



To: Interested Parties

From: America's Voice

Re: Two Keys to Understanding Public Opinion on Immigration Reform and Republicans

Date: Jan 29, 2014

The upcoming House Republican retreat will play a pivotal role in determining how the House tackles immigration reform. Based on a detailed array of district-level polls, it's clear that the American people are firmly in favor of a path to citizenship for aspiring Americans. While opponents attempt to portray this component of immigration reform as contentious, it's actually the consensus position among all voters, including Republican primary voters. The following pages offer substantiation for two key points:

- 1. Immigration reform is broadly popular in available district-specific polling of Republican-held congressional seats.** Available district-specific immigration polling, conducted in the past year by both Democratic and Republican-affiliated pollsters in 25 different Republican-held districts, shows consistent and broad public support for immigration reform. Notably, both likely voters and self-identified Republican likely voters support a path to earned legalization and citizenship as part of a broader immigration fix in district after district. In every district polled, citizenship topped other policy alternatives. In addition to the district-specific polling results, several polls of aggregated congressional district polling assess immigration sentiment in a broader number of competitive House districts. Among Latino voters and all likely voters in these aggregated congressional battleground polls, support is overwhelming on behalf of an immigration reform package that includes a path to citizenship.
- 2. The fear that Republican primary voters don't support immigration reform is overstated – in fact, Republican primary voters are more pragmatic and pro-reform than conventional political wisdom assumes.** The persistent conventional political wisdom that Republican voters are anti-immigration is not borne out by public opinion and polling research. Whether examining immigration in the 2012 presidential primary season or Republican-specific polling conducted during 2013, the GOP base is more open and supportive of immigration reform – including reform with legalization and citizenship provisions – than our punditry assumes. Resultantly, the fears over primary challengers due to immigration are more about misplaced perception than actual reality.

1. Immigration Reform is Broadly Popular in Available District-specific Polling

District-specific polling in 25 congressional districts, including in such conservative locations as the IA-04 district that elected Steve King to Congress, shows strong majority support for the tenets of a broad immigration reform overhaul similar to the Senate's comprehensive approach and the House immigration principles. In every district polled, citizenship topped other policy alternatives.

Available district-specific polls were conducted in the past year by **Public Policy Polling (PPP)**, **Magellan Strategies**, and the **Tarrance Group** in the following districts: CA-10 (Denham); CA-21 (Valadao); CA-22 (Nunes); CA-23 (McCarthy); CA-25 (McKeon); CA-31 (Miller); CA-49 (Issa); CO-03 (Tipton); CO-04 (Gardner); CO-06 (Coffman); FL-10 (Webster); FL-15 (Ross); IA-04 (King); IL-13 (Davis); MN-02 (Kline); NJ-02 (LoBiondo); NV-02 (Amodei); NV-03 (Heck); NY-02 (King); NY-11 (Grimm); NY-19 (Gibson); OH-14 (Joyce); PA-08 (Fitzpatrick); TX-02 (Poe); TX-27 (Farenthold). *Specific polling questions, results, and sourcing for district-specific polling available in the detailed table at the end of this memo.*

Additionally, other recent congressional immigration polls have sampled voters in a range of targeted congressional districts and provided aggregate, rather than district-specific, findings:

- **Basswood Research November 2013 congressional swing district polling, on behalf of FWD.us**, surveyed voters in 20 congressional districts on immigration. **By a 71%-21% margin, respondents supported an “earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented.”** Per the polling summary, “General election voters in these districts, including Republicans, support all the key provisions of comprehensive immigration reform by wide margins. Generally, the proposals regarding earned citizenship for undocumented immigrants are no less popular than the provisions regarding enhanced border security and employer sanctions.” **The districts polled were: CA-10, CA-21, CO-6, FL-2, FL-10, IA-3, IL-13, IN-2, MI-1, MI-7, MI-11, MN-2, NE-2, NV-3, NY-11, NY-19, NY-23, OH-6, OH-14, and PA-8.**
- **Latino Decisions poll of 800 Latino voters in 24 Republican-held battleground districts in July 2013.** 77% of Latino voter respondents support an immigration plan that combines border security, verification of workers’ status by employers, and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. On the question of legal status vs. citizenship, 79% of midterm voters support a full pathway to citizenship over a mere 12% who prefer legal status without citizenship. Among midterm Latino voters in these 24 districts, 62% have voted Republican at some point in their lives and 50% would be more likely to support a GOP House candidate in their district if they take a leadership role in passing immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship, even if they disagree on other issues. Districts polled include 24 Tier One and Tier Two competitive congressional districts.

2. The Fear that Republican Primary Voters Don’t Support Immigration Reform is Overstated – GOP Voters Are Surprisingly Pragmatic and Pro-Reform

The persistent conventional political wisdom that Republican voters are anti-immigration is not borne out by public opinion and polling research. As conservative Republican pollster and consultant Jon Lerner said, “There are around 20 percent of GOP primary voters who oppose most forms of immigration reform. This minority tends to be vocal, but their level of activism should not be confused with the size of their numbers. The large majority of primary voters see a badly broken immigration system and want it fixed.” Among key Republican-focused immigration polls conducted in 2013:

- **Basswood Research on behalf of Americans for a Conservative Direction, July 2013:** In a nationwide poll of Republican primary voters, this poll found, “When given a choice between leaving the current immigration system the way it is, and “passing new laws that are not perfect, but do attempt to fix the serious flaws in the current system,” Republicans choose imperfect solutions over the status quo by a massive 78%-14% margin. Additionally, 65% of Republicans support a pathway to citizenship if it is

“coupled with substantially increased border security. An additional 8% support a pathway to citizenship even without increased border security, bringing to 73% the total of GOP primary voters who are open to the concept. A 21% minority of primary voters oppose citizenship under all circumstances.

- **The Tarrance Group on behalf of American Action Network, July 2013:** The Republican-affiliated Tarrance Group polled likely Republican primary voters in non-blue states and found that, by a 51%-26% margin, GOP primary voters supported passage of generic “comprehensive immigration reform. Additionally, 59% of Republican primary voter respondents supported an “earned pathway to legal status,” while 49% supported an “earned pathway to citizenship.” Additionally, 80% of respondents favored the following detailed proposal: “allowing undocumented immigrants the opportunity to earn legal status if they pass a criminal background check, pay a fine, pay current and back taxes, learn English, go to the back of the line in the application process, and are not allowed to receive any taxpayer paid benefits?”
- **Republican subsets of national polls concur:** the majority of the nation strongly backs immigration reform with a path to citizenship and most Republicans and conservatives prefer the policy option of immigration reform with a path to citizenship versus other policy alternatives (see November 2013 Quinnipiac poll, November 2013 Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) polling, and January 2014 Fox News polling for recent examples. By a 68% to 15% margin, respondents in the January 2014 Fox News poll back a path to citizenship option over the mass-deportation alternative, while a remaining 13% support the guest worker option. Among Republican respondents in that poll, 60% back the path to citizenship option vs. 19% who back mass-deportation and 18% who back the guest worker program. As the PRRI pollsters assessed, “survey questions that make no mention of requirements immigrants living in the country illegally must meet produce lower support for a path to citizenship than questions that do mention requirements,” particularly among Republican respondents.

Fear of losing congressional primaries over immigration is overblown: As John Stanton of BuzzFeed wrote last summer in analysis titled, “*No, Congressman, You Probably Won’t Lose Your Job For Voting For Immigration Reform*,” interviews with “operatives, campaign aides, and activists from groups like the Club for Growth and Heritage Action, as well as a review of recent election data, suggests the likelihood of Republicans facing serious primary challenges is not only overstated but probably won’t have much of anything to do with immigration.” As Molly Ball wrote in *The Atlantic* in July 2013, “There’s really only one instance of a sitting Republican politician whose position on immigration was the primary factor in losing his seat,” referring to former Utah Rep. Chris Cannon’s loss to current Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) in 2008. Ball adds, “there’s a notable counterexample: Russell Pearce, the Arizona legislator who authored the state’s restrictive immigration law, SB 1070, was ousted by another Republican in a recall in 2011, and subsequently lost a Republican primary when he tried to make a comeback.” Additionally, even Rep. Chaffetz has evolved on immigration, saying to a town hall audience in August that, “there should be a pathway to citizenship, not a special pathway and not no pathway, but there has to be a legal lawful way to go through this process that works and right now it doesn’t.”

Lessons from the 2012 primary season: Republican presidential primary voters are more pro-reform and practical and on immigration than often assumed. Poll after poll of likely Republican caucus-goers in Iowa during the 2012 cycle found that the state’s Republican electorate was more pro-reform than conventional wisdom suggested – in fact, they preferred the Newt Gingrich “let undocumented immigrants apply for legal status” approach over Mitt Romney’s “self-deportation” approach. In addition to the Iowa caucuses, immigration consistently ranked lowest on the list of 2012 Republican primary and caucus-goers’ voting issues

in nearly every Republican primary exit poll. Of course, the 2012 cycle also demonstrated that tacking to the right on immigration during a primary can destroy the general election viability of Republican candidates.

Finally, what the House does on immigration may determine whether Republicans can take back the White House in 2016: Republicans’ future White House prospects may hinge on whether House Republicans decide to block immigration reform this Congress. In an assessment titled, “The Republican Party’s Uphill Path to 270 Electoral Votes in 2016,” Dan Balz of the Washington Post argues that demographic trends and shifting political winds in many states have already placed the Republican Party at a decided disadvantage in the 2016 presidential race. Balz concludes by stating, “a Republican candidate who is significantly more successful at winning Hispanic votes than the party’s past two nominees could quickly change the calculus of some of these contested states...But Republicans have considerable ground to recapture to win the presidency, and underlying trends have not been helping them.”

As Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) said last year on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” “if we don't pass immigration reform, if we don't get it off the table in a reasonable, practical way, it doesn't matter who you run in 2016. We're in a demographic death spiral as a party and the only way we can get back in good graces with the Hispanic community in my view is pass comprehensive immigration reform. If you don't do that, it really doesn't matter who we run.” Similarly, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) said to *National Journal*’s Fawn Johnson, “My theory is that we can win in 2014 without resolving it. We can't win in 2016 without resolving it.”

2013 Congressional-District Level Polling on Immigration			
District	Member	Key Poll Result in Republican-Held Congressional District	Source
CA-10	Jeff Denham	72% of likely voters, including 68% of Republican voters, "support legislation that would significantly increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
		66% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 69% support a path to citizenship (51% and 72% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013
CA-21	David Valadao	77% of likely voters, including 75% of Republican voters, "support legislation that would significantly increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
		65% of voters support immigration reform modeled after Senate's approach and 77% support a path to citizenship (61% and 80% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013

CA-22	Devin Nunes	74% of likely voters, including 71% of Republican voters, "support legislation that would significantly increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
CA-23	Kevin McCarthy	76% of likely 2014 voters, including 74% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
CA-25	Buck McKeon	73% of likely 2014 voters, including 65% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
CA-31	Gary Miller	By a 66%-23% margin overall (58%-31% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would "strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time"	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
		65% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 65% support a path to citizenship (58% and 70% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013
CA-49	Darrell Issa	74% of likely voters, including 72% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Oct. 2013
CO-03	Scott Tipton	77% of likely 2014 voters, including 74% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice in Oct. 2013
CO-04	Cory Gardner	76% of likely 2014 voters, including 77% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of AV in Oct 2013
CO-06	Mike Coffman	74% of likely voters, including 71% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies on behalf of A.V. Oct 2013
		65% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 66% support a path to citizenship (56% and 69% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013

FL-10	Daniel Webster	79% of likely 2014 voters—including 80% of Republicans —support legislation that would increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants and make sure undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. pass a criminal background check and register for legal status.	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Nov. 2013
		When asked “How important is it to you that immigration reform legislation includes a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million immigrants living in the US without legal status,” 63% answered ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ important, a more than 2-1 margin over those answering ‘not at all important’ (31%).	PPP for Project New America in May 2013
FL-15	Dennis Ross	78% of likely 2014 voters—including 79% of Republicans —support legislation that would increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants and make sure undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. pass a criminal background check and register for legal status.	Magellan Strategies on behalf of America's Voice Nov. 2013
		When asked “How important is it to you that immigration reform legislation includes a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million immigrants living in the US without legal status,” 69% answered ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ important, a more than 2-1 margin over those answering ‘not at all important’ (28%).	PPP for Project New America in May 2013
IA-04	Steve King	Seven in ten district voters (69%) indicate that they favor or support generic “comprehensive immigration reform” and only 17% are opposed. Over two-thirds of Republicans (67%) are in favor of generic comprehensive immigration reform.	Tarrance Group on behalf of American Action Network, July 2013
IL-13	Rodney Davis	By a 69%-19% margin overall (66%-20% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
MN-2	John Kline	By a 78%-12% margin overall (76%-15% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
		69% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 67% support a path to citizenship (66% and 79% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013
NJ-2	Frank LoBiondo	By a 71%-18% margin overall (64%-28% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
NV-2	Mark Amodei	72% of likely 2014 voters, including 70% of Republicans, support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	Magellan Strategies for AV in Oct. 2013
NV-3	Joe Heck	By a 65%-25% margin overall (52%-37% among Republicans), support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013

		74% of likely voters, including 71% of Republicans, support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	Magellan Strategies for AV in Oct. 2013
		61% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 62% support a path to citizenship (49% and 62% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013
NY-02	Peter King	82% of likely 2014 voters—including 85% of Republicans— support legislation that would increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants and make sure undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. pass a criminal background check and register for legal status.	Magellan Strategies for America's Voice in Nov. 2013
NY-11	Michael Grimm	By a 72%-18% margin overall (71%-18% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
		66% of voters support immigration reform modeled after the Senate's approach and 69% support a path to citizenship (59% and 76% among Republicans)	PPP Swing District polling July 2013
NY-19	Chris Gibson	79% of likely 2014 voters—and 82% of Republicans-- support legislation that would increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants and make sure undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. pass a criminal background check and register for legal status.	Magellan Strategies for America's Voice in Nov. 2013
OH-14	David Joyce	By a 76%-11% margin overall (75%-17% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
PA-8	Mike Fitzpatrick	By a 77%-12% margin overall (71%-18% among Republicans), voters support legislation that would “strengthen border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and require that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. without a criminal record register for legal status, learn English, pay taxes, and be allowed to work towards citizenship over time”	PPP for SEIU in Oct. 2013
TX-2	Ted Poe	79% of likely 2014 voters, including 76% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies for AV in Oct. 2013
TX-27	Blake Farenthold	77% of likely 2014 voters, including 81% of Republicans, support immigration legislation that would "increase border security, block employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, and make sure that undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. with no criminal record register for legal status. If immigrants were to meet a list of requirements, they could eventually apply for citizenship."	Magellan Strategies for AV in Oct. 2013

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