

# How Supporting Gun Control Loses Elections

## The demise of George H.W. Bush (1992)

- 1) George Bush received overwhelming support from gun owners in 1988. But he forgot his supporters and betrayed gun owners during his four years in office. In 1992, he failed to obtain the endorsements of Gun Owners of America and the National Rifle Association.
- 2) The result? George Bush lost ten very pro-gun states by less than 5%—states that he had won in 1988. Additionally, he lost Pennsylvania where fully 60% of the adults hold hunting license. (Bush himself stated in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the pro-gun support in Pennsylvania was the number one reason he overcame—and later beat—Dukakis in that state in 1988.)
- 3) If the states listed below had voted for Bush in 1992, he would have won the election. In only one state listed below (Pennsylvania) did George H.W. Bush lose by more than 5 percent. Here's the breakdown:

States that George Bush won in '88 but lost in '92	Electoral Vote	States that George Bush won in '88 but lost in '92	Electoral Vote
Colorado	8	New Hampshire	4
Georgia	13	New Jersey *	15
Kentucky	8	Ohio	21
Louisiana	9	Pennsylvania **	23
Montana	3	Tennessee	11
Nevada	4		

Total **119** (electoral votes from states Bush won in 1988, but lost in 1992)  
+ **168** (electoral votes Bush actually received in 1992)  
**287** votes, and victory

\* Bush lost New Jersey, even though voters had elected an overwhelming Republican majority in the state House and Senate in 1991. This was due to a protest vote on guns and taxes.

\*\* In contrast to Bush, the Republican candidate for Senate in Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter, won the NRA endorsement and defeated his opponent in 1992.

## **Importance of the Gun Issue in Reelection**

“In [Montana] and other western and southern states where gun racks are almost standard equipment for pickups ... officials of the Bush-Quayle campaign plan to use extensively Dukakis’ support of gun control ... to try to pull voters over to the GOP.”

-- *The Washington Post*, 8/27/88

“Opinion polls ... showed [Bush] catching up to and even surpassing Dukakis in Pennsylvania—an unexpected success that he attributed to the work of the gun lobby.”

-- *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10/5/88

“The [gun] issue has helped Bush turn his campaign around Texas, a key presidential battleground.”

-- *Boston Globe*, 10/21/88

“Michael Dukakis’ reputation as a gun hater has catapulted Republican George Bush into a dead heat in West Virginia, one of the most Democratic states in the nation.”

-- *West Virginia Herald Dispatch*, 10/24/88

**“Pollsters have found for years that gun control is a dominating motivation for voters who oppose it but rarely works as well to motivate those who favor it.”**

-- *Roanoke Times & World-News*, 2/14/93