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CONTACT: Mark Walsh, Field Director
773-209-1002 (cell)

New Bipartisan Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Common Sense Gun Laws
90% of Illinois Voters Support Requiring Background Checks for All Gun Sales

Chicago (March 3, 2009) Today the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (ICPGV), a project of Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV), released the results from a new statewide, bipartisan poll on gun violence prevention. The survey results show an overwhelming majority of Illinois voters strongly support common sense gun laws such as background checks for private gun sales and requiring gun owners to report lost or stolen guns to law enforcement. Despite conventional wisdom, additional polling in Senate districts in Western Collar Counties and the Peoria metropolitan area also showed strong support for these common sense measures.

Voters statewide expressed overwhelming support for closing the “private sale loophole” by requiring background checks for all gun sales, with 90 percent in support and 76 percent strongly supporting such a measure. Support for universal background checks was strong among Republicans (85%), gun owners (79%), and NRA members (70%). Women, voters residing in the suburbs of Chicago, and Hispanic voters had the highest levels of support for the measure, each at 96 percent.

“It’s not surprising that so many women support background checks on private gun sales,” said Representative Elizabeth Coulson (R-Glenview). “The fact is that women who are the victims of domestic abuse are particularly at risk of being shot and killed and gun violence disproportionately affects children and young people. If you’re thinking about the safety of your family and your own safety, it makes sense to support something as simple and necessary as background checks to keep felons, domestic violence offenders, minors and people with severe mental illness from accessing guns.”

The survey results follow the recent House Committee passage of legislation to close the “private sale loophole” for handguns. The bill, HB 48, is sponsored by Representative Harry Osterman (D-Chicago) and would require the sale or transfer of any handgun between two private individuals to be conducted at a federally licensed firearm dealer so that a background check can be completed.

“This is a public safety issue,” explained Representative Osterman. “In 2007, over 800 FOID card holders became prohibited purchasers and were stopped from buying guns because of background checks at gun shows and gun stores. It just doesn’t make sense that these people could have bought guns from private sellers without a background check. FOID cards alone are not enough to prevent prohibited purchasers from accessing guns.”

In Senate District 46, which includes Peoria and is represented by Senator David Koehler, 90 percent of voters also favored background checks on all gun sales. Even among gun owners and NRA members surveyed in this district, support for universal background checks was strong at 86 percent and 72 percent respectively.

In DuPage County, voters in Senate Districts 23 and 24 were consistent with statewide levels of support for requiring background checks for private sales, with nine in 10 voters supporting universal background checks. Republican voters also overwhelmingly supported the measure in these districts, with 86 percent favoring universal background checks in Senator Carol Pankau's district (23) and 91 percent favoring in Senator Kirk Dillard's district (24).

A measure that would require greater gun owner responsibility also gained the support of nearly all Illinois voters. When Illinois voters were asked if they support requiring gun owners to inform law enforcement if any of their guns are lost or stolen, 95 percent said they favor the requirement, with 81 percent strongly favoring loss or theft reporting. Moreover, nine out of 10 gun owners and NRA members support such reporting.

"Law enforcement officials need to know when firearms are lost or stolen because these are the guns that typically get into the illegal market and end up in the hands of criminals," said Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. "A lost or stolen requirement would help deter gun trafficking and discourage straw purchasing."

The bipartisan team of Overbrook Research (R) and Lake Research Partners (D) conducted the statewide poll of 612 voters, as well as additional surveys of over 300 voters each in three state Senate districts (23, 24, and 46), which included six state House districts (45, 46, 47, 48, 91, and 92). Support for the proposed gun laws was strong in all three Senate districts, which include the Peoria metropolitan area and Western Collar Counties, with majorities favoring the policies whether leaning Republican or Democrat.

Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, a project of Legal Community Against Gun Violence, is a research-based public education campaign to promote meaningful gun policy reform in Illinois. Working with a statewide advisory group representing law enforcement, the medical and public health communities, faith-based organizations, local and state policymakers, victims, youth, and advocacy groups, ICPGV informs the public and the media on the facts about gun violence and prevention policies. For more information about ICPGV, including polling facts sheets and policy fact sheets providing a brief analysis of each of the proposed changes to Illinois state law, visit www.icpgv.org.

Legal Community Against Violence is a public interest law center dedicated to preventing gun violence. LCAV focuses on policy reform at the state and local levels and serves public officials and activists working to prevent gun violence. Founded by lawyers in response to the tragic shooting at 101 California Street in San Francisco in 1993, LCAV is the country's only organization devoted exclusively to providing legal assistance in support of gun violence prevention. For more information, visit www.lcav.org.

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