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Illinois Voters Want Stronger Gun Laws Lawmaker positions could impact voter support

To: Interested parties

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Voters in Illinois are ready for changes to gun laws, and there is a large bloc who is more likely to support a candidate who votes for stronger laws. They are not by any means anti-gun, but they strongly favor laws that will help prevent guns falling into the wrong hands and protect their families.

While opposed to conceal and carry generally, if it must happen, voters favor a broad range of limits on who can carry weapons where. They don't stop there. There is also near universal support for background checks on all gun sales, and strong support for banning military-style assault weapons and limiting ammunition magazines.

Voters do not buy the NRA's arguments that common-sense gun laws are a slippery slope towards infringing on 2nd Amendment rights and confiscating guns. They believe there is a moderate, middle-ground approach, and are looking for lawmakers who fill that space.

The below are key findings and recommendations from a survey of 600 registered voters in Illinois, with an additional 300 oversample of Will and DuPage counties. A phone survey was conducted from March 27 through April 2, 2013. Margin of error is +/- 4 percent for the total electorate and +/- 5 percent for Will and DuPage counties (combined).

Lawmakers' positions on guns can impact elections in a way that benefits candidates who support stronger gun laws. Voters in Illinois are now ready to vote on this issue—and in contrast to conventional wisdom, are now more likely to support a candidate who supports stronger gun laws by a wide margin over one who does not. Four times as many voters say they are more likely to support a candidate who favors stronger guns laws than someone who does not, a stunning margin as shown in the table below. Fifty-six percent (including 51 percent of gun owners) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports a strong conceal and carry law; only 13 percent will support a candidate who wants a weak law.

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■ **Figure 1 – More likely to vote for a candidate who supports a strong conceal and carry law with more restrictions, or vote for a candidate who supports a weaker law with fewer restrictions**

	Total stronger	Total weaker
Total	56	13
Gun Owners	51	16
Will/DuPage	56	15

Most impressive here is the intensity: 40 percent are “much” more likely to support a candidate who wants a strong law. This is nearly twice what we normally see, and 13 points higher than those who say conceal and carry will make no difference on their vote.

The impact is even higher when asked about additional gun laws and background checks. Sixty-two percent are more likely to vote for a candidate who supported a strong law with even more provisions outside of conceal and carry, such as universal background checks, limiting ammunition magazines, banning military-style assault weapons, and registering guns. And if the question is limited to background checks as the only additional gun law, 68 percent are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports a strong gun law that includes background checks on all gun sales.

Illinois voters are more concerned with protecting people from gun violence. Fifty-nine percent want stronger gun laws, including 48 percent of gun owners. And indicating how far they are willing to go to keep people safe, by a 14 point margin, Illinois voters believe that it is more important to protect people from gun violence than it is to protect the rights of gun owners (53-39).

This is not to say the people of Illinois are anti-gun. They are not. One-third of voters report having at least 1 gun in their household. Nor are the gun owners of Illinois more Republican: 44 percent are Democrats and 46 percent are Republicans. As we’ll see more of below, common-sense gun laws cut across party and gun-ownership lines.

Voters in Illinois are ready to do something about gun violence.

If conceal and carry is required, there is broad and deep support for a range of regulations. To be clear, most don’t even want conceal and carry at all: 53 percent oppose allowing people to carry concealed weapons in public. But if conceal and carry must be the law of the land, voters were very clear about wanting a strong law with a range of restrictions. The table below shows that a range of provisions to conceal and carry receive strong support, including requiring those who want to carry a weapon to attend mandatory safety classes, forbidding concealed weapons in schools, casinos, buses, colleges, and any place the serves alcohol, and requiring those who want to carry to show a clean record and demonstrate a good reason to need it.

■ **Figure 2 – Total favor each provision of conceal and carry**

	Total	Own Gun	Dem	Ind	Rep	Will/DuPage
Those who want to carry guns in public must obtain a permit	93	95	89	93	97	92
Permit holders must attend gun safety class	92	91	91	94	92	94
No concealed guns at places that serve alcohol	81	80	87	77	76	84
Concealed weapon owners must have a clean record and show a good reason for need	78	74	87	73	72	79
No concealed guns in schools or on school grounds	77	75	84	75	69	77
No concealed guns in casinos or stadiums	76	76	81	77	67	83
No concealed guns at festivals and street fairs	74	72	83	71	65	75
No concealed guns on college campuses	72	69	81	69	62	75
No concealed guns on buses or trains	65	59	77	59	54	64

Voters across the board--independents, Republicans, gun owners--support stronger gun regulations. Voters want more than a strong conceal and carry law. They support additional regulations on guns and gun ownership. The highest—with near unanimous support—was background checks and mandatory reporting when guns are lost or stolen. Banning military style assault weapons and limiting ammunitions magazines to 10 rounds also received strong support. The strong and consistent support shown in the table below illustrates that most of these provisions are simply common-sense to voters.

■ **Figure 3 – Total favor each additional gun law**

	Total	Own Gun	Dem	Ind	Rep	Will/DuPage
Criminal Background checks on all gun sales	95	94	96	93	94	94
Mandatory reporting of lost/stolen guns	93	94	95	93	88	92
All gun dealers be licensed by state	92	92	95	94	86	93
Universal background checks	91	88	95	85	89	93
Those convicted of gun crimes must serve at least 85% of their prison term	87	88	85	89	89	90
Increase min. prison sentence for serious gun crimes	84	86	83	86	83	88
Guns must be registered and notify law enforcement when they are sold or transferred	82	81	92	77	71	85
Limit ammo magazines so only 10 rounds can be fired at a time	68	65	85	62	52	67
Ban on military-style assault weapon	67	57	81	61	54	68