

GUNS | JULY 2013

92%: Not the Only Number You Should Know in the Gun Debate

By Sarah Trumble and Lanae Erickson Hatafsky

Everyone's heard that 92% of Americans support requiring background checks for gun sales. If you follow gun politics, you probably know that 92% of background checks are completed in minutes. But 92% isn't the only number you should know in the gun debate. Below are a few more key figures from recent polling which illustrate the political consequences of a vote against the Manchin-Toomey background check "gunsense" bill.

It turns out that an NRA endorsement hurts more than it helps.

Many politicians blamed the Senate's failure to pass any gun safety legislation on the influence of the NRA. But the polling shows currying the group's favor may hurt more than it helps:

- 40% of Americans say they are *less likely* to support a candidate who has been endorsed by the NRA.¹
- Only 28% say an NRA endorsement makes them *more likely* to support a politician.²

Americans are *less likely* to re-elect Senators who oppose background checks.

People's feelings about a no vote on the Manchin-Toomey compromise in April go even deeper than plummeting approval ratings:

- Nationwide, 51% of voters are *less likely* to vote for a Senator who opposed the background check bill, while only 14% are *more likely* to support one.³
- Not only is Arizona Senator Jeff Flake's approval rating down 21 points, but 52% of Arizona voters say they are *less likely* to vote for him because he opposed the background check bill, compared to only 19% who are *more likely* to do so.⁴
- When New Hampshire Senator Kelly Ayotte voted against Manchin-Toomey, not only did her approval rating fall 15 points, but 50% of New Hampshire voters reported they are *less likely* to vote for her because of that vote. Less than half that number—23%—say her no vote makes them *more likely* to support her.⁵
- Though Nevada Senator Dean Heller's approval rating stayed about even following his vote against background checks (it fell 2 points), 46% of Nevadans say they are *less likely* to vote for him in the future because of that stance. Only 25% of respondents were *more likely* to vote for him due to his vote.⁶
- Ohio Senator Rob Portman has seen his approval rating fall 17 points, and 36% of his constituents say they are *less likely* to support him in future elections because he voted against background checks, compared to only 19% who are *more likely* to support him.⁷

Americans are *more likely* to re-elect Senators who support background checks.

By contrast, Americans are pledging to stand by Senators who voted for background checks to help them win re-election:

- Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu's approval rating is up 6 points, and 44% of her constituents say her vote makes them *more likely* to vote for her in the future, compared to only 26% who are *less likely* to do so.⁸
- Senator Kay Hagan's approval rating in North Carolina stayed essentially even following her vote in favor of background checks, dipping just 1 point. But 52% of her constituents say that vote makes them *more likely* to reelect her, compared to half that number (26%) who say they are *less likely* to support her.⁹
- And even in Alaska, 39% of voters prefer a Senator who supports background checks, compared to only about a quarter who say they'd rather vote for someone who opposes them.¹⁰

Endnotes

1 "Voters Still Mad about Lack of Gun Legislation," Public Policy Polling, Poll, June 14, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/06/voters-still-mad-about-lack-of-gun-legislation.html>.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 "More Backlash Against Senators on Gun Vote," Public Policy Polling, Poll, April 29, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/04/more-backlash-against-senators-on-gun-vote.html>.

5 "Ayotte Faces Backlash Over Gun Vote," Public Policy Polling, Poll, April 24, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/04/ayotte-faces-backlash-over-gun-vote.html>.

6 "More Backlash Against Senators on Gun Vote," Public Policy Polling, Poll, April 29, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/04/more-backlash-against-senators-on-gun-vote.html>.

7 Ibid.

8 "Hagan, Landrieu Gun Votes Could Help in 2014," Public Policy Polling, Poll, May 2, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/05/hagan-landrieu-gun-voters-could-help-in-2014.html>.

9 Ibid.

10 "More Backlash Against Senators on Gun Vote," Public Policy Polling, Poll, April 29, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/04/more-backlash-against-senators-on-gun-vote.html>.