickier than it sounds.

Start with the obvious: look for Hikvision, Dahua, Huawei, ZTE, or Hytera on the camera body, the recorder, and in the phone app. But remember the relabeling wrinkle — many cameras sold under other names are built by Hikvision or Dahua underneath. A name you don't recognize doesn't automatically clear you.

- Check labels on each camera and the recorder for a maker and model.
- Look in the app's device info and firmware screens for a maker name.
- Note any 'original equipment' or manufacturer markings behind the brand.
- Keep a simple written list — brand, model, where it's installed.

✓ Inheriting a system? Check it first

If you took over the cameras when you bought the business or the building, you may not know what's up there at all. Our guide on taking over an old system walks through identifying exactly what you've got before you decide what to keep.

You have covered cameras — now what?

If the check turned up covered gear and you're a private business, here's the calm, sensible path.

First, confirm whether any government work, grant, lease, or insurance rule actually reaches you. If none does, you're not breaking the law by keeping the cameras, and there's no emergency. You can run them, lock them down well, and plan any change on your own timeline.

Second, if you decide to move away from the gear — for support, resale, or a future contract — do it gradually: replace cameras as they age or as budget allows, starting with the ones doing the most important jobs. There's rarely a reason to throw out working cameras all at once.

! Whatever you keep, secure it

Any camera you keep running — covered brand or not — should have a strong, unique password, current firmware where it's still offered, and safe remote access. That matters double for gear whose long-term updates are uncertain. See our [passwords-and-updates](#) guide for the steps.

Shopping for new cameras with this in mind

If you're buying fresh, a few plain questions keep you clear of the whole tangle from the start.

You don't need to memorize the Covered List to shop well. You need a vendor who'll answer straight questions about who really makes the gear and whether it's affected by these rules. A seller who gets cagey about the actual manufacturer is telling you something.

Q: Who actually manufactures this camera and recorder?

You want the real maker, not just the box brand. If the answer is Hikvision or Dahua under another label, now you know, and can decide on purpose rather than by accident.

Q: Is this gear on the FCC Covered List or affected by Section 889?

A reputable seller of business gear should be able to speak to this plainly. A blank stare is a reason to keep shopping.

Q: Will this be supported and updated in the U.S. for years to come?

Especially important given the restrictions on new sales. You're buying years of service, not just a box today.

✓ I don't sell cameras, so my advice is just advice

I earn no commission on any brand, which means I can tell you plainly what to ask and what the answers mean. Bring me a model you're considering and I'll help you dig up who really makes it.

Keeping the whole thing in perspective

It's easy to swing between 'this is nothing' and 'this is a disaster.' The truth sits calmly in the middle.

On one side, don't let a vendor scare you into believing you're a criminal for owning a camera you bought legally — for a private business with no government ties, that's simply not the case. On the other side, don't wave it off entirely: the support, resale, and future-contract concerns are real, and worth a clear-eyed look.

The grown-up answer is to treat this like any other business decision: know the facts, know which rules actually apply to you, weigh the practical trade-offs, and decide on your own timeline — not in a panic and not by burying your head in the sand.

★ A second opinion with nothing to sell

Because I don't sell gear, I've got no reason to talk you into ripping out working cameras or into keeping something past its time. If you want an honest read on your situation, that's exactly what I'm here for. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common myths, cleared up

Here are the things people get told that aren't quite right, straightened out.

- **'It's illegal for anyone to own these cameras.'** Not so — for a private business with no government ties, owning and using them is generally not illegal.
- **'The ban means they'll shut off.'** No — your installed cameras keep working; the FCC rule is about new sales and imports, not a remote kill switch.
- **'If my brand isn't on the list, I'm fine.'** Maybe not — some cameras are built by covered makers and sold under other names.
- **'The rules don't affect small businesses at all.'** They might, through government contracts, grants, a lease, or an insurer — so it's worth checking your own situation.

! When in doubt, check — don't guess

The myths pull in both directions: some folks are scared into believing they're breaking the law, others are lulled into ignoring a rule that really does bind them. The fix for both is the same — find the facts for your business, and ask a pro where it counts.

When this is a question for an attorney

Most of this you can navigate with clear facts. A few situations really do call for professional legal advice.

Call an attorney if you have, or plan to pursue, any federal contract or grant; if a lease, insurance policy, or customer agreement mentions equipment standards you're unsure about; or if someone has told you your current cameras put a deal at risk. Those are moments where the specifics matter and a guide can't substitute for advice on your actual paperwork.

! The honest limits of this guide

I've given you the facts as they stand and kept them general on purpose. The rules in this area are evolving, they turn on the fine details of your situation, and I'm a tech helper, not a lawyer — so for anything that touches a contract, a grant, or real money, confirm it with an attorney. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Common Questions

The questions owners ask me most once the headlines wear off.

Q: Is it illegal for my private business to use a Hikvision or Dahua camera?

Generally no, if you have no government contracts or grants. These federal rules mainly bind the government and its contractors and grantees. This is general information, not legal advice — confirm your own situation with an attorney.

Q: Will my existing cameras stop working because of the ban?

No. The FCC rule limits NEW U.S. sales and imports of covered gear. It doesn't reach back and switch off cameras you already own and use.

Q: Should I replace my covered cameras right away?

Rarely all at once. If no government, lease, or insurance rule binds you, there's no emergency — you can plan a gradual move for support or resale reasons, replacing gear as it ages.

Q: I might bid on a government job next year — does that change things?

Yes, potentially a lot. Section 889 can bar covered gear for government contractors and grantees, so plan any swap before you bid, and get an attorney's read on the specific contract.

★ Still have a question I didn't cover?

This is a confusing topic dressed up in scary headlines, and a plain conversation usually clears it right up. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll give you a straight, no-sales-pitch answer for your business.

The bottom line

If you take away one balanced view from this whole guide, make it this one.

Five China-based makers — Huawei, ZTE, Hytera, Hikvision, and Dahua — are named on the FCC's Covered List, and two separate federal rules flow from that: one that blocks new U.S. sales and imports of covered gear, and one, Section 889, that bars the government and its contractors and grantees from buying or using it. The area is still evolving around 2026.

For a private business with no government ties, those rules generally don't make it illegal to own or use these cameras — but a future contract, someone else's rules, and long-term support worries are all fair reasons to weigh your options. Decide calmly, on the facts, and get an attorney's help where government money or a contract is involved.

✓ Calm facts beat loud headlines

You now know more about this than most of what you'll hear about it. Keep this page handy, and when a vendor or a neighbor repeats a scary headline, you'll be able to sort the real part from the noise.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made understanding the camera-brand rules feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it with your other business papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything — that's what the guide is for.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your place of business, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician or low-voltage contractor — for in-wall wiring or panel work I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro and make sure it all works together.

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Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Two Separate Federal Rules

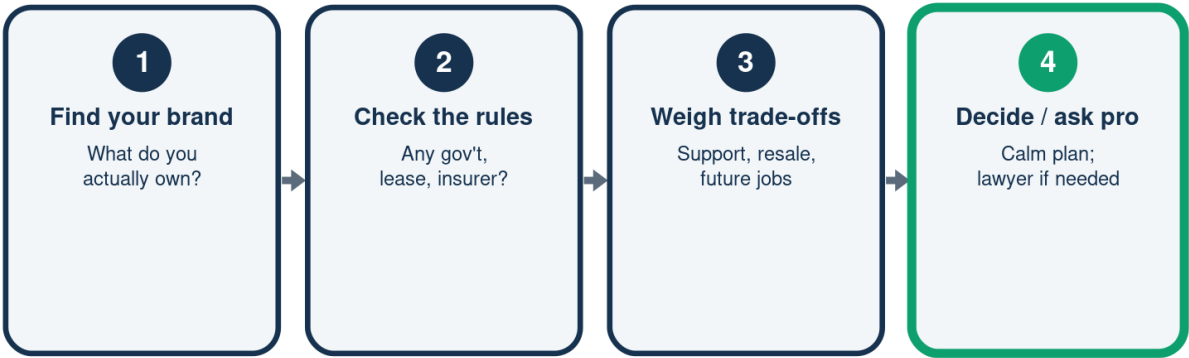
People blend these together -- they're really two different things

	Who it binds	What it does
FCC sales rule	Sellers, importers	Blocks new sales
Section 889	Gov't + partners	Bars buy or use
Private owner	Generally free	Keep using it

Neither rule is a blanket criminal ban on private ownership.

Deciding What To Do

A calm path from 'I heard a scary thing' to a clear choice



No panic, no head in the sand -- decide on the facts.

Does It Affect a Private Business?

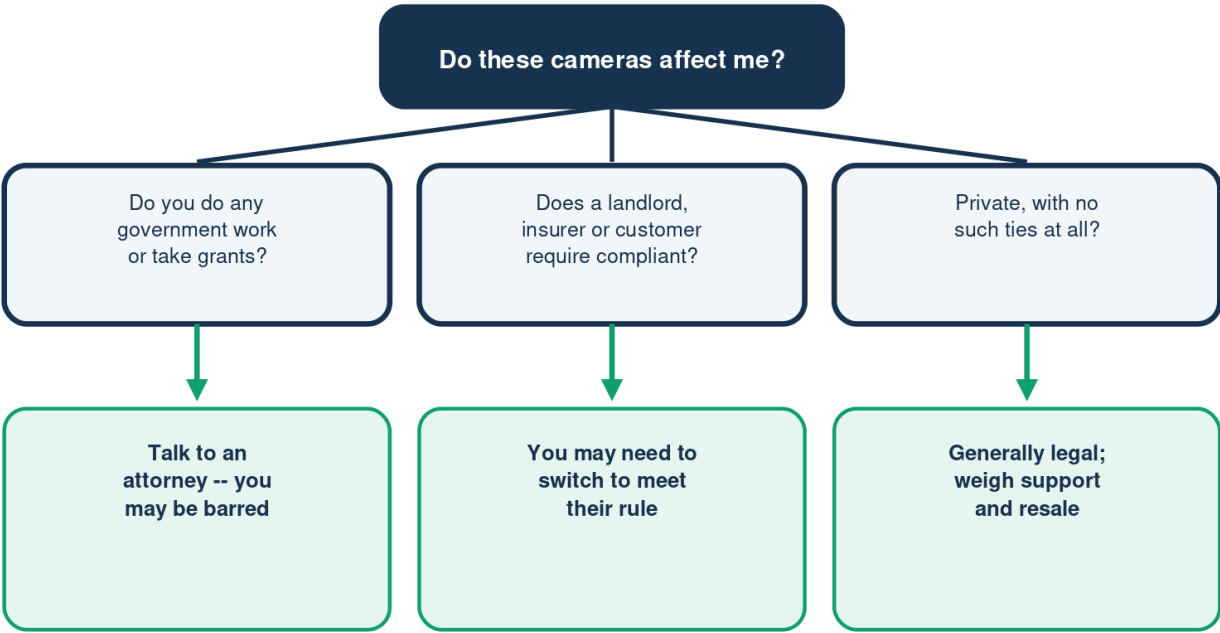
The answer turns on whether the government is in your world

	Situation	What it means
No gov't ties	Not illegal	Weigh options
Gov't contract	889 applies	Ask attorney
Federal grant	Often barred	Ask attorney
Lease / insurer	Their rule	Read it

General information, not legal advice -- confirm with an attorney.

Should a Private Business Worry?

Three honest questions to point you the right way



This is general information, not legal advice -- confirm with an Ohio attorney.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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— *Bill*



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