

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: November 21, 2022

Re: New Survey Shows Gun Safety Was Key to Michael Bennet Defeating Joe O'Dea

[History suggests Democrats should have been soundly defeated](#) in the 2022 midterm elections — after all, the party in power has only gained seats in one midterm since FDR's presidency. But this midterm cycle, Democrats became the exception to the rule, expanding their Senate majority thanks to their ability to defend Michael Bennet in Colorado and other gun safety advocates across the country.

In Colorado, voters chose a candidate who voted to pass the first major piece of gun legislation in three decades over one who has sided with the gun lobby time and again. The politics of gun safety have dramatically changed since 1994, when voters rejected politicians who passed the assault weapons ban. In fact, new polling of 2022 Colorado voters shows how Giffords' efforts informing voters of Joe O'Dea's ties to the gun lobby suppressed his support — ultimately pushing Bennet over the finish line by a 14-point margin. Gun violence is now a winning issue for Democrats in Colorado.

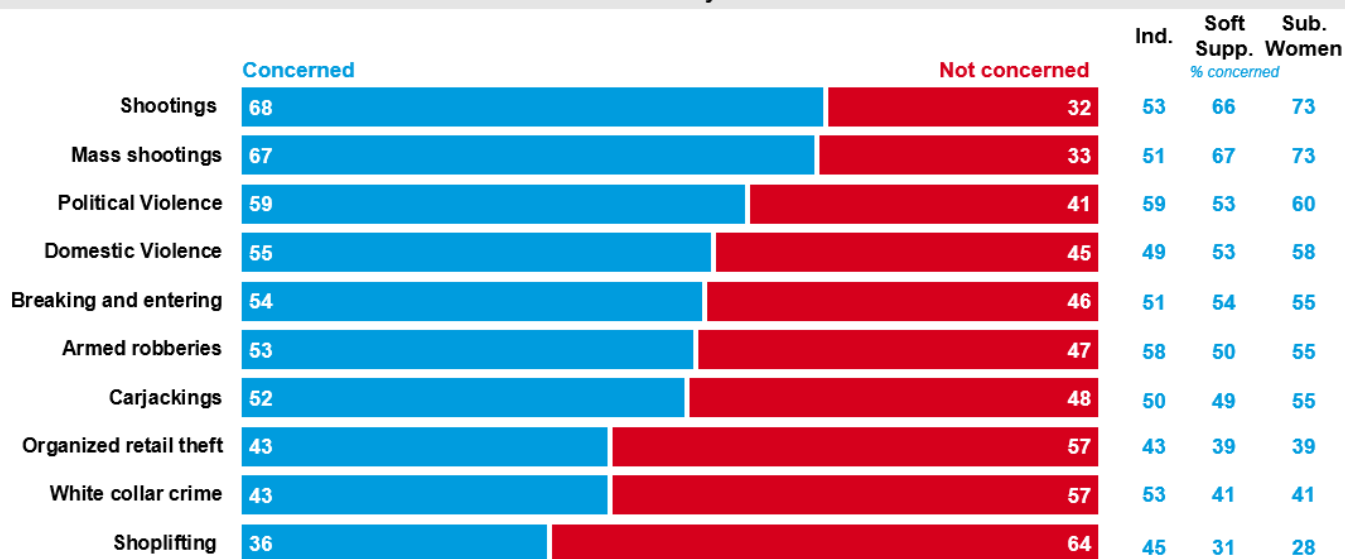
Gun safety was a priority for voters in this election

Gun violence prevention was top of mind when Colorado voters went to the polls. Gun violence (73% important) is one of only a handful of issues tested that three-quarters of voters deemed important in this election, alongside inflation (87% important), jobs and the economy (86% important), and Social Security and Medicare (77% important). Among soft supporters of Bennet — the 19 percent of voters who ultimately voted for him but did not have very favorable opinions of him nor very unfavorable opinions of his opponent Joe O'Dea — gun violence (81% important) was even more important than taxes (67% important).

This comes as Coloradans are deeply concerned about shootings in their communities. Crime has consistently been a top issue for voters this cycle, with nearly two-thirds believing crime was up in their state as early as April.¹ Now, over three-quarters of Coloradans (78%), including 82 percent of independents and 79 percent of suburban women, say crime — specifically, violent crime, was an important issue to them when voting.

¹ See Giffords' research from the spring: <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Giffords-Press-Memo-F04.18.22.pdf>

Please indicate how concerned you are about each...



In fact, Colorado voters are more concerned about kids in their community returning home safely from school (54% concerned) than they are about being able to pay their bills (51% concerned).

Emphasizing gun violence prevention helped Bennet

Supporting stronger gun laws gives Democrats an advantage. Colorado voters want stronger gun laws by a seven-to-one margin (62% stronger/9% less strong), including 76 percent of soft Bennet supporters and 65 percent of suburban women. And they trust Democrats like Bennet more to reduce gun violence (60% Bennet and Democrats/40% O’Dea and Republicans), with half the electorate saying they would never vote for a candidate who opposes commonsense gun safety reforms like background checks on all gun sales (50%).

Voters who were concerned about gun violence delivered for Bennet. The 40 percent of voters who said gun violence was extremely important to their vote overwhelmingly supported Bennet in the election for Senate (80% Bennet/20% O’Dea). To put it simply, Bennet’s commitment to gun safety helped stall any progress O’Dea could have made, propelling Bennet to re-election.

Giffords’ attacks on O’Dea’s record helped suppress his vote

Giffords defined O’Dea as extreme and too close to the gun lobby. In June 2022, [the Rocky Mountaineer found beliefs on how candidates would “deal with the issue of guns” was a significant driver in vote choice.](#) And with [O’Dea already a deeply unpopular candidate,](#) Giffords knew that infusing guns into the race would prevent any burst in support for him. With their two ads [“Terrifying”](#) and [“Weapons of War,”](#) Giffords made clear that O’Dea was not the moderate Republican he hoped to present himself as but rather an extreme MAGA Republican who sided with the gun lobby over Coloradans.

Voters heard the message loud and clear. Giffords’ message broke through: 52 percent of voters heard attacks on O’Dea’s record on gun violence — more than they heard about health care (47%) or inflation (41%). And the core message resonated, thwarting any potential improvement for O’Dea who repeatedly tried to present himself as moderate:

- 75% of the electorate, including 84% of soft supporters, knew Joe O’Dea was on the side of the gun lobby
- 59% of the electorate, including 80% of soft supporters, knew Joe O’Dea opposed background checks
- 57% of the electorate, including 69% of soft supporters, knew that despite O’Dea’s efforts to seem mainstream, “like Trump and MAGA Republicans, Joe O’Dea would make it easier for dangerous people to get guns” after Giffords’ advertising.

Giffords' gun violence prevention message resonated. Importantly, those who heard Giffords' message voted for Bennet at a staggering clip (64% Bennet/36% O'Dea, compared to 41% Bennet/56% O'Dea among those who did not hear), and trusted him more on crime (61% Bennet/39% O'Dea, compared to 39% Bennet/61% O'Dea among those who did not hear).

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 611 2022 Colorado voters between November 3-10, 2022. The survey had a confidence interval of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of voters are properly represented.