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To: Interested Parties

Subject: Candidates out of touch on gun violence prevention could be in trouble on Election Day; Stronger gun laws among top concerns this year for voters

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A new Public Policy Polling survey finds that preventing further gun violence is a major issue on the level of jobs, education, and Social Security for Florida and New Hampshire voters this year, and candidates who support gun safety measures are more popular than those who oppose them. Nine in ten voters (92%) in both Florida and New Hampshire say that making it harder for criminals to get guns is either a “very important” or “somewhat important” issue for them in the upcoming election—similar to the 94% (FL) and 96% (NH) who say creating jobs is important, 92% (FL) and 95% (NH) who say improving education is important, and 95% (FL) and 94% (NH) who say protecting Social Security is important. 77% of Floridians and 72% of New Hampshire voters say abortion is an important issue for them this year.

Candidates vocal in their support for gun reform perform well in Florida and New Hampshire. Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton leads Republican Donald Trump by three points (46/43) in Florida and by thirteen points (50/37) in New Hampshire. Democratic Rep. Patrick Murphy and incumbent Republican Sen. Marco Rubio are statistically tied (40/42) in Florida while Democrat Maggie Hassan leads incumbent Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte by five points (47/42) in New Hampshire. Almost three in four Florida voters (73%) and two out of three New Hampshire voters (67%) would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports requiring a criminal background check to buy a firearm, suggesting ample room for growth for pro-gun violence prevention candidates before the election in November. Even candidates with a broader message of strengthening gun laws are embraced by a majority of Florida voters (58%) and New Hampshire voters (57%) would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports comprehensive gun reform.

In particular, expanding background checks is such an important issue for the states’ voters that they are willing to disregard candidates’ stances on other issues when considering whom to cast their ballot for. A plurality (48%) of voters in Florida and New Hampshire (47%) in New Hampshire say they are less likely to vote for a candidate who opposes background checks on gun sales, even if they agree with that candidate on most other issues.



Key findings from the surveys include:

- Preventing gun violence is a transcendent issue in Florida and New Hampshire, attracting concern from voters of all backgrounds and partisan leanings. At least 80% of gun owners, women, men, Democrats, Republicans, independents, and voters of all age groups in both states all say that making it harder for criminals to get guns is either a “very important” or “somewhat important” issue for them.
- A diverse, bipartisan bloc of voters is united in endorsing candidates who support requiring a criminal background check to purchase a firearm. Strong majorities of gun owners (68% FL, 70% NH), women (76% FL, 71% NH), men (70% FL, 63% NH), Democrats (81% FL, 84% NH), Republicans (65% in FL), independents (71% FL, 67% NH), Hispanics (71% in FL), and majorities in every age group all say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports background checks for gun purchases.
- A significant portion of voters think Sen. Marco Rubio and Sen. Kelly Ayotte are stronger advocates for gun violence prevention than their actual policy positions suggest. 76% of voters either think Rubio supports prohibiting individuals on the FBI Terror Watch List from buying guns or they are not sure of his position, while 74% of New Hampshire voters think the same about Ayotte. 69% either think Rubio supports background checks on gun sales or they are unsure of his stance, 59% think the same for Ayotte. 57% of voters either think Rubio and Patrick Murphy have the same positions on guns or they are not sure how the two candidates stack up, 41% are similarly unsure when it comes to Ayotte and Maggie Hassan. A simple informational campaign reminding voters of Rubio and Ayotte’s out-of-touch, anti-common sense positions could do serious damage to their candidacies leading up to Election Day.
- Florida and New Hampshire voters are overwhelmingly in favor of the gun proposals introduced in Congress this year. 85% of voters in FL and 86% in NH support prohibiting individuals on the FBI Terror Watch List from buying guns, and 83% in FL and 81% in NH support requiring background checks on all gun sales, including those sold online or at gun shows.

PPP surveyed 938 registered Florida voters and 802 registered New Hampshire voters from August 5-7, 2016. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.2% for FL and +/-3.5% for NH. 80% of interviews for the poll were conducted over the phone with 20% interviewed over the internet to reach respondents who don’t have landline telephones.