

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Jeffrey Pollock
RE: Background Checks in Missoula
DATE: August 17, 2015

Missoula Voters Strongly Support Background Checks on All Gun Sales

Gun owners and voters of all parties want expanded background checks

Voters in Missoula overwhelmingly support background checks on all gun sales, according to a recent survey of registered voters in Missoula County conducted by Global Strategy Group.¹

Voters across demographic subgroups – including the 65% of county households with guns – believe preventing criminals and the severely mentally ill from buying guns should be a priority. They support expanding background checks, and a majority is more likely to support city council members who vote to require background checks for all gun sales.

- **Voters overwhelmingly support background checks.** A broad 82% of voters support requiring background checks on all gun sales, including those sold online and at gun shows. Agreement is near universal, as men (76%), women (89%), younger voters (81%), seniors (83%), members of all political parties (Republicans 73%, independents 70%, Democrats 92%), and voters in every part of the county want expanded checks. Gun owners (82%) are just as supportive as everyone else.
- **Voters are more supportive of councilmembers who favor background checks.** A majority (54%) is more likely to support a council member if he or she votes to require background checks. The issue would not impact 27% of voters, and just 14% say they are less likely to support that council member. A plurality of independents, like their Democratic and Republican counterparts, prefer a councilmember who supports background checks, as do a majority (51%) of gun owners.
- **Voters and gun owners, believe preventing criminals from getting guns should be a priority.** When forced to choose, 64% say preventing criminals and the severely mentally ill from purchasing firearms is a higher priority than protecting gun owners from any restrictions on gun rights. This priority is shared by a majority of independents (53%), a plurality of Republicans (46%), and even most gun owners (62%).

The bottom line: Despite a strong culture of gun ownership, voters in Missoula County believe it should be a priority to prevent criminals from buying guns. They support expanding background checks to all gun sales and are more likely to support candidates who vote for background checks.

¹ This survey was conducted among 350 registered voters in Missoula County between August 11th and August 13th, 2015. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 5.2 percentage points on the overall sample.