

Survey: All but one Nevadan in Congress own guns

By Erin Kelly, Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON – All but one member of Nevada’s congressional delegation own guns, bucking a trend in Congress in which Republicans are much better armed than their Democratic counterparts.

A USA Today survey of lawmakers released this week showed that 119 Republicans and 46 democrats identified themselves as gun owners.

But gun ownership in the Nevada delegation is more of a bipartisan affair.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat, and Sen. Dean Heller, a Republican, both said they own guns.

Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Carson City, who represents the Reno area, owns several guns, according to his spokesman, Brian Baluta.

“Mark owns several guns, including hunting rifles, shotguns and handguns,” Baluta said. “He purchased one pump action shotgun and one handgun. The rest he inherited from his father and grandfather.”

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., also owns a gun she inherited: a 32-caliber revolver passed down to her from her grandfather. Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev., also owns a gun, although his office did not say what kind.

The only lawmaker from the six-member congressional delegation who does not own a gun is Rep. Steven Horsford, a Las Vegas Democrat and the first African-American to serve in the Nevada delegation.

There is no public record of gun ownership by members of Congress and it is not part of the information lawmakers are required to reveal in their annual financial disclosure forms. So USA Today and the Gannett Washington Bureau contacted every congressional office to ask: Does the lawmaker own a gun?

The results show a highly partisan – and regional – divide. Only 10 percent of Republicans who responded said they do not own a gun, while 66 percent of Democrats said they are not gun owners.

Plotted on a map, the survey results speak to the cultural chasm between those districts where guns are a talisman of individualism, and those where they're viewed more as a criminal tool.

Only 12 lawmakers from the Northeast, including Pennsylvania, said they own firearms, while 77 Southerners said they do.

Congress's gun gap suggests that cultural factors are at least as important as the influence of the gun lobby in determining where members stand on President Barack Obama's package of gun control proposals.

Gun ownership is clearly correlated with members' voting records.

Over the past two years, the National Rifle Association's political action committee gave 10 times more campaign contributions to House members who own guns than to those who don't, according to an analysis of campaign finance reports filed last week.