



**Widespread Support Exists for Stricter Gun Laws...
Gun Reform Major Factor for Midterms
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This Marist Poll Reports:

Following the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, 71% of Americans, including 58% of gun owners, agree the laws governing the sale of firearms need to be stricter. This is up from 64% in October 2017. More than one in five Americans (23%) say gun legislation should remain as it is, and only 5% think the laws covering gun sales should be less strict.

Regardless of demographic group, at least a majority of Americans think gun laws should be strengthened. Democrats (93%) and women (81%), especially those who live in a small city or the suburbs (84%), are among those most likely to support stricter gun laws.

Although those who say they voted for President Donald Trump (51%) and those who identify as strong Republicans (51%) are the least likely to want stricter gun laws, even a majority of these voters favor strengthening them.

Nearly three in four Americans (74%) believe the students who survived the assault in Parkland and are speaking out about gun violence will have either a major (34%) or minor (40%) impact on gun reform in the United States. 23% say they will not have any impact at all, and 3% are unsure.

“Americans are experiencing a heated debate over gun policy in the wake of the latest school shooting,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “What jumps out in the findings is that there is not only widespread support for gun reform, but it has become a voting issue for gun reform advocates, especially women.”

Most registered voters nationally (85%) say a candidate’s position on gun legislation will influence their vote. Included here are 59% of registered voters who say a candidate’s stance on the issue will be a major factor and 26% who report it will be a minor one. 13% say it will not play a role in deciding their vote, and 2% are unsure.

Of note, 77% of Americans who say a candidate's position on gun policy will have a major influence on their vote in this year's midterm elections assert gun laws need to be strengthened.

Women (66%) are more likely than men (51%) to say gun policy plays a key role in their vote. While more than six in ten voters in the cities and suburbs have this view, even majorities of those living in small towns and rural areas say the same.

A majority of voters (54%) say they would definitely (34%) or probably (20%) vote **for** a congressional candidate who supports a ban on semi-automatic assault guns. This compares with 40% who report they would definitely (24%) or probably (16%) vote **against** a congressional hopeful who backed a ban.

Nearly six in ten gun owners (57%) would vote **against** a candidate who favors a ban on these weapons. But, more than one in three gun owners (35%) say they would vote **for** a candidate that supports prohibiting assault guns. Differences in opinion also exist along party lines, by age, by gender, and by geographic regions. Especially noteworthy is the divide between men and women who live in small cities or the suburbs. 72% of women in these communities say they would support a candidate who wants to ban assault guns. Only 46% of men in small cities or suburbs say the same.

When it comes to the NRA, a majority of voters (51%) think they would definitely or probably vote **against** a congressional candidate who receives campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association. In contrast, 37% of voters say they would probably or definitely vote **for** a candidate who accepts campaign donations from the NRA.

80% of Democrats and 51% of independents would vote **against** a candidate with NRA contributions while 70% of Republicans would vote **for** such a candidate.

"Last week's shooting revitalized the debate over gun policy," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "If this intensity of debate continues to shape discourse through the midterms, candidates running for office will need to pay careful attention to the issue."

Advocates for gun reform are currently intent on taking their views to the ballot box. 62% of voters who say a candidate's position on gun reform will greatly influence their vote say they will definitely (45%) or probably (17%) vote **against** a candidate who receives donations from the NRA. NRA contributions to candidates are particularly concerning to African American voters (74%), Latino voters (54%), women (61%), and voters who live in the suburbs (62%), or urban areas (61%). Although notable proportions of white voters (48%), men (39%), and voters living in small towns (40%) or rural areas (39%) share this view, these voters are less likely to say a contribution from the NRA is a strike against a congressional candidate.

Looking at the generic congressional ballot question, a plurality of voters nationally (46%) support the Democrat in their district compared with 39% who back the Republican. 55% of voters who report a candidate's stance on gun legislation will greatly impact their vote say they will vote for the Democrat compared with 32% who will vote for the Republican.

"In past elections, Democrats have steered clear of gun reform, and Republicans were eager to trumpet their position," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Right now, it's the Democrats that have the advantage on the issue among voters."

President Trump's job approval rating stands at 38% among residents nationally. 54% disapprove of the president's job performance, and 9% are unsure. This is little changed from Marist's survey in early February.