A recent bipartisan, national study of likely voters finds that likely voters have a strong preference for a plan that deals with future immigration by creating an earned citizenship program in which immigrants come to America, work, and earn citizenship by meeting a variety of criteria over a significant period of time over a program in which guest workers would be sent home after a period of time and there would be no method in which these guest workers could earn citizenship.

Likely voters were first informed that all immigration reform plans, including these two plans, would increase security at the border and provide tougher enforcement of current laws. Likely voters were then told one key difference was how to deal with future immigration. They were read the descriptions below and asked which of these plans they would prefer. It should be noted that in the interest of getting an honest assessment no labels other than Plan A and Plan B were given to these plans.

**PLAN A**
- Immigrants could come here to work for up to six years, then they must return to their home country.
- Immigrants could bring their immediate families, but their families could not work.
- These immigrants and their families would be eligible for only emergency medical care and education.
- Immigrants would never be eligible for US citizenship.

**PLAN B**
- Immigrants could come to work for three years and in the fourth year, while continuing to work, they would be eligible to apply for citizenship.
- Immigrants could bring their immediate families and their families could work.
- These immigrants and their families would be eligible for only emergency medical care and education, but once they become citizens they would be eligible for all services available to any American citizen.
- Immigrants could earn the right to citizenship by working, paying taxes, and learning English.

An overwhelming majority (71%) of likely voters chose Plan B. Plan B is chosen by 60% or more of every major demographic group.

In fact, strong majorities of several diverse groups chose Plan B, including Republicans (70%), Independents (64%), and Democrats (74%) and including conservatives (68%), moderates (64%), and liberals (77%).

Only 19% of likely voters chose Plan A and 10% of likely voters are initially unsure.

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1 These findings are drawn from telephone interviews with N=1,010 registered “likely” voters. The confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is ± 3.1%. Responses to this survey were gathered March 26-28, 2006.
The prospect of rewarding immigrants with the right to earn citizenship is the clear driver for support for Plan B. When asked the component they like most about Plan B, the two most common elements chosen are earning the right to citizenship (31%) and becoming eligible to enter a citizenship program after three years of working (27%).

Support for Plan A is driven by immigrants having to return home after six years (28%) followed by these guest workers being never eligible for citizenship (18%), and the ban on their families working (15%).

After a series of statements regarding the merits and flaws of both plans, 64% of likely voters select Plan B while 25% of voters select Plan A. Another 11% of voters are unsure.

Overall, 57% of the likely electorate remains supportive of Plan B throughout the survey.

Regarding overall political environment, when presented with a list of ten issues and asked to select which issue most concerns them, 8% of likely voters select illegal immigration, putting it behind issues like the situation in Iraq (17%), the economy and jobs (11%), terrorism and national security (11%), moral values (10%), and health care (9%).

Regarding the overall environment on this issue, 66% of likely voters agree with the statement that “There should be no consideration of what to do about future immigration until we have increased security at the border and increased enforcement for punishing employers who are currently employing illegal immigrants.” However, an illustration of the ambivalence of likely voters on this issue and their strong desire for solutions is seen later in this same series, when 65% of likely voters agree with the statement that “If we strengthen the border and end illegal immigration, we will need to increase legal immigration to meet our country’s economic needs.”

Three-quarters (75%) of likely voters (or more) agree with the following statements about immigration policy:
  o The immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed. (90% agree)
  o We need an immigration system that is consistent with the basic American values of fairness and equal treatment under the law. (92% agree)
  o Deporting all 11 million illegal immigrants currently in the United States is unrealistic. (78% agree)
  o If an immigrant has been in this country working, paying taxes, and learning English, there should be a way for them to become a citizen. (83% agree)
  o If an illegal immigrant has been in this country working, paying taxes, and learning English, there should be a way for them to become a citizen. (76% agree)
  o Fixing our immigration system to make it safe, legal, and orderly will make us more secure from terrorists. (78% agree)
  o We need a controlled immigration system that would replace an illegal immigration flow with a legal immigration flow. (91% agree).

The bottom line... Despite the heated rhetoric on this issue, likely voters have a strong preference for a system of dealing future immigration that provides a reward of eligibility to earn citizenship for those who come here to work hard, pay taxes, and learn English.