POLLS SHOW MOST AMERICANS SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

By consistently strong majorities, Americans support comprehensive immigration reform. In 2009 as in previous years, voters want the President and Congress to advance a solution that legalizes the undocumented workforce, requires them to pay taxes, levels the playing field for workers and employers, and restores the rule of law. The same was true in the run-up to the 2008 elections, when swing voters chose candidates who offered practical solutions to the broken immigration system over those who offered just empty rhetoric. Following is a snapshot of recent opinion polls on immigration reform.

December 2009 – America's Voice National Poll (Benenson Strategy Group)

Benenson Strategy Group conducted a national poll from December 19 to 21, 2009 for America's Voice, following up on questions asked in May 2009. The December poll surveyed 800 likely voters and had a margin of error of ±3.46%.

Sixty-Five Percent of Respondents Supported Congressional Action on Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2010. According to the December poll, 65% of voters prefer for Congress to take up the immigration issue this year rather than wait until later. Sixty-six percent of respondents supported comprehensive immigration reform before even hearing details of the plan. Support for reform continued to cut across party lines, with 69% of Democrats, 67% of independents, and 62% of Republicans supporting comprehensive reform. When given details, support for comprehensive reform climbed. Requiring undocumented immigrants to register with the government and meet certain conditions, including working, paying taxes and learning English in order to apply for citizenship, was supported by 87% in December. These findings show continued support for reform following similar polls in November 2008 and May 2009, even during the country's harshest economic crisis in decades. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, December 2009]

A Majority of Voters Said the Issue Was Crucial Due to the Poor Economy and Preferred that Undocumented Immigrants Become Legal Taxpayers over a Deportation Approach. The sense of urgency has been bolstered by the poor economy. Fifty-five percent of respondents said that the poor economy makes it more crucial that Congress address immigration reform, as opposed to the 42% who believed it was not the right time. An overwhelming margin of voters, 67% to 28%, prefer that undocumented immigrants take steps to become legal taxpayers over an option to deport them because they are "taking jobs." [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, December 2009]

Sixty-Six Percent Support Requiring Undocumented Immigrants to Register and Work Towards Citizenship. When given details about what is included in comprehensive immigration reform, including access to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who register and meet state criteria, support remains strong and consistent. Roughly the same percentage of voters in May and December 2009, 66%, support a program that requires undocumented immigrants to register, meet certain requirements, and become legal taxpayers on their way to becoming full U.S. citizens. Only 22% of voters believed that those immigrants should be required to leave and 11% believe that they should be allowed to stay temporarily. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Polls, December and May 2009]

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October 2009 – CNN (Opinion Research Corporation)

CNN conducted a telephone poll from October 16 to 18, 2009. The poll was conducted through interviews with 1,038 adult Americans on the phone by Opinion Research Corporation. The poll had a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Americans Want To See The Number Of Illegal Immigrants Decrease, But Not Through Mass Deportation. A CNN poll found that 73% of Americans want illegal immigration reduced, while 3% want it increased and 22% want it to stay the same. But only half of those who want it reduced—37% of the entire sample—said mass deportation was the way to accomplish the goal. [CNN Poll, 10/16-18/09]

Even In This Poll, Often-Cited By Restrictionists As Proving Their Case, A Majority Of Respondents Favored An Immigration Solution Other Than Mass Deportation. More than 60% of those surveyed either did not want to see illegal immigration decreased, or did not want mass deportation. While we do not know what type of solution they would embrace, since the question was not asked, other polls indicate consistent majority support for comprehensive immigration reform. [CNN Poll, 10/16-18/09]

June 2009 – America's Voice and Center for American Progress Action Fund Congressional District Polling (Benenson Strategy Group)

On behalf of America's Voice and the Center for American Progress Action Fund, Benenson Strategy Group conducted a poll of three battleground Congressional districts between May 27 and June 1, 2009. The poll surveyed 500 likely voters each in Idaho's 1st Congressional District, Alabama's 2nd Congressional District, and California's 3rd Congressional District. The margin of error was ± 4.38% in each district.

A majority of voters in these districts supported comprehensive immigration reform and candidates who support reform. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in these districts supported comprehensive immigration reform when asked generically (65% in ID-1, 65% in AL-2 and 67% in CA-3), while support climbed to nearly 90% after the details of comprehensive reform were explained (88% in ID-1, 87% in AL-2, and 83% in CA-3). Respondents were also more likely to support Congressional candidates who championed comprehensive reform rather than those who opposed it (85% in ID-1, 83% in AL-2, 79% in CA-3). [America's Voice, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, June2009]

A majority of voters in these districts supported a pathway to citizenship over deportation. Two thirds of respondents preferred a comprehensive approach to the status quo of continued enforcement and forced departure (65% over 34% in ID-1, 63% over 35% in AL-2, 63% over 34% in CA-3). A vast majority chose legalization of undocumented workers that included a pathway to citizenship, over deportation or temporary status (65% in ID-1, 62% in AL-2, 63% in CA-3).
[America's Voice, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, June 2009]

These voters believed that comprehensive reform is good for taxpayers and the economy. A majority of voters believed that comprehensive reform would be helpful and fair to taxpayers by making the undocumented into legal taxpayers. By a 3 to 1 margin, voters would rather turn undocumented immigrants into legal taxpayers than force them to leave because they are taking jobs (68% to 28% in ID-1, 65% to 31 in AL-2, 73% to 23%).

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[America's Voice, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, June 2009]

A majority of voters in these districts also believed the time for enacting comprehensive immigration reform is now. Seven in ten of these voters want Congress to act now on immigration. They said that the recession makes it more important that we address immigration and rejected the argument that the President and Congress should focus solely on other issues. [America's Voice, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, June 2009]

May 2009 - America's Voice National Poll (Benenson Strategy Group)

On behalf of America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group conducted a national poll from May 9 to 12, 2009. The poll surveyed 1,000 likely voters and had a margin of error of 3.1%.

75% Of Respondents Supported Congressional Action On Immigration Reform In 2009; 57% Said The Issue Was Crucial Due To Economic Situation. According to a poll of 1,000 likely voters conducted by the Benenson Strategy Group, 75% of respondents believed Congress should tackle immigration reform in 2009. The sense of urgency was boosted by the poor economy. 57% of respondents said that the poor economy makes it more crucial that Congress address immigration reform as opposed to the 39% who believed it was not the right time. In general, voters support a member of Congress willing to tackle immigration more so than one who will not. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, 5/14/09]

68% Support Pathway To Citizenship For Undocumented Immigrants Including 62% Of Republicans. Support for comprehensive immigration reform has remained stable since a previous poll taken in November 2008. Roughly the same percentage of voters, 68%, support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants allowing them to register, meet certain requirements and become legal taxpayers. Support is bi-partisan, as 62% of Republicans support the same position. Only 20% of voters believed that those undocumented should be required to leave and 10% believe that they should be allowed to stay temporarily. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, 5/14/09]

71% of Voters Preferred That Illegal Immigrants Become Legal Taxpayers. An overwhelming margin of voters, 71% to 26% believed that illegal immigrants should take steps to become legal taxpayers. 71% of respondents also believe that those illegal immigrants should not be forced to leave and were not responsible for taking American jobs. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group Poll, 5/14/09]

May 2009 – Pew Research Center

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press conducted a 2009 Values Survey. The first part of the poll was conducted from March 31 to April 6, 2009 reaching 1,506 voters. The second poll was conducted from April 14 to April 21, 2009 reaching 1,507 voters. There was no reported margin of error in the topline report.

63% Of Respondents Supported A Pathway To Citizenship, Up 5% From 2007. The Pew Research Center polling results show that support for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants has risen from 58% in 2007 to 63% in 2009. 73% of Democrats support this position along with 50% of Republicans and 61% of Independents. [Pew Research Center, 5/21/09]

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April 2009 - America's Voice National Poll of Latino Voters (Bendixen & Associates)

On behalf of America's Voice, Bendixen & Associates conducted a national poll of 800 Latino voters in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Nevada, New York, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia from April 28 to May 5, 2009. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and English and the margin of error was 3.5%.

Latino Voters Overwhelmingly Supported Obama; 83% Believed He Would "Do The Right Thing" For Immigration Reform. Latino voters across 13 states overwhelmingly believed President Obama's campaign promise to pass comprehensive immigration reform. 72% of respondents believed it will happen in 2009. 75% of respondents rated Obama favorably when asked whether he was tackling the "issues and concerns of Hispanic families." Furthermore, 83% of respondents believed Obama would "do the right thing" when passing comprehensive reform, only 10% said that he will "not do the right thing." [America's Voice, Bendixen & Associates, 5/18/09]

Only 23% Of Latino Voters Trusted Congressional Republicans To Tackle Immigration Reform. Latino voters responded unfavorably towards Congressional Republicans when asked about their approach to comprehensive immigration reform. Only 23% of respondents trusted Republicans to tackle the issue, while 69% trusted Democrats in Congress. [America's Voice, Bendixen & Associates, 5/18/09]

87% Of Latino Voters Would Not Vote For Congressional Candidate Who Supported Deportation. Latino voters believed immigration was a personal issue, 82% of respondents said the issue was "personally important." Furthermore, voters responded unfavorably towards a Congressional candidate who did not support a pathway to citizenship for those undocumented. 87% of Latino voters surveyed would not support a candidate who favored deportation for undocumented immigrants. [America's Voice, Bendixen & Associates, 5/18/09]

89% Of Respondents Supported Path To Citizenship; Only 4% Believed Illegal Immigrants Should Leave. 89% of respondents believed undocumented immigrants in the country should be given a pathway to citizenship, while only 4% supported immediate deportation. [America's Voice, Bendixen & Associates, 5/18/09]

April 2009 - Washington Post/ABC News Poll

The Washington Post-ABC News conducted a telephone poll of 1,072 adults from April 21 to 24, 2009. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus three points.

61% Of Respondents Supported a Program To Give Illegal Immigrants In United States The Right To Live Here Legally After Paying Fines And Meeting Other Requirements. To the question "Would you support or oppose a program giving ILLEGAL immigrants now living in the United States the right to live here LEGALLY if they pay a fine and meet other requirements?" 61% of respondents said yes and 35% said no. [Washington Post-ABC News Poll, 4/21-24/09]

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Support For Legalization Increased Over Previous Years. When asked the same question in June of 2007, 52% supported legalization and 44% opposed. In December 2007, 49% supported and 46% opposed. [Washington Post-ABC News Poll, 4/21-24/09]

April 2009 - New York Times/CBS Poll

The New York Times / CBS poll conducted a telephone survey from April 22 to 26,, 2009 with 973 adults. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

Support For Pathway To Citizenship For Undocumented Immigrants Rose In 2009. A telephone survey of roughly 1,000 adults conducted by the New York Times / CBS found that 44% of respondents supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. 21% believed that they should be given temporary legal status, while 30% believed they should be required to leave the country. Two years ago, in December 2007, 38% of New York Times/CBS respondents chose a path to citizenship, 28% chose temporary status and 28% chose removal. [New York Times, 4/27/09]

59% Believed Obama Would Pass Significant Immigration Reform In His First Term. According to the New York Times poll, 59% of respondents believed Obama would pass significant immigration reform in his first term; only 35% thought reform was unlikely. [New York Times, 4/27/09]

March 2009 - Washington Post/ABC News Poll

The Washington Post-ABC News telephone survey of 1,000 adults was conducted from March 26 to 29, 2009 and the results were published on April 30, 2009. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus three points.

61% Of Respondents Supported Giving Undocumented Immigrants The Right To Live In The U.S. "If They Pay A Fine And Meet Other Requirements." In 2007, roughly 49% of people supported giving undocumented immigrants the right to live in the country; that number has grown by 12% in 2009. 59% of Republicans support this position, up 17% from 2007, while 68% of Democrats expressed their support, up only 9% from 2007. [ABC News, 4/30/09]

Majority Of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Moderates, And Conservatives Supported Legalization. The Washington Post polling showed that support for legalization of undocumented immigrants was high despite political affiliation. 70% of liberals, 68% of Democrats, and 59% Republicans and Independents alike supported an amnesty program. [ABC News, 4/30/09]

November 2008 - America's Voice National Poll (Lake Research Partners and Benenson Strategy Group)

On behalf of America's Voice, Lake Research Partners and Benenson Strategy Group conducted a survey of 1000 voters between November 5 and 9, 2008. The poll included an oversample of 250 Latino voters with bilingual interviewing, for a total of 371 Latino interviews. The margin of error was +/- 3.1% for the base sample and 5.1% for Latinos.

78% Of Voters Said Illegal Immigration Was A Serious Problem; 71% Of Latinos Believed It Was A Serious Problem. When asked whether they believed illegal immigration was a problem facing the country, 43% of respondents said it was a very serious problem, 35% said it was a somewhat serious

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problem, while only 21% said it was somewhat not serious or not at all serious. Among Latino voters, 36% said it was a very serious problem, 35% said it was a somewhat serious problem, 17% said it was somewhat not serious, while only 11% said it was not serious at all. [America's Voice, 11/13/08]

55% Of Total Respondents And 61% Of Latino Voters Believed Immigration Reform Should Be A High Priority For Congress. The majority of respondents believed that enacting immigration reform should be a high priority for the new Congress. 61% of Latinos believed it should be a top priority, with 10% responding that it is the single highest priority for the new Congress. Only 3% of total respondents believed it should be the single highest, while 27% said it should be a very high priority. [America's Voice, 11/13/08]

67% Of Voters Believed Illegal Immigrants Should Be Required To "Register And Become Legal." The poll said: "Most government officials believe that to deal with the problem of illegal immigration, we need to make our borders secure, crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and deport illegal immigrants who commit crimes. In addition to these steps, what should be done about the 12 million illegal immigrants here in the United States?" 67% of the total respondents said that illegal immigrations should be required to register and become legal, 14% said they must leave the country, and 13% said they should be allowed to stay temporarily. 71% of Latino voters supported a path to citizenship, 17% said those undocumented should be allowed to stay temporarily, while only 8% said they must leave the country. [America's Voice, 11/13/08]

Voters Believed Congress Should Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform Rather Than Simply Enforcing Current Law. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform was supported by a 27% margin of voters, as opposed to enforcement of current legislation. 60% of respondents and 69% of Latino respondents believed the new Congress should pass comprehensive legislation to address immigration reform. 33% of respondents and 22% of Latino respondents supported enforcing current legislation. [America's Voice, 11/13/08]

62% of Voters Believed Undocumented Immigrants Should Be Allowed to Become Legal Taxpayers, Said They Were Not Taking American Jobs. 62% of respondents believed that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to become legal taxpayers rather than forcing them to leave the country because they were taking American
jobs, while only 21% said they should leave the country. 69% of Latinos surveyed supported this position rather than 13% of Latinos said they should leave. [America's Voice, 11/13/08]

September through November 2008 - America's Voice Local Polling (Lake Research Partners and Benenson Strategy Group)

Statewide and congressional district-wide polling was conducted for America's Voice by Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners before and after the 2008 November election. The Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners conducted 3371 interviews of likely voters in 9 swing Congressional districts from September 23 to October 5. The margin of error for overall results is ±1.89%. 402 swing district general election voters were also interviewed after the election from November 6 - November 9, 2008. The margin of error for the post-election poll was 4.89%.

Percentage Of Voters In Swing Districts Who Believed Immigration Was A "Serious Problem" Remained Stable Pre And Post-Election. In pre-election polling, 84% of swing district voters believed that immigration was a serious problem, 79% of Democrats, 83% of Independents, and 92% of

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Republicans. In post-election polling, 80% of voters believed that immigration was a serious problem. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners, 1/22/09; America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group, 11/13/08]

46% Of Voters Believed Immigration Reform Was A High Priority Post-Election. According to post election polling of voters, 46% believed enacting immigration reform was a high priority. Only 15% of voters considered it a low priority, while 37% said it was medium. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group, 11/13/08]

67% Of Voters Post-Election Believed Undocumented Immigrants Should Have A Pathway To Citizenship. In post election polling, 67% of voters in the 9 swing districts largely believed that the 12 million undocumented in the country should be required to register to become legal, undergo background checks and be provided a pathway to citizens. Only 16% said they should be required to leave the country, 10% allowed for them to stay temporarily, and 7% said they did not know. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group, 11/13/08]

66% Of Voters Believed Undocumented Immigrants Should Be Allowed To Become Legal Taxpayers, Said They Were Not Taking American Jobs. 66% of respondents believed that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to become legal taxpayers rather than forcing them to leave the country because they were taking American jobs, while only 23% said they should leave the country. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group, 11/13/08]

66% Of Voters Preferred Comprehensive Immigration Reform To Border Enforcement. According to the polls, swing district voters overwhelmingly favor a comprehensive approach to immigration reform over other options, 66% to 27%. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners, 1/22/09]

64% Of Voters Preferred That Congress Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform; 74% Of Democrats Preferred That Approach. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of voters preferred that the new Congress pass comprehensive immigration reform, only 27% of voters supported enforcing current legislation. Support is bi-partisan, 74% of Democrats, 64% of Independents, and 54% of Republicans all support comprehensive reform. Furthermore, 63% of voters who were conflicted about which candidate to support preferred that Congress pass comprehensive reform. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners, 1/22/09]

70% Of Voters Believed Illegal Immigrants Should Become Legal Rather Than Receiving Temporary Status Or Being Deported. According to polling by the Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners, almost 70% of voters in swing districts supported a pathway to citizenship for those undocumented immigrants. Only 15% believed undocumented immigrants should be forced to leave while 13% believed that they should be granted temporary status. [America's Voice, Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners, 1/22/09]

September 2008 – NDN Polling (Bendixen & Associates)

NDN commissioned a poll of 2,000 voters, 500 each in Florida, Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada. The poll was conducted from August 6 – August 14, 2008 in English and Spanish and had an over-sampling of at least 150 Hispanic voters. The margin of error was 4%.

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Roughly 60% Of Voters In Four Battleground States Believed Undocumented Immigrants Were Not Taking Jobs From American Citizens. In the four battleground states, voters overwhelmingly believed that undocumented immigrants in the country were taking jobs that nobody else wanted; 60% in Florida, 60% in Colorado, 60% in New Mexico and 53% in Nevada of voters all supported this position. Only 31% in Florida, 27% in Colorado, 28% in New Mexico and 35% in Nevada of voters believed undocumented immigrants were taking jobs from American citizens and legal immigrants. [NDN, 9/18/08]

Over Two-Thirds Of Respondents In Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, And Nevada Supported Comprehensive Immigration Reform. When asked whether they supported comprehensive immigration reform, 67% in Florida said yes, 69% in Colorado, 66% in New Mexico and 67% in Nevada. Less than 25% of the respondents opposed comprehensive immigration reform in all four states. NDN's poll defined comprehensive immigration reform as system that, "strengthens border security, sets up an employment verification plan, establishes serious criminal penalties for employers that hire illegal workers, creates a new visa program for 200,000 workers annually, substantially increases the number of family visas available for the immediate relatives of legal immigrants, and grants illegal immigrants conditional legal status for six years and then a path to permanent residency and citizenship if they meet certain requirements." [NDN, 9/18/08]

Hispanic Voters Trusted Democrats More Than Republicans To Tackle Immigration Reform. Hispanic voters trusted the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party to tackle immigration reform in Congress. The margins were 48% to 29% in Florida, 48% to 14% in Colorado, 46% to 19% in New Mexico, and 58% to 20% in Nevada. [NDN, 9/18/08]

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