

Nearly half of N.J. residents back Christie's controversial gun bill veto, poll shows

Gun laws in New Jersey

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[Chris Christie explains veto of 10-round limit gun control bill: "Why not go to zero?"](#) In his first public comments since vetoing the bill last week, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie explains his opposition to the bill that would have limited the size of gun magazines to ten rounds. Following the logic of the bill's supporters to its logical conclusion, he said, would have led to a ban on guns altogether. Christie spoke at a press conference announcing new grants awarded to victims of Hurricane Sandy in Keansburg, New Jersey. (Video by Brian Donohue / The Star-Ledger)

TRENTON — A plurality of New Jerseyans agree with Gov. Chris Christie's controversial decision to veto a gun control bill that would have reduced the size of ammunition magazines from 15 to 10 rounds in the state, according to a poll released early this morning.

The [Rutgers-Eagleton survey](#) shows 49 percent of residents in the Garden State — which traditionally leans Democratic — support the Republican governor's move, while 42 percent say he should have signed the measure and 9 percent are unsure.

"Most gun control measures we have asked about in the past garner large majorities in support," said David Redlawsk, the poll's director and a political science professor at Rutgers University. "This one is different, with residents slightly more in favor of the veto than opposed, perhaps because the change seems only incremental and did not strike gun opponents as significant."

Still, the poll also shows 66 percent of residents believe Christie made the wrong call in declining to meet with parents of victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, who traveled to Trenton to speak with him the day he vetoed the bill. Twenty-four percent agree with Christie that it would have been hypocritical to see them.

"Agree or disagree with the actual veto, people believe the governor should have taken the time to listen," Redlawsk said.

Democratic lawmakers in New Jersey introduced the bill in the wake of the December 2012 shooting at the elementary school in Newtown, Conn., in which a shooter opened fire and killed 20 children and six adults.

Advocates said reducing the size of magazines would cause a shooter to reload more often and allow potential victims more time to escape. A pair of Sandy Hook parents visited Christie's office in July to urge the Republican governor to sign the legislation.

But [Christie conditionally vetoed](#) the measure that day, saying it "simply defies common sense to believe that imposing a new and entirely arbitrary number of bullets that can be lawfully loaded into a firearm will somehow eradicate, or even reduce, future instances of mass violence." Instead, the governor suggested a series of changes to New Jersey's mental health system to help prevent future shootings.

Christie [said he had "extraordinary sympathy"](#) for the victims' families but added that he declined to meet with the parents that day because he had already signed the veto.

"It would have been really hypocritical for me to sit down and act like I was listening to their arguments, again, when in fact I already signed the conditional veto," he explained at the time.

Christie's office also noted that the governor had met with parents last year.

Christie's actions drew sharp rebukes from the Sandy Hook parents and gun control advocates who [protested his appearance in Connecticut](#) as he raised money for the Republican gubernatorial candidate there.

Today's poll shows a majority of New Jersey residents are worried about gun violence. Sixty-eight percent say they are "very concerned" in general — though that is a 9-point drop from a December 2012 poll taken immediately after the Sandy Hook shooting. Twenty-four percent say they are "somewhat concerned."

At the same time, 64 percent believe controlling gun ownership is more important than protecting the right to own guns, while 31 percent feel the opposite. But this is also down from the 2012 poll, in which the split was 72 to 20 percent.

This survey was conducted over the phone with 871 New Jersey residents from July 28 to Aug. 5. The margin of error was plus-or-minus 3.9 percentage points.

The survey was taken before the controversial shooting in Ferguson, Mo.

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