

Devin Montero

From: Mayors Against Illegal Guns [info@mayorsagainstillegalguns.org]
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2009 9:55 AM
To: Mayors Against Illegal Guns
Subject: E.J. Dionne Column on Mayors Against Illegal Guns poll of NRA members

Dear coalition members and staff,

To follow up on yesterday's email regarding the coalition's new poll of NRA members and other gun owners, we wanted to share two links with you today.

You can find the coalition's press release on the poll here:
<http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr012-09.shtml>

Also, in today's Washington Post, columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. has written an Op-Ed about the results of the poll. The column is copied below, and you can find it on the Washington Post's website here:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/09/AR2009120903312.html>



E.J. Dionne Jr.

Op-Ed Columnist

Beyond the NRA's absolutism

By E.J. Dionne Jr.
Thursday, December 10, 2009

When it comes to passing sensible gun laws, Congress typically offers Profiles in Cowardice.

The National Rifle Association wields power that would make an Afghan warlord jealous because the organization is thought to command legions of one-issue voters ready to punish any deviationism from the never-pass-any-new-gun-laws imperative. Many legislators fear that casting a vote for even a smidgen of restraint on weapons sales could be politically lethal.

But imagine if NRA members were more reasonable than the organization's leaders and supporters in Congress in understanding the urgency of keeping guns out of the wrong hands.

NRA leaders, meet your members.

It turns out that the people in the ranks actually are much wiser than their lobbyists. In a move that should revolutionize the gun debate, Mayors Against Illegal Guns decided to go over the heads of Beltway types and poll gun owners and NRA members directly.

The survey, which will be released soon, wasn't conducted by some liberal outfit but by Frank Luntz, the Republican pollster lately famous for providing talking points against the Democrats' health-care bills.

"I support the NRA," Luntz insists. What he doesn't go for is the "slippery slope argument" that casts any new gun law as the first step toward confiscation. "When the choice is between national security and terrorism versus no limits on owning guns," Luntz says, "I'm on the side of national security and fighting terrorism."

Most NRA members seem to agree.

In his survey of 832 gun owners, including 401 NRA members, Luntz found that 82 percent of NRA members supported "prohibiting people on the terrorist watch lists from purchasing guns." Sixty-nine percent favored "requiring all gun sellers at gun shows to conduct criminal background checks of the people buying guns," and 78 percent backed "requiring gun owners to alert police if their guns are lost or stolen." Among gun owners who did not belong to the NRA, the numbers were even higher.

It's true that these gun owners, including NRA members, don't buy broader forms of gun control. For example, 59 percent of NRA members opposed "requiring every gun owner to register each gun he or she owns as part of a national gun registry," though I was surprised that 30 percent supported this.

And gun owners continue to worry that President Obama "will attempt to ban the sales of guns in the United States at some point while he is president." Asked about this, 44 percent of NRA members said Obama "definitely" would and 35 percent said he "probably" would.

Still, those surveyed stood behind the core idea that gun regulations and gun rights complement each other. The poll offered this statement: "We can do more to stop criminals from getting guns while also protecting the rights of citizens to freely own them." Among all gun owners and NRA members, 86 percent agreed.

NRA members also oppose the idea behind the so-called Tiahrt amendments passed by Congress. Named for Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-Kan.), the rules prevent law enforcement officials from having full access to gun trace data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and require the FBI to destroy certain background-check records after just 24 hours. Talk about handcuffing the police.

The mayors' poll offered respondents this statement, antithetical to the Tiahrt rules: "The federal government should not restrict the police's ability to access, use, and share data that helps them enforce federal, state and local gun laws." Among NRA members, 69 percent agreed.

This survey should empower Congress to take at least some baby steps down the safe path the mayors' group is trying to blaze. They could start by overturning the Tiahrt rules and keeping guns from those on terrorism watch lists. "There are too many public officials taking an absolutist position when they don't have to," Luntz says. "And they're taking it not because they want to, but because they're scared into doing it."

Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee said in an interview that he and his colleagues are trying to send a clear message to gun owners: "If you have a gun you use for hunting or for self-defense in your home, I don't want your gun."

What he does want are tougher rules on purchases that might have kept six of his city's police officers from being shot with guns bought at the same gun store. A lot of gun owners get that.