

January 23, 2007

## Strong Public Support for Tough Enforcement of Common Sense Gun Laws

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research  
The Tarrance Group

A new, bipartisan survey shows strong support for tougher enforcement of existing gun laws and additional common sense provisions to prevent and solve crimes, including access to and use of trace data from gun sales, which can identify who purchased a gun and where it was bought.

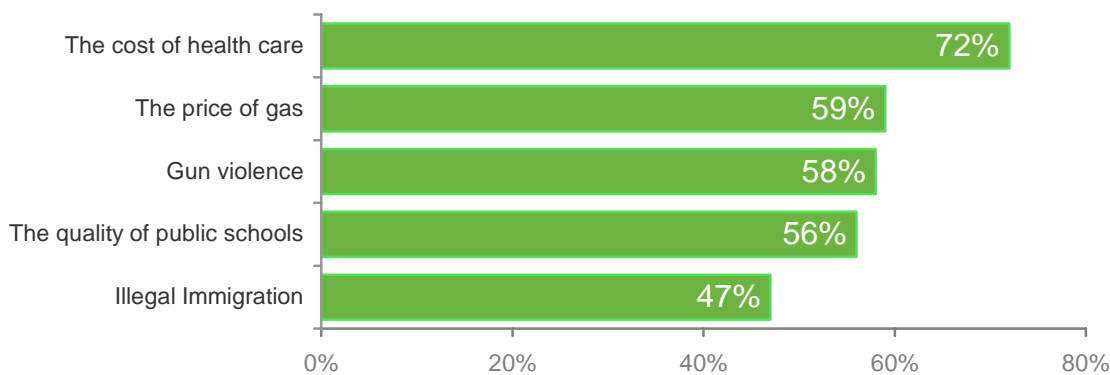
The following are key findings from a national survey of 803 Americans conducted January 10 – 15 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and The Tarrance Group on behalf of Mayors Against Illegal Guns. The sample is subject to a margin of error of approximately 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

- **Gun violence is a serious concern for Americans.** More than eight in ten (84 percent) say that they are concerned about gun violence, including 58 percent who say they are very concerned. This places gun violence right along side of the price of gas (59 percent very concerned) and the quality of public schools (56 percent very concerned) in the public's mind as a top issue. Concern about gun violence crosses partisan lines (Democrats 90 percent very/somewhat concerned, Independents 89 percent, Republicans 83 percent) and exists in big cities (83 percent) as well as rural areas (85 percent).

■ **Figure 1:** Percentage of Americans 'very concerned' about key issues

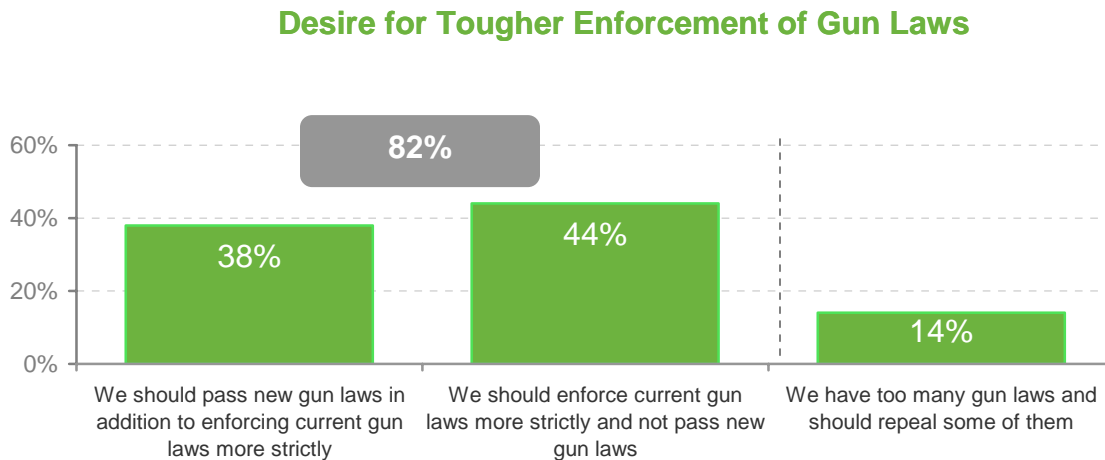
### Gun Violence is a Top Concern for Americans

*Now, I am going to read some issues people in this country are concerned about. For each one, please tell me how concerned you are about that item - very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned.*



- **Eighty-two percent of Americans favor either tougher enforcement of existing laws or tough new laws, while only 14 percent of Americans believe we should repeal existing gun laws.** A 44 percent plurality believes we should better enforce current gun laws rather than pass new laws, while 38 percent believe we should pass new laws in addition to more strictly enforcing current laws.

■ **Figure 2:** Americans' views on the state of current gun laws and the need for new gun laws



The focus of public opinion on tougher enforcement can be seen vividly in the issue of mandatory criminal background checks. Americans support background checks with near unanimity, with 92 percent of the public favoring background checks, including 91 percent of gun owners. However, a majority (51 percent) believes these checks have not reduced gun violence, which underscores public concern about enforcement. With the gun show loophole and other ways for criminals to get around background checks, Americans are skeptical that this law they support is really being enforced effectively.

- **Americans oppose restrictions on trace data from gun sales that impede police investigation and prosecution of criminals, such as the provisions of the Tiahrt Amendment.** When the Tiahrt Amendment is explained to Americans and they hear arguments for and against it, they overwhelmingly conclude that police should be able to use and share trace data from gun sales to prevent and solve crimes. Nine-in-ten Americans believe that cities should be able to use and share this information with other law enforcement agencies without restrictions. Support for allowing police to freely share this information with other law enforcement agencies is broad, including large majorities of gun owners (87 percent favor), big city residents (91 percent) and rural residents (87 percent), Democrats (93 percent) and Republicans (89 percent). Seventy-two percent of Americans support using trace data to revoke the licenses of negligent gun retailers and 66 percent support using this data to file lawsuits against those retailers.

- **Figure 3:** Percentage of population and gun owners favoring and opposing allowing the police to share with other law enforcement agencies information about gun sales records.

### Americans Agree Police Should Be Able to Share Information on Gun Sales

**Now, let me read you some more information about this. Currently, the police investigating a crime are allowed to find out who bought and sold a gun found at a crime scene, but they are limited in how they can share this information with authorities in other cities or states. Now, let me read you two statements about this.**

*Some people say police need the full ability to share information about gun sales across cities and states to stop illegal gun trafficking. This allows the police to find leads that helps them solve crime and protect Americans.*

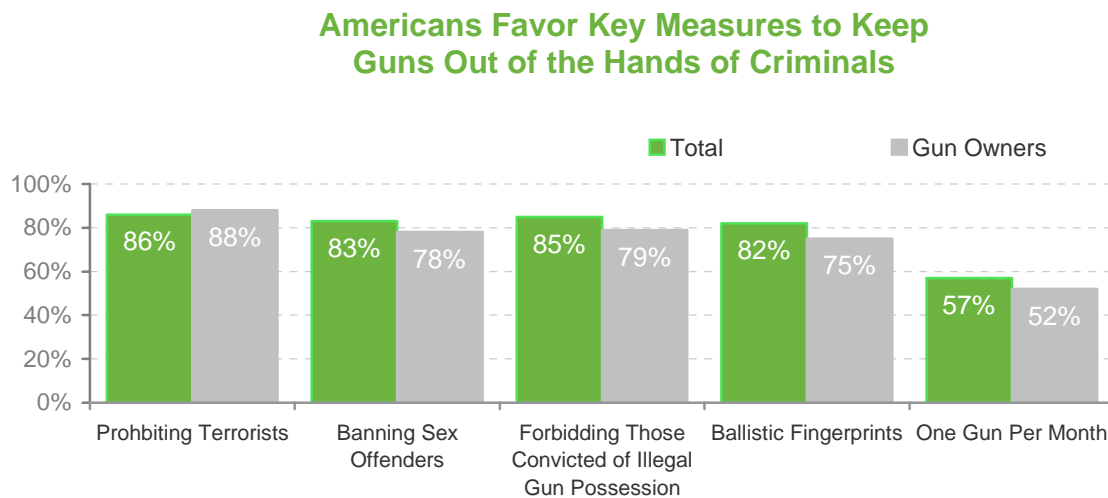
*Other people say that the government cannot be trusted to use information about legally purchased guns in a responsible way. This could lead to dangerous abuses of power by the government.*

**Do you think the police SHOULD or SHOULD NOT be allowed to share information with other cities and states about who sold and bought a gun that is found at a crime scene?**

	All Respondents		Gun Owners	
Total Should		90%		87%
Total Should Not		8%		11%
<b>Should – Should Not</b>		<b>82%</b>		<b>77%</b>

- **Strong public support for additional common sense measures to get guns out of the hands of criminals.** Additionally, large majorities of voters support common sense initiatives to prohibit dangerous people from carrying guns. Eighty-six percent favor prohibiting people on the terrorist watch list from purchasing guns (including 88 percent of gun owners), 83 percent favor banning convicted sex offenders from buying guns (including 78 percent of gun owners), and 85 percent back forbidding people convicted of misdemeanor gun possession from buying a gun (including 79 percent of gun owners). Additionally, 82 percent favor requiring all guns to have a ballistic fingerprint to enable police to determine the gun a bullet was fired from (including 75 percent of gun owners). Support for limiting Americans to purchasing one gun per month is not as strong at 57 percent (52 percent among gun owners).

■ **Figure 4:** Percentage of Americans favoring measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.



In sum, Americans are looking for tougher enforcement of existing gun laws and measures to give police the tools they need to investigate crime and get illegal guns off the street. They support a tough criminal justice agenda that helps police protect people, one squarely focused on getting illegal guns and criminals off the street.

## About Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and The Tarrance Group

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