

# Gun Violence Prevention

2009 Issues Briefing

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LWVIL continues to work with the Legal Community Against Gun Violence, the Brady Campaign and the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (ICPVG) as well as several other advocacy groups to promote sensible gun legislation in Illinois. LWVIL has successfully applied for and received mini-grants for the last two years and plans to do so again in 2009. The State and local Leagues are regularly recognized among the best performers in this grass-roots activism.

The recent elections have resulted in renewed optimism for Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) advocates. The Brady Campaign was very successful in helping elect new and returning legislators who are GVP advocates. The focus this session will be on HB48 (universal background check) formerly known as HB758 which lost by only two votes in the last session.

For years, the gun lobby has defeated new gun control laws partly by arguing that stronger laws do not deter crime. A brand new study prepared by Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a bipartisan group headed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston, should finally put that myth to rest. I recommend reading the full report because there is so much more included there than just Universal Background checks information.

The study analyzed trace data for guns used in connection with crimes during 2007. The data revealed a strong correlation between weak state gun laws and higher rates of in-state murders, police slayings and sales of guns used in crimes in other states. Many states have enacted strong gun laws to supplement inadequate federal ones, including mandatory background checks on gun show sales, like we did in Illinois in 2005.

The MAIG Report shows States with weak gun laws produce different outcomes. More than half the guns recovered in out-of-state crimes last year were supplied by Georgia, Florida, Texas, Virginia and six other states where weak laws make it easy for gun traffickers and other criminals to obtain weapons.

Weak gun laws also put a state's own citizens at risk. There were nearly 60 percent more gun murders in the 10 states where exports were highest than in the states with low export rates — and nearly three times as many fatal shootings of law enforcement officers. The study by the mayors' group isn't the first to document the link between weak gun laws and gun violence or the "iron pipeline" by which guns flow from states with weak gun laws into states with strong ones. Still, the numbers are startling. They explain why the gun lobby resisted their release, and they provide a powerful retort to those who claim tougher gun laws don't work.