



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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CARBONDALE, ILL. –

Friday, April 30, 2010

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“Hunting Culture Alive and Well in Southern Illinois”

“Did you get your deer yet?”

It’s a common greeting across large swaths of rural and small-town America. In southern Illinois, the answer is often “yes” and there’s now data to prove it.

A quarter of households surveyed in the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute’s inaugural Southern Illinois Poll contained a deer hunter, and about one in five households overall “got” their deer.

The survey by the Institute, based at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, found that 30 percent of registered voters said they or someone in their households had been hunting in the past year. Of households containing a hunter, a large majority (84 percent) contained at least one deer hunter. Of deer-hunting households, eight in ten (79 percent) said at least one of their hunts had been successful.

Southern Illinois is known for its woodlands and lakes, which provide good conditions for harvesting a wide variety of game beyond deer. Of hunting households, a third (34 percent) reported someone in the household had been turkey hunting, 16 percent reported hunting for rabbits, and 12 percent reported that they had been duck hunting. Around 9 percent of hunting households reported hunting for geese, squirrels, quail, doves, or pheasants. A handful reported hunting for coyotes and raccoons.

“The love of hunting and the respect for and necessity of gun ownership in areas like ours is something that seems to be lost on some urban and suburban lawmakers,” said Charlie Leonard, the Paul Simon Institute visiting professor and occasional bird hunter who supervised the poll.

“That may be why there is such a disconnect between big-city and small-town cultures on gun laws. Chicago’s attempts to restrict handgun ownership, for example, don’t make sense to people in sparsely populated, pastoral areas, where guns and hunting are a normal part of life from childhood,” he said.

It is no surprise, then, that southern Illinois voters favor, by a wide margin, a proposal by State Representative John Bradley (D-Marion) to permit Illinois residents to carry concealed weapons (57 percent favor, 37 percent oppose, 6 percent undecided).

Similarly, in a series of questions on people's feelings toward groups, almost half (48 percent) reported positive feelings toward the National Rifle Association, more than a quarter (27 percent) reported neutral feelings, and just one in six (16 percent) reported cool or negative feelings.

Leonard said, "In the debates over gun laws, what our friends in the cities and suburbs need to remember is that, in our area, a gun is less likely to be used to commit a crime, and a lot more likely to be used in a way that is legal and that—to people down here—is seen as wholesome."

David Yepsen, the director of the institute, said he hopes the poll can be used to examine cultural issues, habits and trends in southern Illinois. "Polls always measure political things. We want this poll to go beyond that so it can also be a research and educational tool for scholars and students.

The poll of 401 registered voters in the 18-county area of southernmost Illinois was taken April 5 to 13 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The margins for error is larger for subsamples cited. The interviews were conducted for the Institute by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. It reports no Illinois political figures as clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute's endowment fund.

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**Poll Results of Registered Voters in Southern Illinois
Conducted April 5-13, 2010
*Released April 30, 2010***

1. Have you or anyone else living at your address gone hunting in Illinois in the last 12 months?

Yes	30%
No	70%

2. (Among households reporting a hunter) And what were you or your household members hunting for? (Multiple responses allowed)

Deer	84%
Turkey	34%
Rabbit	16%
Duck	12%
Squirrel	9%
Goose	9%
Dove	8%

3. (Of deer hunters) And were any of those hunts successful?

Yes	79%
No	21%

4. We'd like to know what you think about a proposal to allow Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons. Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose a proposal to allow Illinois residents to carry concealed weapons?

Strongly favor	26%
Favor	31%
Oppose	22%
Strongly oppose	15%
Other/Don't know	6%

**Some columns do not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.*

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