

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**

**FROM: THE TARRANCE GROUP AND LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS**

**RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY ON IMMIGRATION**

---

**METHODOLOGY**

The Tarrance Group and Lake Research Partners is pleased to present the findings from a survey of “likely” voters nationwide. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample of N=800 registered “likely” voters nationwide and an N=300 oversample in competitive Congressional Districts, an N=100 oversample of Hispanic voters, and an N=100 oversample of “strong” Republicans. Responses to this survey were gathered April 15-19 and 22, 2007. The confidence interval associated for the base sample is  $\pm 3.5\%$  in 19 of 20 cases.

**Key Findings Summary**

Overall, this study finds that likely voters nationwide continue to have a strong interest in immigration reform. Interest in passing immigration reform legislation has increased since last year and there is broad agreement on what the premise of immigration reform legislation should be.

There is notably strong support for comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship. This strong support for comprehensive immigration reform crosses all party, ethnic, and demographic lines, including base Republican voters and based Democratic voters. In addition, a majority of likely voters do not see a reform that includes a path to citizenship as amnesty.

Likely voters are poised to reward supporters of comprehensive immigration reform and they are ready to have all incumbents in Washington share the blame if no reform is passed.

In examining the details of this legislation, there is strong support for assimilation programs, triggers, providing a path to citizenship. A “touchback” requirement has slim majority support. Deportation of all illegal immigrants has majority opposition and is seen by an overwhelming majority of voters as an impossible task.

### **Strong and Increasing Interest in Immigration Reform**

On an issue matrix with ten choices, “illegal immigration” is in the top tier of likely voter concerns with ten percent (10%) of voters selecting this issue. Only the “situation in Iraq” (19%), “the economy and jobs” (12%), and “terrorism and national security” (11%) are selected more frequently.

Fully seventy-three percent (73%) of likely voters feel that it is “extremely” (42%) or “very” (31%) important for Congress to deal with the problem of illegal immigration this year. This represents an eleven point increase in concern about this issue from a July 2006 study, including a nine point increase in those saying “extremely important”.

This attitude that dealing with illegal immigration is an important job for Congress to deal with this year is pervasive across all demographic groups, including likely voters in swing Congressional Districts (74%), strong Republicans (79%), strong Democrats (70%), and weekly church attendees (76%).

In addition, more than seven-in-ten (73%) likely voters say that they are more interested this year in having Congress pass immigration reform legislation.

On a series of agree/disagree statements, there is broad consensus among likely voters that immigration reform should be dealt with this year by Congress and that this reform should focus on ensuring a controlled, legal flow of immigrants who assimilate into American culture. The notable findings are:

- It is the job of Congress to deal with important issues like immigration reform. (92% agree)
- Immigration is a critical problem that needs to be addressed this year. (81% agree)
- A key goal of immigration reform should be to get control of the immigration flow in this country and change it from an illegal flow to a legal flow. (83% agree)
- It would be good for the US economy if we could reform our immigration system to ensure that there are enough workers to meet our economic needs. (74% agree)
- Immigration reform should focus on assimilating new immigrants into the American way of life and not on creating a class of temporary workers who will never be allowed to become citizens or remain in the country. (69% agree)

**Strong Support for Comprehensive Immigration Reform that  
Includes a Path to Citizenship**

Likely voters are read a proposal for comprehensive immigration reform that is described as follows:

- Provide resources to greatly increase border security,
- Impose much tougher penalties on employers who hire illegal workers,
- Allow additional foreign workers to come to the United States to work for a temporary period,
- Create a system in which illegal immigrants could come forward and register, pay a fine, and receive a temporary worker permit
- Provide these temporary workers with a multi-year path to earned citizenship, if they get to the end of the line and meet certain requirements like living crime free, learning English, paying taxes

After this description, seventy-five percent (75%) of likely voters favor passage of this legislation. This represents a four point increase of support for this legislation since July 2006.

Support for this legislation crosses all racial and partisan/ideological lines with whites (75%), African Americans (70%), and Hispanics (74%) all strong favoring passage and with strong Republicans (76%), very conservative voters (74%), strong Democrats (74%) and liberals (75%) as well as swing CD voters (72%) also strongly in support of passage. There is also strong support for passage of this legislation among white conservative Christians (78%), born again Christians (75%), and weekly church attendees (76%). In fact, there is even strong support for passage among those who listen to talk radio on a daily basis (76%).

In examining some likely criticisms of this legislation, a majority (52%) of likely voters do not believe this proposal is the same thing as amnesty for illegal immigrants. In addition, on a forced choice question in which likely voters are offered the options of doing nothing on immigration reform or passage of legislation that includes a path to citizenship that some will call amnesty, a strong majority (64%) of likely voters select the passage of legislation that includes a path to citizenship.

**Electoral Impact of Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Looking at the electoral impact of this legislation, two-thirds (67%) of likely voters indicate they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports this legislation. Like support for passage of this legislation, the willingness to reward supporters of this legislation crosses a variety of demographic lines. Those saying more likely is at two-thirds or more among whites (67%), African Americans (73%), Hispanics (67%), strong

Republicans (69%), very conservative voters (65%), strong Democrats (67%), liberals (67%), white conservative Christians (71%), born again Christians (71%), weekly church attendees (70%), and even daily talk radio listeners (70%).

In contrast, when asked to select who would be most to blame if immigration reform does not become law this year, a majority (59%) of likely voters select that both parties in Congress and President Bush would share this blame equally.

### **Views on Details of Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Likely voters are asked their view of several items related to comprehensive immigration reform. An overwhelming majority (83%) of the likely electorate favors enacting a requirement that illegal immigrants in the earned citizenship program be required to pass an assimilation test that shows basic knowledge of English and our government.

Fully seventy percent (70%) of likely voters support implementing comprehensive immigration reform in two stages with the first step being increased border security and tougher penalties on employers. Upon certification that these measures are in place, the second step -- the guest worker program and earned legalization program -- would be enacted.

Regarding dealing with the transition for illegal immigrants to legal status, a strong majority (62%) of likely voters favor using the approach described in the comprehensive immigration reform proposal. A slim majority (54%) of likely voters favor a “touchback” requirement for a brief period of time during the final stages though it should be noted that this provision met intense opposition across diverse demographics during extensive qualitative research.

In a forced choice question on use of an attrition policy or offering a path to citizenship as part of a comprehensive immigration reform policy as the best way to deal with the issue of immigration reform, offering a path to citizenship (65%) is selected more than twice as often as attrition (26%).

On the issue of dealing with current illegal immigrants, seventy-six percent (76%) of likely voters favor using the approach outlined in the comprehensive immigration reform proposal described in this poll. In contrast, a strong majority (65%) of the likely electorate opposes dealing with current illegal immigrants by deporting them by any means necessary. In addition, fully 85% of likely voters believe it is not possible to deport all twelve million illegal immigrants.

###