

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FR:** Lincoln Park Strategies  
**RE:** Polling Results on Guns in Vermont  
**DATE:** May 2, 2014

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Our recent survey of likely voters in Vermont<sup>1</sup> found an overwhelming majority of voters support requiring all gun buyers to pass a criminal background check for all gun sales, no matter where they buy the gun and no matter who they buy it from. Additionally, a strong majority of likely voters also would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports criminal background checks on all gun sales, and seven in ten Vermonters agree that support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment goes hand in hand with keeping guns out of the hands of criminals.

Overall, 81 percent of likely voters in Vermont support requiring all gun buyers to pass a criminal background check. Contrary to conventional wisdom, support for background checks cuts across party, regional, ideological, and demographic lines. Indeed, 68 percent of Republicans, 93 percent of Democrats, and 79 percent of Independents support background checks for all gun sales, with support incredibly consistent across the state ranging from a low of 78 percent support in Chittenden County to a high of 84 percent in the central area of the state (Addison, Washington, Orange, and Rutland Counties). Furthermore, even as gun ownership remains a significant part of local culture in Vermont, a strong majority of gun owners in Vermont (77 percent) support background checks for all sales.

Not only do voters in Vermont support background checks, but they are willing to translate that to support at the ballot box. Across the state, 67 percent of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports background checks, while just 15 percent say they are less likely. This sentiment cuts across party lines, with a majority of Democrats (83 percent), Independents (62 percent), and Republicans (54 percent) agreeing that they would be more likely to support a candidate who supports background checks. This is compared to just 5 percent of Democrats, 16 percent of Independents, and 26 percent of Republicans who say they would be less likely to support a candidate backing this position. Furthermore, a majority of gun owners (61 percent) also say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports background checks, while just 20 percent would be less likely to vote for a candidate who is in favor of background checks.

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<sup>1</sup> Findings are based on 600 interviews among likely voters conducted by landline from April 22-24, 2014. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is  $\pm 3.99$ .



Given these numbers it is not surprising to see a vast majority of voters in Vermont believing support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment also means support for keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. Indeed, two-thirds of gun owners (67 percent) agree with this statement, as do 69 percent of Republicans, 64 percent of Independents, and 76 percent of Democrats across the state.

Overall, a majority of voters in Vermont have a gun in their household, but that does not mean there is a lack of support for background checks for all gun purchases. In fact, both gun owners and non-owners alike agree that support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment goes hand in hand with keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, and a majority of both groups would be more likely to support a candidate who favors this approach. While Vermont has the highest concentration of gun owners in the Northeast, this does not mean that common sense approaches are not strongly supported. Elected officials and candidates running for office should listen to the views of their constituents or there is a good chance they will pay the price on Election Day.

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