

Collections

# Poll suggests Christie's gun-control vetoes defied public opinion



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POSTED: September 20, 2013

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton poll suggests Gov. Christie went against public opinion last month when he vetoed three major gun-control bills passed by Democrats.

But the numbers shift slightly depending on whether poll respondents were informed of Christie's veto, suggesting the governor's actions could sway voters.

The poll, which surveyed 925 adults in the state from Sept. 3 to 9 - before this week's shooting in the Washington, D.C., naval yard - has a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points.

Overall, 70 percent of poll respondents said they "strongly support" one of the bills, which would have created a database for gun dealers to instantly check whether a wannabe gun buyer is qualified, encoded gun-permit data on driver's licenses, created a mandatory safety-training course for gun owners, and stiffened penalties for those who give minors access to weapons. An additional 12 percent said they "somewhat support" that bill.

But the pollsters randomly split the group in half, telling one group only that the bills had passed the Legislature; the other group was told that Christie had vetoed the bills.

In the group not informed of the veto, 86 percent of respondents supported the multifaceted bill to some degree. The support is lower in the group told of the governor's veto: 77 percent.

That trend held true for another bill, which would have required law enforcement agencies to report information on missing guns to federal databases. Christie issued a conditional veto, asking for a "minor change."

That bill saw overall support of 85 percent, with support falling from 88 to 82 percent depending on whether respondents were told of Christie's veto.

The governor absolutely vetoed a third bill, banning .50-caliber guns. In April, Christie had proposed a ban on purchases of the Barrett .50-caliber gun and others like it, but he rejected the Democrats' bill last month because he said it went too far in criminalizing all .50-caliber weapons. They have never been used in crimes in the state, he said, but are used for long-range, precision shooting by marksmen.

That bill had 54 percent of respondents saying they had strong support, with 11 percent offering partial support. Those numbers don't change significantly based on knowledge of Christie's veto.

"First, people are more certain of their position on banning the .50-caliber gun, so their opinion does not change whether they know Christie opposes it," said poll director David Redlawsk, a political science professor at Rutgers, in a news release. "But for the other, more complicated measures, support is not as crystallized. As a result, the governor's decision directly influences opinion, moving some people more in his direction."

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