

ILLINOIS FIREARMS STUDY FINDINGS

*Senate District 28*

***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 28<sup>1</sup>. 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 22-24, 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 seven proposed changes to state gun laws, with strong support near or above 80% for four of those proposals. Seven in ten support each of those proposals at least somewhat, and opposition does not exceed 26% for any of them.

***Reporting Lost/Stolen Guns***

The most popular proposal, with 91% 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 (88%), and those engaging in firearms behavior<sup>2</sup> (81%).

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<sup>1</sup> District 28 is mostly in Cook and DuPage Counties, but a small portion extends into Kane County. Communities that are partly or entirely in the district include: South Elgin, Bartlett, Wayne, West Chicago, St. Charles, Carol Stream, Bloomingdale, Hanover Park, Elk Grove Village, Schaumburg, Roselle, Palatine, and Rolling Meadows.

<sup>2</sup> The survey results show that 20% 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 (84%) strongly favors requiring a state license for handgun dealers. While Democrats (90% strongly favor) are the most supportive group, strong support remains high even among Republicans (79% strongly favor) and those engaging in firearms behavior (72%).

## ***Safe Storage***

The third proposal, receiving 81% strong support, would require gun owners to lock their guns if there are children under the age of 18 in the household. The partisan gap is slightly wider for this proposal, with Democrats (90% strongly favor) again significantly more supportive than Republicans (75%)—but it should be emphasized that even among Republicans, this proposal is very popular. Strong support does drop to 57% among those engaging in firearms behavior, with 27% opposing it at least somewhat (compared to 12% total opposition among voters as a whole).

## ***Expand Background Checks***

Nearly eight in ten (79%) 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. Strong support is only slightly higher among Democrats (86%) than Republicans (78%), and even a majority of those engaging in firearms behavior (55%) strongly favor this proposal. Although total opposition among those engaging in firearms behavior reaches 27%, total support still exceeds two-thirds (73%).

## ***Assault Weapons Ban***

As shown in other polling, support remains strong (70%) for a ban on the sale and possession of semi-automatic assault rifles. The ban receives significantly stronger support from women (76% strongly favor) than men (63%), and the spread is particularly wide between older women (78%) and younger men (54%). Support is stronger among Democrats (78%) than Republicans and Independents (65%). Strong support drops to just 44% among those with firearms behavior; 38% of such voters strongly oppose the ban. In total, those with firearms behavior are nearly evenly divided on the ban (52% favor / 47% oppose).

## ***Fifty-Caliber Rifle Ban***

There is also strong support (70%) for banning the sale and possession of powerful, military-grade fifty-caliber rifles. Democrats (85% strongly favor) are significantly more supportive than Republicans (61%) or Independents (57%).

Strong support drops to 45% among those with firearms behavior, and strong opposition climbs to 28%. In total, a narrow majority of those with firearms behavior (57%) support the ban at least somewhat, while 38% oppose it. In total, men (23% oppose) are almost twice as likely as women (12%) to oppose the ban.

### ***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) are much stronger supporters than men (46%), but two-thirds of men (68%) do support the proposal at least somewhat. Similarly, Democrats (65% strongly favor) are much more supportive than Republicans (48%) or Independents (41%), but majorities of both Republicans (66%) and Independents (77%) support the policy at least somewhat. Although strong support drops to 36% for those engaging in firearms behavior, a small majority of such voters (56%) supports it at least somewhat; 39% oppose it at least somewhat.