

To: Interested Parties  
From: Margie Omero, GBA Strategies  
Re: Recent polling on guns  
Date: July 18, 2018

## **National Voter Survey Findings**

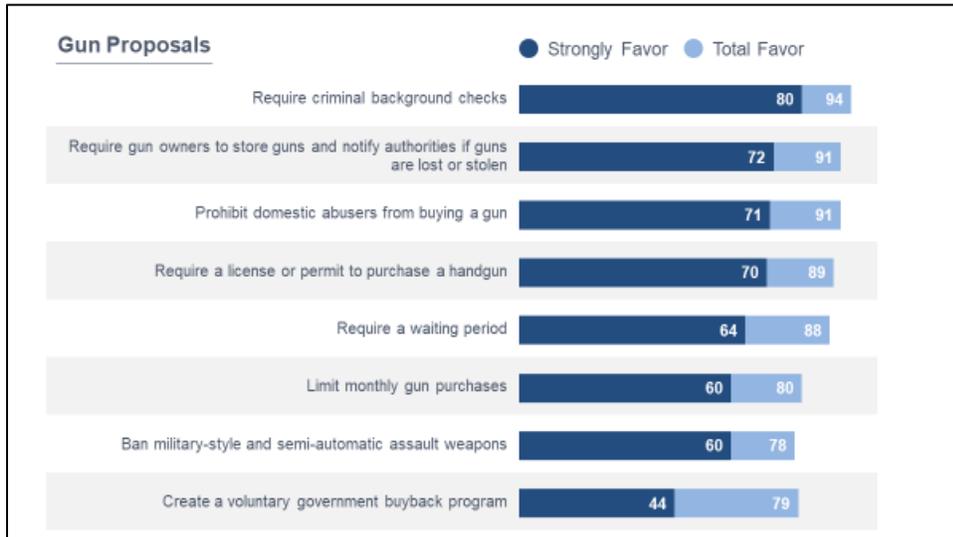
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*This memo highlights key findings survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted June 12-16, 2018 via online web panel, on behalf of Center for American Progress and Guns Down.*

Our recent poll shows clear enthusiasm for stronger gun laws that make guns harder to get. These results both reflect and confirm other recent public polling showing a shift in the aftermath of the Parkland shooting, and show continued support for a variety of stronger gun laws. Additionally, we experimented with assessing the impact of a campaign message on stronger gun laws, and found taking action on stronger gun laws can improve a candidate's electoral chances, across party lines. Lastly, the NRA's reputation is suffering greatly, even before the recent arrest of suspected Russian agent Maria Butina.

### **Majorities support a variety of stronger gun laws**

It's clear where voters stand on gun laws; two-thirds (67%) want them stronger, with a quarter preferring laws be "kept as they are now," and barely any (8%) saying "less strong" laws are their choice. Even half of Republicans prefer stronger laws. As has been written elsewhere, this broader question has in the past shown less support for stronger laws than an examination of specific proposals might suggest. Now, support for stronger gun laws transcends question wording.



Voters want an “all of the above” approach on guns. Every proposal we tested receives majority support, *even among Republicans*. Many proposals making guns harder to get also garner majority *strong* support, such as limiting gun purchases through monthly limits,

requiring stronger background checks or waiting periods, and limiting gun purchases for people with restraining orders.

### Candidates could benefit from a strong message on stronger gun laws

Guns are likely to play a major role in voters’ midterm decisions. A majority say it will have a “major impact” in their decisions. In a split sampled test, there is no difference overall if it’s phrased as “a candidate’s position on guns” or “a candidate’s position on reducing gun violence” (54%, 55%, respectively). However, Democrats find both positions more important to their vote than do Republicans (major impact on vote: “position on guns:” 64% among Democrats, 54% among Republicans; “position on reducing gun violence:” 72% among Democrats, 41% among Republicans).

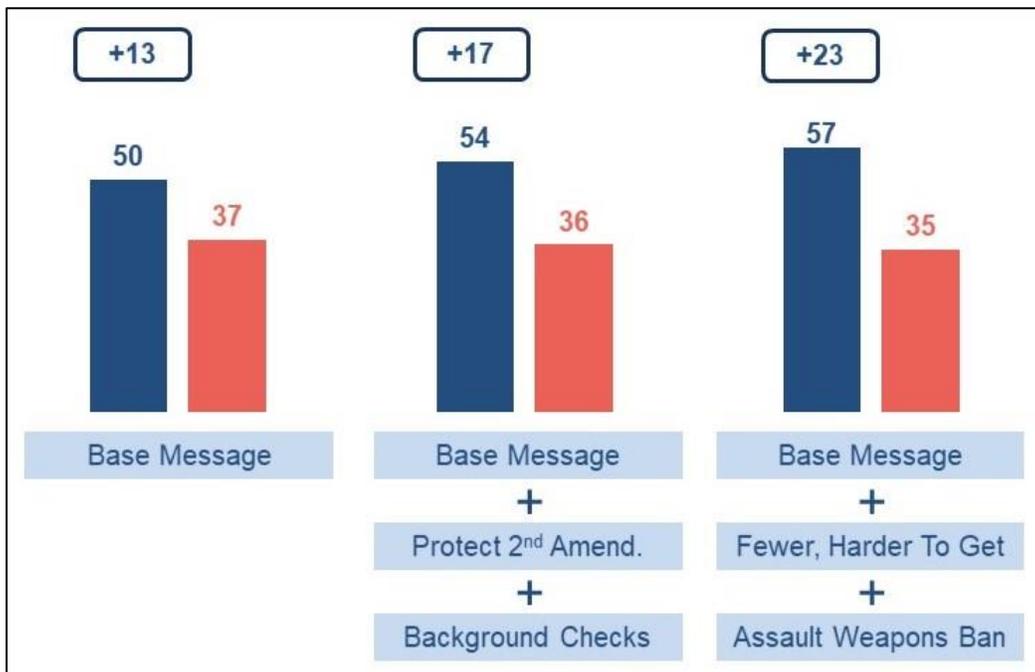
Our additional experiment shows the added impact of a gun message as part of a broader progressive platform. All respondents heard a conservative message on taxes, economic job growth, less regulation, fewer entitlements, stronger borders, and renegotiated trade deals. All respondents also heard one of three versions of a progressive message on economic opportunity: the “base” message without a mention of guns, the base message along with an argument for universal background check, and the base message combined with an argument for making guns harder to get by passing an assault weapons ban. Respondents were then asked to vote for their preferred candidate; no candidate party labels were given.

**(SPLIT A) Base Message:** The first candidate says we need to focus on improving economic opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy few. That means focusing on our public schools, making college more affordable, and making it easier to afford quality health care.

**(SPLIT B) Base Message + Protect 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment + Universal Background Checks:** The first candidate says we need to focus on improving economic opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy few. That means focusing on our public schools, making college more affordable, and making it easier to afford quality health care. This candidate also says we can protect the Second Amendment while also keeping guns out of dangerous hands, through commonsense gun laws like universal background checks.

**(SPLIT C) Base Message + Fewer Guns, Harder To Get + Assault Weapons Ban:** The first candidate says we need to focus on improving economic opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy few. That means focusing on our public schools, making college more affordable, and making it easier to afford quality health care. This candidate thinks we need fewer guns, not more, and that guns should be harder to get, not easier. This candidate also says we should ban military-style assault weapons like the AR-15.

The second candidate says thanks to the recent tax cut, the economy is doing better, and Americans are keeping more of what they earn. To continue this recovery, this candidate says we need to cut wasteful spending, prevent people from living off the government, protect our borders, crack down on crime, and re-negotiate trade deals to put American workers first.



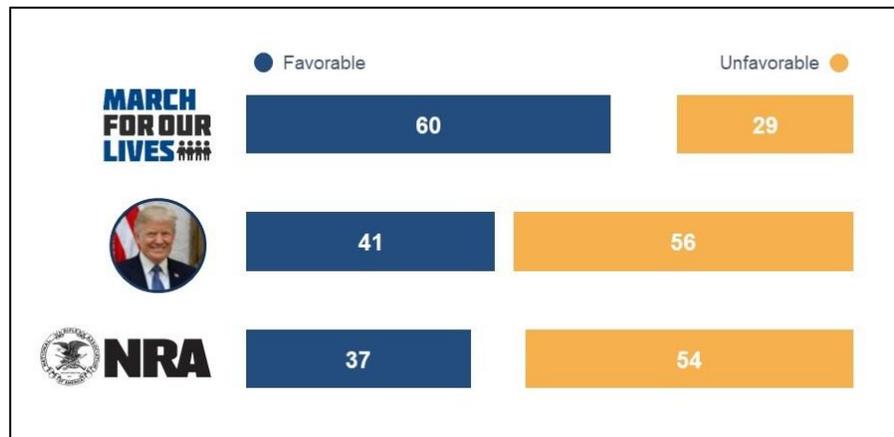
This exercise shows the effect of the strongest message on guns. The assault weapons ban candidate earns a 23-point lead, while the candidate not mentioning guns garners only a 13-point lead. There are sizeable gender differences here. White women vastly prefer the candidate supporting fewer guns over the other two treatments (no gun message: +12, background checks: +14, assault weapons ban: +35). White men only prefer the softer background check message that mentions balancing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment (-5, +9, -2). The gender gap extends across party lines. Democratic, independent, and Republican women all prefer the third treatment over the other two; men across party lines don't.

Interestingly, older voters are more likely to differentiate between the arguments than younger voters. Voter over 50 prefer the third treatment (+3, +9, +20), with smaller differences among 18-34 year olds (+36, +32, +27).

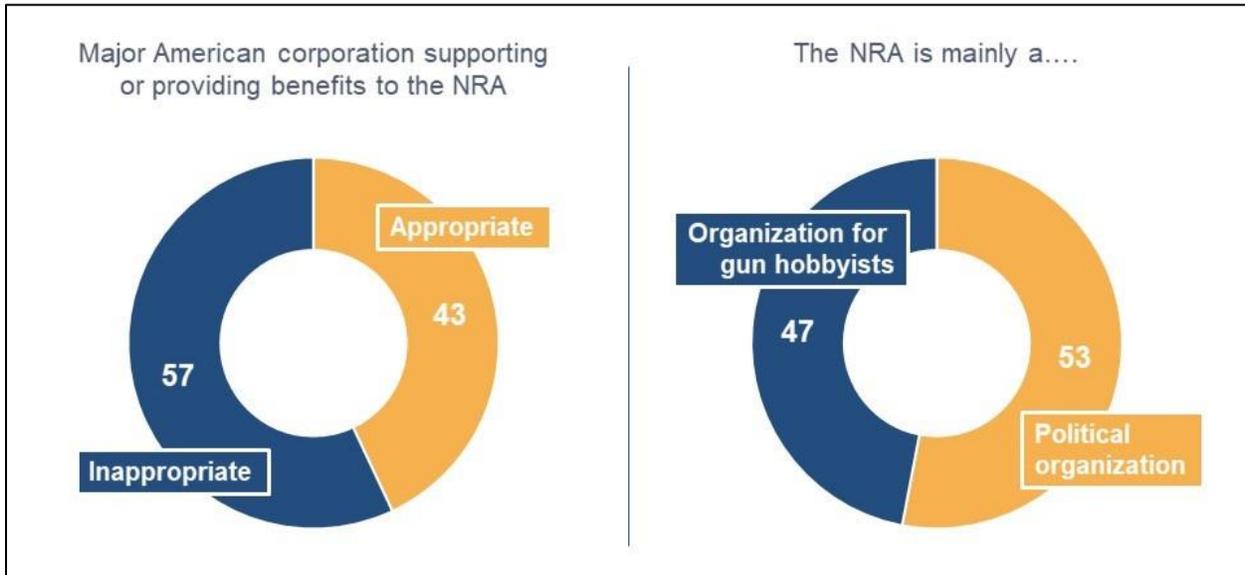
**The NRA's reputation is suffering greatly, moving from hobbyists to lobbyists**

The NRA and its leaders are now unpopular, a reversal from recent years. Over half (54%) view the group unfavorably, including both independent men and women (favorable – unfavorable: -20 with independent men, -25 with independent women). The NRA has a worse favorable-to-unfavorable ratio (0.69-to-1) than the also-unpopular President Trump (0.73-to-1). By comparison, the Parkland students' movement is incredibly popular, making it the most popular person or entity we tested. Even Republican women are favorable toward the movement (+5 favorable – unfavorable).

Neither the NRA's outgoing or incoming leaders are popular. Each are 7-points more unpopular than popular, although Oliver North is better known than Wayne LaPierre.



Most now also see the NRA as a political organization, with whom it is largely inappropriate to associate. Over half (57%) say it is not appropriate “for major American corporation to support or provide benefits to the NRA,” an increase from a Guns Down survey in 2017, where Americans were evenly divided (49% appropriate, 51% inappropriate).



This matches how many see the NRA’s shift from hobbyists to lobbyists. Half (53%) describe the organization as “mainly a political organization that fights to weaken gun laws and help the gun industry sell more guns” as opposed to “mainly an organization for gun hobbyists and for those interested in firearms education.” This is also a shift from 2017, when the numbers were reversed, and a majority (53%) found the organization mainly focused on safety and education training.

**Conclusion**

This polling shows what advocates for stronger gun laws have known for some time: voters want to make guns harder to get, not easier. There are many ways to achieve that goal; a long list of popular proposals shows there is much available bipartisan common ground. Further, a conversation about guns can be an asset to candidates, not a liability. And the NRA is no longer the respected validator it may have once been.