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Broad Support for Protecting Victims by Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Domestic Abusers

Support holds despite opposition arguments

To: Interested Parties

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There is no controversy about protecting victims from domestic abusers and stalkers, as Minnesota voters strongly support legislation to keep guns out of the hands of stalkers and domestic abusers by prohibiting them from buying or possessing guns, closing the 'long gun loophole,' and ensuring that domestic abusers turn in their guns once they become prohibited from possessing them. Support is strong across partisan and demographic lines and holds in the face of standard opposition messaging.

The following memo is based on a survey of 500 registered voters from 20 swing House districts across Minnesota¹. The survey was conducted Mar. 11-13, 2014, and has a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent.

Key Findings

Minnesota voters support a broad range of proposals to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and stalkers. Seventy-nine percent support a complete package of laws² that includes prohibiting those with domestic violence restraining orders from possessing a gun, requiring stalkers and domestic abusers to turn in their guns, and requiring all domestic violence convictions be sent to the National Instant Background Check System so abusers fail background checks.

- Three-quarters of voters support prohibiting those subject to a domestic violence restraining order from buying or possessing a gun.

¹ See Appendix A for a complete list of districts.

² For a complete list of provisions tested, please see Appendix B.

- Seventy-five percent believe domestic violence convictions should be sent to the National Instant Background Check System, so abusers fail background checks.
- Seven in ten support extending current law so domestic abusers are not allowed to own any type of gun, including shotguns and rifles. The same number supports requiring convicted domestic abusers to turn in their guns.
- Two-thirds support requiring those convicted of stalking to turn in all of their guns for three years.

The intensity of the support is dramatic; while 79 percent support the proposal including all provisions listed above, nearly half, 49 percent, “strongly” support the proposal, only 8 percent strongly oppose.

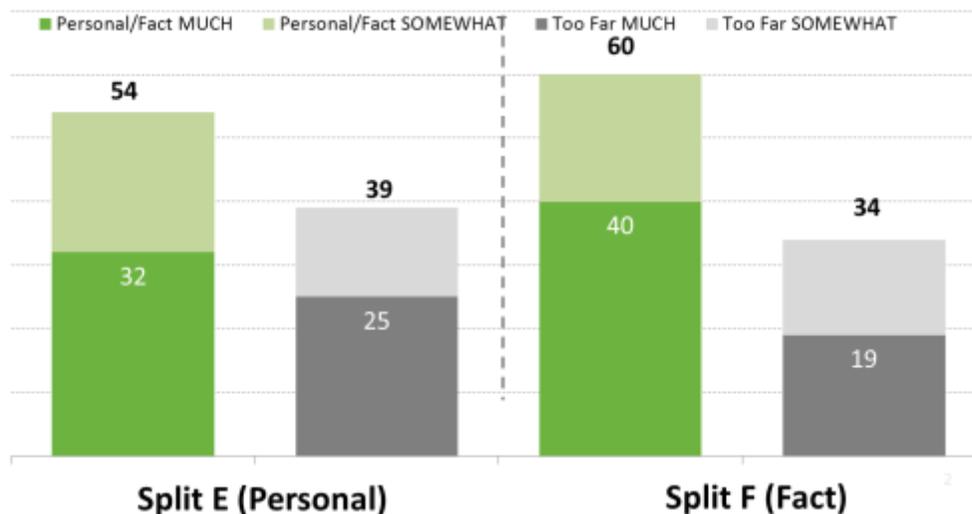
Minnesota voters support common-sense public safety regulations. While at least 48 percent of these voters own at least one gun, 76 percent believe it is possible to protect the rights of gun owners while strengthening the laws that keep guns out of the wrong hands, including 76 percent of gun owners, 80 percent of independents, and 68 percent of Republicans. They do not believe that every gun law is an attack on the rights of gun owners. That belief allows this proposal to enjoy broad support across the electorate, including Republicans, gun owners and rural residents, as well as critical swing voters like independents.

Table 1: Support for Proposal by Key Groups

	Strongly Favor	Total Favor
Total	49	79
Men	37	72
Women	60	85
Democrats	65	87
Independents	43	71
Republicans	39	76
Greater MN	45	78
Suburbs	55	80
Gun owners	46	79
Not gun owners	60	86
Gun laws less strong/kept as is	32	67

Voter support for keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and stalkers holds up under opposition messaging. Both a personal story about domestic violence and guns and a fact-based message about the impact of these laws were tested against the same opposition messaging that threatened gun confiscation, registries, and ineffectiveness. Both positive messages strongly held against the argument that these laws go too far. To see the full messages tested, see appendix C.

Graph 1: Gun Proposal Statement Pair



Appendix A: District List

HD 2A

HD 2B

HD 5B

HD 8B

HD 10B

HD 11B

HD 12A

HD 14A

HD 14B

HD 17A

HD 17B

HD 27A

HD 42A

HD 43A

HD 44A

HD 48A

HD 49B

HD 51B

HD 53B

HD 56B

Appendix B: Full Text and Scores of Proposed Provisions

Current Minnesota law prohibits domestic abusers from owning a handgun. I am now going to read you some specific provisions that may be included in the proposal that would prevent those convicted of domestic violence from possessing a shotgun or rifle, and to prevent those convicted of stalking from possessing a gun. For each one, please tell me on a scale from 0-10 whether it would make you more or less likely to support the proposal, where 10 means you are very likely to support a proposal with this provision and 0 means you are not likely to support a proposal with this provision, and 5 means it would make no difference either way.

	Mean	10	8-10	6-10	5	0-4	DK/ Ref
(BACKGROUND FAIL) Require that all domestic violence convictions be sent to the National Instant Background Check System so that domestic violence offenders fail background checks.....	7.9	49	66	75	14	9	1
(REST. ORDER PROHIBIT) Prohibit those subject to a domestic violence restraining order from buying or possessing a gun.	7.7	49	62	75	14	10	1
(SURRENDER) Require domestic abusers to turn in their guns.....	7.6	49	64	71	14	14	1
(SPLIT)(LONG GUN PROHIBIT) Prohibit those who are convicted of domestic assault from owning any gun, including shotguns and rifles.	7.5	47	61	71	14	14	1
(SPLIT)(EXTEND THE LAW) Extend the law so that those who were convicted of domestic assault are also not allowed to own shotguns and rifles.....	7.5	46	58	70	16	13	1
(SPLIT)(3 YEARS) Require those convicted of stalking to turn in all of their guns for three years.	7.3	47	57	65	19	15	1
(SPLIT)(3 YEARS--NO GUN) Require those convicted of stalking to turn in all of their guns for three years, even if no gun was used in the stalking crime.	7.2	44	54	67	16	15	2

Appendix C: Full Text of Proposal Positive/Negative Statement Pair

We set the following statement pair up as a split exercise, where half heard the split E message (“personal”) and the “too far” counter, and half heard the split F message (“fact”) and the “too far” counter.

(SPLIT E) (PERSONAL) Americans have the right to own a gun, but that does not mean we should do nothing to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. This common sense proposal tightens Minnesota law and closes loopholes that put victims at risk, such as Nancy Sullivan, a successful lawyer who was shot and killed by her boyfriend as she was trying to leave him. Her boyfriend had previous domestic violence charges and was ordered to domestic abuse counseling, but it didn't work. Violent domestic abusers have no business owning a gun. We may not be able to stop every gun crime, but this proposal helps protect people like Nancy and save some lives.

(SPLIT F) (FACT) Americans have the right to own a gun, but that does not mean we should do nothing to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. This common sense proposal tightens Minnesota law and closes loopholes that put victims at risk, and it can have a real impact. In 9 out of 10 cases, attempted murders of women involve previous stalking, and requiring domestic abusers to turn in their guns has reduced partner homicides by 19 percent in other states. We may not be able to stop every gun crime, but this proposal will help protect victims and save some lives.

(FULL SAMPLE) (TOO FAR) No one believes that violent criminals should have guns, but this proposal goes too far. This law allows the government to confiscate the guns of private citizens and create a de facto gun registry, directly violating their second amendment rights. It will do nothing to stop crime; criminals will still get around these laws by stealing guns or getting others to buy them. We don't need more gun laws on the books, we need to enforce current laws so those who commit domestic violence go to jail for a long time.