

ILLINOIS FIREARMS STUDY FINDINGS

*Senate District 43*

***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 43<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 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 proposals, with strong support exceeding 75% for four of those proposals. Two-thirds support each of those proposals at least somewhat, and opposition does not exceed 30% for any of them.

***Reporting Lost/Stolen Guns***

The most popular proposal, with 87% strongly supporting it, would require gun owners to inform law enforcement if any of their guns are lost or stolen. This proposal has near-universal appeal, with overwhelmingly strong support even among Republicans (83% strongly favor), men (84%), and those engaging in firearms behavior<sup>2</sup> (84%).

---

<sup>1</sup> District 43 is in Will County, and includes Joliet, the rural areas surrounding Joliet (particularly to the south and east), and all or part of northern communities such as Bolingbrook, Lemont, Woodridge, Lockport, and Crest Hill.

<sup>2</sup> The survey results show that 35% 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***

A large majority (83%) strongly favors requiring a state license for handgun dealers. Strong support is very high across the district, but significantly stronger among seniors (91% strongly favor) than those aged 45-64 (76%), with support weaker (though still high in absolute terms) among men aged 40 and over (73%). Those with post graduate degrees are significantly more supportive (93% strongly favor) than those with only a high school diploma (73%) or some college education (81%). There is no difference by partisanship, and even three-fourths (77%) of those with firearms behavior strongly support this proposal.

## ***Safe Storage***

Another highly-rated proposal, receiving 77% strong support, would require gun owners to lock their guns if there are children under the age of 18 in the household. Although strong support is high across the district, it is significantly higher among women aged 40 and older (89%) than among men in that same age group (66%) or women under age 40 (68%). Democrats (86% strongly favor) are significantly more supportive than Republicans (64%), and support is stronger among post graduates (84%) than those who did not go beyond high school (71%). Even a majority of those engaging in firearms behavior (63%) strongly support this proposal.

## ***Expand Background Checks***

More than three-fourths (77%) 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, but significantly stronger among women (82% strongly favor) than among men aged 40 and older (68%). Democrats (80%) and Independents (84%) are only somewhat more supportive than Republicans (71%) — but even two-thirds (67%) of those engaging in firearms behavior strongly favor this proposal.

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

There is strong support (66%) for banning the sale and possession of powerful, military-grade fifty-caliber rifles. Older women (79% strongly favor) are significantly more supportive than men (58%) or women under age 40 (64%). Among women, 82% favor the ban at least somewhat, compared to 65% among men. There are twice as many men opposing the ban at least somewhat (33%) than there are female opponents (15%). Total support is significantly higher among Democrats and Independents (80% favor at least somewhat) than among Republicans (62% favor at least somewhat). Nearly four in ten (37%) Republicans oppose the ban at least somewhat, which is more than twice the level of opposition among Democrats and Independents (17%). For the first time, strong support among those engaging in firearms behavior slips below the majority mark (to 49%). However, a majority

(55%) of those engaging in firearms behavior still support this proposal at least somewhat; 42% of such voters oppose it at least somewhat.

### ***Assault Weapons Ban***

As shown in other polling, support remains strong (62%) for a ban on the sale and possession of semi-automatic assault rifles. As this issue has been debated longer and louder than many of the other proposals, subgroup differences are somewhat more pronounced. Women (74% strongly favor), and especially older women (82%) are much more supportive than men (48%), and especially younger men (41%). Strong opposition among men reaches 23%, and 40% of men oppose the ban at least somewhat—more than twice the level of opposition among women (17% oppose at least somewhat). There is surprisingly little difference between Democrats (61% strongly favor) and Republicans (57%) on this issue. Those with firearms behavior are nearly evenly divided on this issue, with 52% favoring it at least somewhat and 47% opposing it at least somewhat.

### ***One Handgun per Month***

Limiting the number of handguns an individual can purchase to one handgun per month garners a bare majority (51%) strongly supporting it. More than two-thirds (69%) support it at least somewhat, while just over one-fourth (29%) oppose it at least somewhat. Women (60% strongly favor), are much stronger supporters than men (41%). More than three-fourths (78%) of women support the proposal at least somewhat, while only 20% oppose it at least somewhat. Among men, total support drops to 60%, and opposition (39%) is nearly twice what it is among women. Democrats and Independents (74% somewhat or strongly favor) are more likely than Republicans (62%) to support the proposal at least somewhat; opposition is much higher among Republicans (37%) than among Democrats or Independents (24%). Those engaging in firearms behavior are highly polarized on this issue, with 32% strongly favoring it and 29% strongly opposing it. A small majority (56%) of such voters favors the policy at least somewhat, while 43% oppose it at least somewhat.