



Common-sense Gun Policy and Illinois Politics

How do candidates who support gun policy reform fare in election years?

The conventional wisdom in Springfield has been that supporting gun violence prevention policies might compromise election prospects. This is not true. The facts are that the vast majority of voters are supportive of reasonable gun regulations, including NRA members, FOID card holders and hunters. The small, vocal minority represented by the gun lobby does not speak for the voters. We urge our elected officials in Springfield to stand up to the gun lobby and support SB 1007, SB 940, HB 758 and HB 1696.

Here are the facts:

In Illinois, the Brady Campaign, working with its dedicated network of Million Mom March Chapters, endorsed 35 local candidates for the 2006 Fall Election, and 33 were victorious (the remaining 2 lost by very small margins). Gun violence prevention advocates provided resources and active support for all of these local candidates. Most notable:

- Fred Crespo beat the incumbent Terry Parks (A rated by NRA) in a close race, with banning assault weapons as one of his top issues.
- Dan Kotowski beat the incumbent Cheryl Axley in a close race, with banning assault weapons as his top issue.

In addition, Governor Rod Blagojevich and Attorney General Lisa Madigan, both endorsed by gun violence prevention advocates, defeated their gun lobby supported opponents.

The facts are that voters want common sense gun laws and they will take action to make their views known and voices heard.

According to a bipartisan survey released by the campaign in March, an overwhelming majority of Illinois voters support common-sense policies to reduce gun crime and violence. 96% of voters support requiring gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms to law enforcement and 89% support requiring background checks on all private handgun transactions. Support was similarly high on banning assault weapons (79%). This was true not only for the statewide results, but in the oversampled districts, including Senate Districts 21, 23, 28, and 43.

The truth is that advocates for common sense gun laws will take action.

Since March 2007, the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (www.icpgv.org), which includes law enforcement officials, medical and health professionals, faith-based organizations, victim advocates and state and local policymakers, has advocated for meaningful gun policy reform to reduce preventable gun crime and violence. Members of the campaign have made thousands of phone calls, generated letters to representatives, held district meetings and visited their legislators. The media coverage, particularly on editorial pages, has shown that this is an important issue for the health and safety of our state.

Recent Editorials and Letters to the Editor in Support of Commonsense Gun Laws:

05/25/2007 – Editorial—“Limiting the Collateral Damage,” *The Chicago Tribune*

“...Legislation to prohibit the sale and possession of magazines that deliver more than 10 rounds of ammunition has passed the Illinois Senate and will likely come to a vote in the House next week. Most encouraging, it is getting support from Republicans and Democrats...”

(continued...)

05/25/2007 – Op-Ed by Nina Vinik, Legal Community Against Violence – “Support New Gun Controls,” *The Joliet Herald*

“...This public health approach can also work to reduce gun deaths and injuries. The laws being considered in Springfield will help reduce the lethality, accessibility and the sheer number of illegal guns on our streets. It will not happen overnight, but just as with regulations on cars and driving, we can reduce the number of gun deaths...”

05/23/2007 – Op-Ed by Reverend Jesse Jackson -- “Organize to Fight Gun Crime,” *The Chicago Sun Times*

“...The NRA wants guns on streets. The gun dealers profit from the sale. Guns are becoming a statement of manhood. The victims -- and their friends, relatives and neighbors, police and firefighters -- must demand real gun control. Gun control won't end violence, but it will lower the casualties and help protect the innocent. It will make it harder for terrorists -- foreign and homegrown -- to buy guns in America. It will strengthen the porous borders of metropolitan areas against the gun peddlers who profit from selling guns to gangs. It might even allow us to celebrate the life of the next Blair Holt rather than mourn his death...”

05/06/2007 – Letter to the Editor – Judy Lohr, President, The League of Women Voters of the Park Forest Area, “Stopping Gun Violence,” *The Park Forest Star*

“...The League of Women Voters of the Park Forest Area urges our representatives to support House Bill 758, a bill that would require the private transfer of firearms to occur at the place of business of a federally-licensed firearm dealer who will conduct a background check of the buyer and follow all other applicable federal, state and local laws...”

05/03/2007 – Letter to the Editor – Jerie Beth Karkos, M.D., “Common-sense Laws Can Curb Violence,” *The Springfield State Journal-Register*

“...As a pediatrician specializing in rehabilitation for the past 15 years, I have seen firsthand the devastation of gun violence. I have seen what devastation bullets can do to a body, family and community. I am not so naïve as to believe any law will totally prevent criminal deaths by guns; however, layers of laws, consistently enforced, will decrease the likelihood of that happening. It is only logical to believe that the time required for background checks can reduce the numbers of impulsive crimes of passion...”

05/03/2007 – Letter to the Editor – Michael Robbins, “State Reps. Dropped the Ball on Handgun Bill,” *The Chicago Defender*

“...A measure was considered by the Illinois House that would have required a criminal background check on all handgun sales in Illinois (HB 758)...As a former Chicago police officer and a victim of handgun violence, I am well aware of the impact of gun violence has on African American communities which are disproportionately affected by it...”

5/01/2007 – Letter to the Editor – Dr. Jim Webster, M.D. President, Chicago Board of Health “Common-sense laws would curb gun violence,” *The Springfield State Journal-Register*

“...We need more elected officials to step up and look for ways to prevent these tragedies. It is still too easy for criminals and mentally unstable people to get a handgun – either legally or illegally – from a gun dealer, a neighbor, or off the streets...”

4/27/07 – Letter to the Editor – Richard Devine, Cook County State’s Attorney, “Gun Bills Would Make Our Streets Safer,” *The Chicago Sun Times*

“These are not isolated incidents. Other shootings, some fatal and some not, have plagued our community for years. Each year, the gun lobby succeeds in derailing common-sense legislation that is aimed at curbing the violence.”

4/18/07 – Editorial -- “Deny Easy Gun Access to Dangerous People,” *The Chicago Sun Times*

“...In Springfield, the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is pushing several worthwhile bills. They include requiring background checks on private handgun sales . . . [and] requiring gun owners to report lost or stolen weapons . . . The group’s poll shows that those proposals are not only supported by a majority of Illinoisans, they’re supported by a majority of gun owners...”