

ILLINOIS FIREARMS STUDY FINDINGS

Senate District 23

Introduction and Methodology

This survey measures attitudes and community sentiments regarding support or opposition for changes to existing firearms laws in Illinois. The results detailed in this report are drawn from a survey of 300 registered voters in Senate District 23¹. The survey questionnaire was identical to one used in a parallel survey of voters statewide. District residents were identified by matching census tract and block group numbers to listed telephone records within those geographic locations. Localities within the district were represented proportionate to their share of the population. Interviews were conducted between February 20-25, 2007.

The research was commissioned by the Legal Community Against Violence, and executed as a bipartisan collaboration of Overbrook Research (R) and Lake Research Partners (D). The sampling error of the district-level survey is +/-5.7%, at a confidence level of 95%. This means that if the survey were conducted 100 times with different samples, results would fall within approximately five and a half percentage points of those obtained here in 95 of those 100 administrations.

Perceptions of Proposed Changes to Illinois Gun Laws

We tested seven potential changes to current gun laws, asking voters if they strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each. A majority strongly supports each of the proposed changes to state gun laws, with strong support exceeding 80% for four of those proposals. Seven in ten support each of those proposals at least somewhat, and opposition does not exceed 27% for any of them.

Reporting Lost/Stolen Guns

The most popular proposal, with 88% strongly supporting it, would require gun owners to inform law enforcement if any of their guns are lost or stolen. This proposal has universal appeal, even among Republicans (88% strongly favor), men (86%), and those engaging in firearms behavior² (75%).

¹ District 23 is entirely in DuPage County, and includes all or part of the following communities: Bloomingdale, Glendale Heights, Addison, Elmhurst, Itasca, Elk Grove, Wood Dale, and Bensenville.

² The survey results show that 25% of respondents own a gun, have a FOID card, have a hunting license, and/or are a member of the NRA. These respondents are referred to collectively as “engaging in firearms behavior.”

State Licensing

Likewise, a large majority (86%) strongly favors requiring a state license for handgun dealers. Strong support is again very high across the district, even among Republicans (88% strongly favor) and those engaging in firearms behavior (75%). Those with at least an undergraduate degree (92%) are more strongly favorable than those lacking this credential (80%), but there are no other significant subgroup differences in support.

Safe Storage

The third proposal, receiving 84% strong support, would require gun owners to lock their guns if there are children under the age of 18 in the household. Strong support is high across the district, with few demographic subgroup differences. Even solid majorities of those Republicans (81%) and those engaging in firearms behavior (71%) strongly support this proposal.

Expand Background Checks

More than eight in ten (82%) also strongly believe that people who buy guns from private individuals should be required to undergo a criminal background check, just like people who buy guns from stores or gun shows have to. Support is strong among all subgroups, with even two-thirds (67%) of those engaging in firearms behavior, and 79% of Republicans, strongly favoring it.

Assault Weapons Ban

As shown in other polling, support remains strong (74%) for a ban on the sale and possession of semi-automatic assault rifles. Surprisingly, unlike for the statewide electorate as a whole, there are few significant subgroup differences in opinion on this issue. In District 23, the assault weapons ban is strongly supported by both women (78%) and men (70%), and by Republicans (73%) and Democrats (76%) alike. However, strong support drops to just 50% among those with firearms behavior; 26% of such voters strongly oppose the ban. In total, 62% of those with firearms behavior favor the ban at least somewhat, while 38% oppose it at least somewhat.

Fifty-Caliber Rifle Ban

There is strong support (73%) for banning the sale and possession of powerful, military-grade fifty-caliber rifles. Those under age 30 are least likely to support the ban; fewer than half (45%) strongly favor it, with 23% strongly opposing it. Democrats (77% strongly favor) are somewhat more supportive than Republicans (69%) or Independents (70%). Those with at least a college degree (79%) are more

supportive than those lacking post secondary education (65%). Even a majority (56%) of those with firearms behavior strongly support the ban, with fewer than one-fourth (24%) giving it any degree of opposition.

One Handgun per Month

Limiting the number of handguns an individual can purchase to one handgun per month garners a majority (54%) strongly supporting it; fewer than one in five (19%) strongly oppose it. More than two-thirds (70%) support it at least somewhat, while just over one-fourth (27%) oppose it at least somewhat. Women (60% strongly favor), and especially younger women (66%) are much stronger supporters than men (47%) — but Democrats (54%) and Republicans (55%) give nearly identical levels of strong support. Although strong support drops to 35% for those engaging in firearms behavior, a small majority of such voters (53%) supports it at least somewhat; 44% oppose it at least somewhat.