

Poll shows Granite Staters strongly favor 'assault weapons' ban, full background checks

By JOHN DISTASO
Senior Political Reporter

HENNIKER -- As an "assault weapons" was unveiled on Capitol Hill Thursday, a new poll was released by New England College showing a large majority of Granite Staters favor a such a ban and universal background checks for gun purchases.

The poll, conducted Jan. 21 and 22 of 656 registered voters, asked two direct questions:

- Whether "assault weapons" should be banned, and - "Do you support the idea of universal background checks for gun purchases?"

The poll showed 72 percent favored and 24 percent opposed an "assault weapons" ban and that 88 percent favored and 10 percent opposed "the idea of universal background checks."

According to the poll, men favored an "assault weapons" ban, 64 to 34 percent and women favored it, 80 to 16 percent.

The first question contained no specific explanation of an "assault weapon," according to NEC spokesman Scott Spradling.

"It is a broad poll question, but we are confident people know and understand the definition of an assault weapon," Spradling said.

"New Hampshire voters show surprisingly strong support for these gun control moves," NEC poll director Dr. Ben Tafoya said in a statement.

"There are deep and lasting effects on the public from the heightened level of sensitivity toward these issues in light of the tragic shootings in Newtown, Conn.," Tafoya said.

In Washington, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Cal., unveiled a bill calling for an "assault weapons" ban similar to the ban that expired in 2004. Feinstein called the prospects for passage an "uphill" battle.

New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen and Reps. Annie Kuster and Carol Shea-Porter have expressed support for an "assault weapons" ban, while Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte opposes the Feinstein bill, a spokesman said Thursday.