



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Whit Ayres  
**DATE:** June 29, 2006  
**RE:** The Importance of Reaching Agreement on Immigration Reform

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A national survey of 1000 registered voters, conducted by our firm on June 23-27, 2006, indicates that voters overwhelmingly want an immigration reform bill passed this year. Moreover, by a two-to-one margin, they will be less likely to support Republican candidates for the House and Senate if internal disagreements prevent a bill from passing. The conference committee charged with resolving differences between House and Senate versions of the bills could craft a bill that would receive overwhelming support from the American people. While certain aspects of both the House and Senate bills are problematic, core components of both bills enjoy significant support. Highlights of the survey include:

- 1. More than eight in ten registered voters think it is important to pass legislation combating illegal immigration this year, with Republicans the most intense in their desire to pass a bill.** Sixty-six percent of all voters think it is very important, 18 percent somewhat important, and only 12 percent think it is not too important to pass immigration reform this year, with the remainder undecided. Among Republicans, 77 percent say it is very important, 13 percent somewhat important, and 7 percent not too important. Among Independents, 63 percent say very important, 20 percent somewhat important, and 13 percent not too important; among Democrats, 57 percent say very important, 21 percent somewhat important, and 16 percent not very important.
- 2. More than seven in ten voters, including more than three-fourths of Republicans, would rather have Congress pass "a bill that includes border security, employer enforcement, and a temporary-worker program," rather than pass no bill at all.** Voters prefer a bill with these three components over no bill by a margin of 71 to 22 percent. Margins in favor of this bill are 76 to 18 percent among Republicans, 71 to 21 percent among Independents, and 66 to 27 percent among Democrats.
- 3. More than six in ten voters, including three-fifths of Republicans, would rather have Congress pass "a bill that includes border security, employer enforcement, a temporary-worker program, and a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who are already here," rather than pass no bill at all.** Voters prefer a bill with these four components over no bill by a margin of 61 to 30 percent. Margins in favor of this bill are 59 to 33 percent among Republicans, 61 to 29 percent among Independents, and 63 to 30 percent among Democrats.

4. **If Congress deadlocks and cannot reach agreement on immigration reform, voters will be less likely to vote for Republican candidates for House and Senate this November by a two-to-one margin.** Not surprisingly given the intense desire to see illegal immigration addressed, 40 percent say they will be less likely to vote for Republican candidates for federal office if no bill passes, compared to 19 percent who will be more likely and 27 percent who say it makes no difference (14 percent are unsure). The critical number here comes from Independents who are not predisposed to support either party: 42 percent would be less likely and 15 percent more likely to support Republicans if no immigration bill passes.
5. **The following list demonstrates that voters are willing to try almost anything that they think might help control illegal immigration, including embracing apparently contradictory alternatives.** Intensity matters in politics, especially on an issue as volatile and emotional as illegal immigration. Therefore the last column includes an intensity measure: strong support minus strong opposition. A positive number indicates intensity in support of an option; a negative number indicates intensity in opposition to that option.

	<i><b>Total Support</b></i>	<i><b>Total Oppose</b></i>	<i><b>Intensity</b></i>
• Imposing significant fines on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants	76%	18%	+49
• Giving immigrants who are already in the U.S. illegally a path to become U.S. citizens if they pay back taxes, pay a fine, learn English, and do not have a criminal record	68%	27%	+22
• Using National Guard troops to help guard the border with Mexico	67%	27%	+29
• Adopting a temporary-worker program where people could come to the U.S. to work for a period of time, but would then have to return to their home countries	66%	28%	+17
• Building a fence along portions of the U.S. border with Mexico	56%	36%	+17
• Treating people who assist illegal immigrants to come here or remain here as felons	52%	40%	+9
• Treating illegal immigrants as felons so they would have to be deported	51%	42%	+11
• Giving Social Security benefits to illegal immigrants who become citizens if they paid Social Security taxes when they worked here illegally	50%	45%	-6
• Forgiving two of five years of back taxes for illegal immigrants who want to become citizens	34%	58%	-24

6. **When presented with three options on immigration reform phrased as their proponents articulate the position, the preferred option includes border security, employer enforcement, a temporary-worker program, and a path to citizenship.** Here is the exact wording of the question:

*Which of the following three types of legislation would you prefer?*

- A bill that concentrates on border security and employer verification of workers' legal status, but does not include a temporary-worker program or a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who are already here, because we have to secure the border and improve employer verification first before we can think about other solutions;
- A bill that includes border security and employer verification of workers' legal status, but also includes a temporary-worker program, because we have to address the need for workers by U.S. employers if we are ever going to get control of the border;
- A bill that includes border security, employer verification of workers' legal status, and a temporary-worker program, but also includes a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who are already here, because any solution to the immigration problem must deal with the illegal immigrants who are already in America.

Among all voters, 40 percent prefer the third option that includes a path to citizenship, 25 percent prefer the second option that includes a temporary-worker program, and 22 percent prefer the first option that concentrates only on border security and employer verification. Among Republican voters, 35 percent prefer the third option that includes a path to citizenship, with 26 percent for each of the other two options. In other words, 65 percent of all voters and 61 percent of Republican voters prefer an option that goes beyond border security and employer verification.

7. **Voters want their congressman and senators to stand on principle rather than compromise with those who hold different views, but those who want their officials to stand on principle prefer a path to citizenship.** By a margin of 50 to 37 percent, voters want their elected officials to stand on principle rather than compromise with those who hold different views. The margin in favor of standing on principle is 57 to 33 percent among Republicans, 47 to 37 percent among Independents, and 47 to 40 percent among Democrats. But among voters who want their elected officials to stand on principle, 34 percent favor the option that includes a path to citizenship, 27 percent favor the option that stops at a temporary-worker program, and 27 percent favor the option with just border security and employer verification.
8. **Voters are split on whether the conditions attached to a path to citizenship amount to amnesty, but they want a path to citizenship anyway.** "If an illegal immigrant is given an opportunity to become a U.S. citizen if they pay back taxes, pay a fine, learn English, have a job, do not have a criminal record, and go the to back of the line, do you consider that to be amnesty?" Forty-six percent think that is amnesty, and 40 percent do not. The margins who think it is amnesty are 45 to 43 percent among Republicans, 46 to 39 percent among Independents, and 47 to 39 percent among Democrats. But among those who think those

conditions amount to amnesty, 39 percent favor the option that includes a path to citizenship, 27 percent favor the option that stops at a temporary-worker program, and 24 percent favor the option with just border security and employer verification.

Clearly the American people want something done about illegal immigration, and they want it done soon. Voters are upset and angry at a problem that they view as out of control. This issue has reached critical mass, and excuses about why the House and Senate cannot agree on what needs to be done are likely to fall on deaf ears. To craft a bill that can win widespread popular approval, it would be wise for the conference committee to drop provisions from either bill that do not enjoy overwhelming support. But core provisions remain in both bills that meet that criterion.

As the governing party, Republicans have a special responsibility to demonstrate that they can govern when faced with such intense grassroots pressure. Failure to meet that responsibility will generate even more anger and frustration, which voters could take out on Republican candidates in November. While there may certainly be a cost to swallowing provisions opposed by a vocal minority of the Party, there is a greater cost to doing nothing.

### ***Methodology***

The sample for this survey consists of 1000 respondents drawn randomly from throughout the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Respondents were selected by random-digit dialing to insure that households with both listed and unlisted numbers are included. All respondents indicated they are registered to vote. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.10$  percent.

Demographics of the sample are consistent with recent national surveys of registered voters. By gender, 48 percent of the respondents are male and 52 percent are female. By political party, 32 percent are Republican and 32 percent Democrat, with the remainder Independent or other. By race, the sample is 80 percent white, 11 percent African-American, 8 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent other/refused.

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