To: Interested Parties  
From: Global Strategy Group  
Date: April 2022  
Re: Recent U.S. Senate Battleground Survey Shows Voters Demand Stronger Gun Laws to Reduce Crime

A recent poll of six U.S. Senate battleground states, conducted by Global Strategy Group on behalf of Giffords, demonstrates gun violence prevention policies and messages continue to enjoy widespread support in 2022, but perhaps more importantly, can be the antidote to the GOP’s otherwise potent attacks on crime.

Winning on Gun Violence Prevention

Infusing guns into Senate battleground races gives a Democrat the advantage. Voters in these battleground states are divided on the generic vote for Senate (45% Democratic candidate/45% Republican candidate). A generic Democrat who supports stronger gun laws has a six-point advantage over a Republican who opposes new gun restrictions, and a seven-point advantage among suburban voters – key voting blocs Democrats need to reclaim in November. An election framed around this debate is likely better terrain than several other issues right now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic ballot (Democrat v. Republican)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun-infused generic ballot (Democrat who supports stronger gun laws vs. Republican who opposes more gun restrictions)</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Shift (Generic vs. Gun-infused ballot)</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+9</td>
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Why? Because voters support gun violence prevention priorities. Even as voters struggle to keep up with the cost of living, gun violence prevention remains a key concern and priority for voters:

- Even though nearly two-thirds of voters falsely believe background checks on all gun sales already exist (64%), most are still calling for stronger gun laws (58%), including a majority of suburban voters (58%) and even a third of Republicans (37%).
- Further, they say commonsense measures like background checks (67% top priority), requiring licenses to purchase a firearm (61% top priority), combatting gun trafficking and the spread of illegal guns (59% top priority), and holding irresponsible gun dealers accountable (57% top priority) should be top priorities for their next Senator.

And importantly, gun violence prevention helps beat back crime attacks we know are coming. Nearly two-thirds of voters (63%), including 54 percent of independents, say crime is increasing in their state. And right now, they trust Republicans more than Democrats to address crime (32% Democrats/38% Republicans); this margin is even wider among suburban voters (31% Democrats/40% Republicans).

There is a path forward though: Right now, battleground voters are most concerned by shootings (57% major concern) – more than armed robberies (49% major concern), breaking and entering (49% major concern), carjackings (42% major concern), theft (41% major concern), or white-collar crime (32% major concern). When we reframe these crime conversations around gun violence prevention, we not only address voters’ largest concern, but we also beat back these attacks. In a head-to-head between Democratic and Republican approaches to crime, Republicans have a 10-point advantage among swing voters, but including guns in our approach puts the Democratic and Republican positions even among swing voters, and also gives the Democratic side an advantage among Hispanic voters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% agree with more, even if neither is exactly right</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>True Swing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without Guns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who say that to combat rising crime, we need to <strong>balance safety with justice</strong> by <strong>investing in public safety</strong>, including social services so that law enforcement can focus on keeping communities safe rather than having to handle mental health crises and non-violent issues.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who say that to combat rising crime, we need to <strong>bring back law and order</strong> to this country by increasing funding for law enforcement who will <strong>lock criminals up to keep our streets safe</strong>.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Guns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who say that to combat rising crime, we need to <strong>balance safety with justice</strong> by <strong>investing in public safety</strong>, including social services so that law enforcement can focus on keeping communities safe rather than having to handle mental health crises and non-violent issues, and <strong>strengthening gun laws</strong> to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and other people with dangerous pasts.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who say that to combat rising crime, we need to <strong>bring back law and order</strong> to this country by increasing funding for law enforcement who will <strong>lock criminals up to keep our streets safe</strong>.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+22</td>
<td>+46</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Shift (Without guns vs. with guns)</strong></td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td>+46</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voters say gun violence prevention measures are more likely to reduce crime than a range of other policies. Battleground voters are more likely to blame criminals having easy access to guns (59% major factor) and an increase in illegal guns (58% major factor) for increasing crime rates than mental health crises (54% major factor), lack of economic and educational opportunity (50% major factor) or lack of resources for law enforcement (44% major factor).

And when presented with a range of solutions, 64 percent say requiring background checks on all gun sales is a top priority for reducing crime – more than getting Americans back to work (58% top priority), increasing the presence of law enforcement (43% top priority), increasing funding for law enforcement (42% top priority), or raising the minimum wage (36% top priority). Voters certainly still support these priorities, but they do not believe they will be as effective in reducing crime.

**How to Message to Persuadable Voters on Gun Violence Prevention**

As we’ve seen before, messaging on guns is most effective when it reflects voters’ own way of talking about the issue. With so many other concerns dominating the forefront of voters’ minds these days, tying rising crime to weak gun laws helps 1) Democrats engage on crime on our own terms; 2) demonstrates Democrats have a plan to reduce crime; and 3) places blame squarely on Republican shoulders, putting them on defense on the issue.

**Use guns as a response to a crime attack.** Gun violence prevention is a powerful response after Republicans hit Democrats for being soft on crime. Given that crime has long been a Democratic vulnerability, a proactive positive message is less compelling for voters, but it helps rebuild a Democrat’s vote share when gun violence prevention is used to correct the record on the Democratic approach to crime.
Acknowledge crime is rising. Voters believe crime is on the rise, and when we dismiss their concerns, we lose them.

Show how lax gun laws impact law enforcement. Democrats have a reputation for opposing and undermining law enforcement. Showing voters that Democrats are tough and working to protect them and their families, as well as law enforcement, is easily our strongest message.

- An alternative is to focus on the other impacted communities. Voters care deeply about the country they are leaving behind for their children, especially amid rising crime levels. Focusing on the need to keep our communities safe – and how lax gun laws hinder law enforcement’s ability to do so – can help make the connection between crime and the need for stronger gun laws, though less effectively than a straight law enforcement message.

Place blame on Republicans for the lack of progress on gun violence prevention, which contributes to crime. Voters tend to trust Republicans more than Democrats when it comes to addressing crime, and Democrats tend to shoulder the responsibility for correcting the situation. We should focus on correcting the record by blaming Republicans for their inaction on gun violence prevention policies that would have prevented these rising crime rates in the first place, while showing Democrats have a plan to create change.

Propose solutions that reduce crime in the short- and long-term. Voters are drawn to Republican approaches to reducing crime by focusing on getting criminals off the street, but they also know there needs to be action to address crime in the long term. Policies like combatting gun trafficking and holding irresponsible gun dealers accountable addresses the desire to hold bad actors accountable in the short term, while background checks and closing loopholes in the law addresses voters’ desire for long-term change.

Your Candidate’s Message

Of course, every candidate has their own voice and story, and each electorate is different, but the following message can serve as a starting point or template for speaking about crime and gun violence prevention in response to a crime attack:

Best Message

Violent crime is on the rise and the law enforcement officers expected to protect us are under-staffed, under-resourced, and outgunned – all because Republicans have voted against investing in local law enforcement and refused to close loopholes in the law that allow criminals to easily and legally get their hands on dangerous weapons. As [INSERT OFFICE] I will work with law enforcement to get criminals off our streets now and address the root causes of crime for future generations, starting with cracking down on gun trafficking, closing loopholes in the law that allow criminals to legally buy guns without a background check, and holding the irresponsible gun dealers who sell them accountable.

- If time allows, we would also recommend including an example of a situation in which law enforcement is confronted with the challenges of lax gun laws: Law enforcement has enough to deal with trying to keep children and families safe, they shouldn’t have to worry about going up against heavily armed civilians and being gunned down at a routine stop because the driver got a gun they shouldn’t have had in the first place.

Alternative Message

We all want our kids to have more than we had growing up, but with violent crime on the rise, it’s getting more difficult. So much of this could have been avoided if Republicans took action to reduce crime by increasing funding for local law enforcement and supporting commonsense gun laws like background checks on all gun sales. Instead, they have made it harder for law enforcement to keep our children safe. As [INSERT OFFICE] I will work with anyone to make our streets safer now, and for our children, by cracking down on gun trafficking, closing loopholes in the law that allow criminals to legally buy guns, and holding the irresponsible gun dealers who sell to them accountable.
Questions to Ask in Your Next Survey

When fielding your next survey, consider asking the following questions to better understand how gun violence prevention can help drive a Democratic victory.

Priority Questions to Ask

Support for stronger gun laws: We’ve been asking this question for years now, and it continues to be a great way of understanding how a candidate’s individual district or state feels – on a cultural level – about gun laws. Keep in mind that even voters that don’t want “stronger gun laws” in theory often support specific policies such as background checks.

- Should gun laws in the United States be stronger, less strong, or kept the same as they are now?
- If low on time, asking the NRA’s favorability can also help give a sense of how voters feel about guns culturally, but again, voters are not necessarily pro-gun or anti-gun. Many may support the NRA while wanting background checks.

Attack and response on crime: By hitting a Democrat on crime and then testing our gun violence prevention-infused response, we’ll get a sense of how we are able to use guns to combat the narrative that Democrats are soft on crime. After testing an attack on Democrats for being tough on crime, we would recommend asking the vote for the race in question, and then testing the below response, and asking the vote again to see how we can build back the Democrat’s vote share.

- Violent crime is on the rise, and the law enforcement officers expected to protect us are under-staffed, under-resourced, and outgunned – all because Republicans have voted against investing in local law enforcement and closing loopholes in the law that allow criminals to easily and legally get their hands on guns. [DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE] will get criminals off our streets and address the root causes of crime for future generations by cracking down on gun trafficking, closing loopholes in the law that allow criminals to legally buy guns without a background check, and holding the irresponsible gun dealers who sell them accountable.

Additional Questions to Ask if Time

Negative on the Republican candidate: Drawing a contrast between Republicans and Democrats was more effective than positives for the Democrat alone, indicating that some Republican negative on the issue could be helpful.

- Does the following statement raise doubts for you about voting for the [REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE], or does it not raise doubts?
  - [GOP CANDIDATE] stands with Republicans in Congress who have voted time and again to make it easier for criminals and people with dangerous pasts to get their hands on guns, despite increases of shootings and armed robberies across the country. They even oppose commonsense policies like background checks and licenses on all gun sales, combatting illegal guns, and holding irresponsible gun dealers accountable that reduce crime and help law enforcement keep our children and families safe.

Types of crime that concern voters: Voters are concerned about rising crime, but they don’t necessarily connect crime involving guns to the hardware itself. By asking how concerned voters are about a series of violent crime incidents, we can identify the most concerning incidents involving guns that we can cite in our messaging to make it resonate with voters.

- How concerned are you about each of the following incidents? (shootings, armed robberies, breaking and entering, carjackings, etc.)
  - If low on time, you can also ask as a forced choice: Which one (or two) of the following types of crime are you most concerned about?

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,217 registered voters in FL, GA, NV, NC, PA, and WI including 203 Black voters and 201 Hispanic voters between March 17 and March 23, 2022. The survey had a confidence interval of +/- 2.8% and the oversamples of Black and Hispanic voters had a confidence interval of +/-6.9%. Interviews were conducted online. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the populations of likely voters are properly represented.