

**To:** Interested parties

**From:** Global Strategy Group

**Date:** October 15, 2018

**Re:** New Survey Shows Growing Dissatisfaction with Comstock After Giffords PAC Ad Campaign on Gun

Giffords PAC recently made a significant paid media investment in Virginia's 10<sup>th</sup> congressional district – backyard to the NRA's corporate headquarters and NRA-ally, Congresswoman Barbara Comstock. In 2016, Clinton won this district by 10 points (52%-42%) but Comstock still won by 6 points (53%-47%).

Giffords PAC's ads exposed the truth about Congresswoman Barbara Comstock – that she has stood with and taken thousands of dollars from the NRA while opposing laws that would reduce gun violence and protect our children.

- The campaign ran two 30-second ads for six weeks (August 28 to October 8) - [Barbara Comstock Has Failed](#) and [NRA Over Virginia](#). Both ads directly took on Comstock's loyalty to the NRA and the first spot was narrated by Gabby Giffords herself.
- The over \$1-million-ad campaign ran on cable television systems in Loudoun and parts of Fairfax and included a \$100,000 digital campaign that drove 7 million impressions on the most persuadable voters, including 5.6 million on women. Both the cable shows and the digital targets focused on independent voters, with a strong emphasis on reaching female voters.

Giffords PAC ran two surveys – one before the ads went on air and one after – to measure the impact of their investment while recognizing that guns-related advertising hasn't been the only advertising on the airwaves. **Data shows Giffords PAC's advertisements helped diminish incumbent Barbara Comstock's standing by as much as 10 points, expand Giffords-endorsed candidate Jennifer Wexton's lead, and make voters more knowledgeable about Comstock's positions on guns and the NRA.**

## Key Findings:

**After seeing Giffords PAC's ads, voters are now more likely to say they are unfavorable of Comstock.** In August, impressions of Comstock split down the middle (42% favorable/42% unfavorable). Now, Comstock is 10 points underwater (40% fav/50% unfav) and her very unfavorable rating rose significantly from 23% to 31%.

- Moderates, moms, and college-educated women – key targets for the ad campaign and strong supporters of violence prevention laws – have all become more unfavorable toward Comstock (percent unfavorable has increased by 10 points, 9 points, and 7 points, respectively).

**Comstock's re-election prospects have gotten even worse since Giffords PAC's ad campaign began.** Wexton has expanded her lead from 50% Wexton/43% Comstock (+7) in August to 49%/39% (+10) in October.

- Comstock's vote share has diminished significantly with seniors 65+ (down 19 points since August), independents (down 10 points), and moderates (down 12 points).

**Her favorability and vote decline correspond with increased voter knowledge about Comstock's position on guns and the NRA's influence over her.** Giffords PAC's advertising campaign focused on Comstock's financial backing from the NRA, her A rating, her opposition to background checks, and her continued allegiance to special interests like the NRA rather than the people she is supposed to represent. Voters became more likely to believe all these key points after advertising.

- Voters are now 9 points more likely to say it is "definitely true" that Comstock has an A rating from the NRA (61% total "true" and that Comstock has taken money from the NRA (61% total "true").
- In August, nearly half of voters (47%) doubted that "Barbara Comstock opposes background checks on all gun sales." But after advertising, those doubts diminished and only 38% now believe the statement is false.
  - **Moms – one of the groups Comstock lost the most ground with – have clearly realized where Barbara Comstock stands: Only 27% now doubt the statement, down from 47% in August.**
- Prior to the ad campaign, voters believed that Comstock "stands up to special interests" by a two-point margin. Now, by nine points, voters believe that statement is false.
  - Moms are now 31 points less likely to believe Comstock sands up to special interests like the NRA (55% originally said the statement was true, now only 24%).

**Guns are a top issue for VA-10 voters and nearly as important as health care.** Two-thirds of voters (69%) consider "guns" a major issue when deciding whom to vote for this November, trailing only healthcare at 76 percent. Gun issues are more important to voters than a candidate's position on Trump, taxes, women's rights, or the environment.

- Further, those who historically favor stronger gun laws are putting more of an emphasis on the issue in their voting decisions. Most Democrats (53%), Wexton voters (57%), and voters unfavorable to the NRA (50%) consider guns their top issue – more than Republicans (35%), voters favorable toward the NRA (40%), or Comstock voters (34%).
- 84% of VA-10 voters support "government background checks on all gun sales and private transfers, including those sold online and at gun shows."

#### **ABOUT THESE POLLS**

*Global Strategy Group conducted two live telephone surveys of 400 likely midterm voters each in Virginia's 10<sup>th</sup> congressional district. The first poll fielded from August 23-27, 2018 before advertising; the second fielded from October 7-9, 2018, after advertising. The margins of error for the overall electorates at the 95% confidence level are +/- 4.9%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the expected electorate are properly represented based on historical turnout in each poll.*