



Republicans Have an Immigration Problem – and Amnesty Won’t Solve It

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Ever since Mitt Romney lost the 2012 presidential election, many have claimed that the Republican Party cannot win national elections unless they support so-called “comprehensive immigration reform.” In fact, the GOP is having trouble expanding its voter base because the U.S. immigration system brings in individuals who support the Democratic Party’s platform. Amnesty would cripple the GOP because it would legalize millions of illegal aliens who do not support the principles of the Republican Party.

Republicans are having trouble expanding their voter base because the U.S. immigration system brings in individuals who are less-educated, less-skilled, and low-income. These individuals tend to favor candidates who support robust social welfare programs.

- The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), championed by Ted Kennedy, overhauled our immigration system so that admission is based primarily on family connections, not employment and/or skills.¹
- As a consequence, the Hispanic share of the U.S. population grew dramatically. Specifically, a significant majority of immigrants come from Mexico—a country where the government plays a larger role in the economy and society, including healthcare and pensions. Unsurprisingly, immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Asia are more predisposed to think that the natural function of government is redistributing economic resources.²
- Pew found that 71 percent of Hispanics prefer “a bigger government providing more services” while only 19 percent want “a smaller government providing fewer services.”³
- Asians are more likely to support an activist government and less likely to identify as Republicans. Asians prefer a big government that provides more services (55 percent) over a smaller one than provides fewer services (36 percent).⁴
- A Pew Hispanic poll found that by 3 to 1, Hispanics favor a big government with more services to a smaller one.⁵

- Pew found that 55 percent of Hispanics have a negative view of capitalism, the highest of any group surveyed, even higher than self-identified supporters of Occupy Wall Street (47 percent).⁶
- Not only do Hispanics and Asians align with progressives, they show a 2 to 1 party identification with Democrats over Republicans.⁷
- While the general public was divided in 2012 on Obamacare, 66 percent of Hispanics support it; and three times as many Asian Americans had a favorable opinion of the program as had an unfavorable opinion of it.⁸
- When it comes to the economy, 44 percent of Latino voters say the Democratic Party is better on the issue while 36 percent say the Republican Party is better.⁹

Immigrants tend to be poorer than the rest of the population and tend to rely more heavily on government assistance programs. Most will vote with their pocketbooks and they will always get a better deal from the Democrats than Republicans.

- According to recent census data, 51 percent of households headed by an immigrant (legal or illegal) reported that they used at least one welfare program during the year, compared to 30 percent of native households. Welfare programs include Medicaid, cash, food, and housing programs.¹⁰ Seventy-six percent of immigrant-led households with children receive welfare, compared to 52% for the native-born.¹¹
- Recent census data shows that 76 percent of households headed by an immigrant who had not graduated high school used one or more welfare programs, as did 63 percent of households headed by an immigrant with only a high school education.¹²
- In the four states with the most immigrants, use of welfare by immigrant households is significantly higher than that of native households: California (55 percent vs. 30 percent), New York (59 percent vs. 33 percent), Texas (57 percent vs. 34 percent), and Florida (42 percent vs. 28 percent).¹³

The Republican messages of patriotism and American sovereignty do not resonate with immigrants.

- Only 37 percent of naturalized citizens think the Constitution is a higher legal authority than international law compared to 67 percent of native-born citizens.¹⁴
- Eighty-five percent of native born Americans consider themselves American citizens and not citizens of the world compared to 54 percent of naturalized citizens.¹⁵
- Only 44 percent of naturalized citizens believe America to be better than other nations compared to 65 percent of native born citizens.¹⁶
- Native Americans are more likely than immigrant citizens to support schools teaching about our foundational documents.¹⁷
- Eighty-one percent of native born Americans believe that schools should teach children to be proud Americans compared to 50 percent of naturalized citizens.¹⁸

Immigrants are not more socially conservative so moving away from the so-called “immigration issue” does not translate into more votes for Republicans.

- Conservative pundits claim that Hispanics are “natural Republicans” because they run small businesses, are culturally traditional and would be with Republicans if the party didn't seek to deport them. But this view is wrong. Hispanics aren't that conservative on cultural issues.¹⁹ According to Pew Research Center, 56 percent of Hispanics favor same-sex marriage.²⁰

- While Asians stand out for their strong emphasis on family, Pew Research Center found 53 percent of Asians believe homosexuality should be accepted by society and 54 percent believe abortions should be legal.²¹

Immigration is not a top issue to garner an immigrants vote.

- President Obama broke his promise regarding immigration reform. Yet more Hispanics and Asians voted for President Obama in 2012 than 2008. He received 71 percent of the Hispanic vote.²²
- In the 2014 election, the economy was the top issue for Latino voters (50 percent), followed by health care (24 percent). Only 16 percent of Latino voters saw immigration as the top issue.²³
- According to 54 percent of Latino voters, they would vote for a candidate who doesn't share their position on immigration policy if the candidate agrees with them on most other issues.²⁴

Providing amnesty for illegal aliens will not translate into more votes for the Republican Party. Among Republicans, there are different positions on immigration, however, Republicans do not seem to benefit from one position over another.

- The partisan impact of immigration is relatively uniform throughout the country, from California to Texas to Florida, even though local Republican parties have taken different positions on illegal immigration.²⁵
- Immigrants give overwhelming support to Democrats regardless of local Republicans' approach to immigration.²⁶
- Democrat candidates have garnered a greater share of the Hispanic vote than Republican candidates in every election over the past three decades.²⁷
- In the 2014 elections for the U.S. House of Representatives, 62 percent of Latinos voted for Democrats compared to 36 percent for Republicans. In the 2012 election, Democrats got 68 percent of the Latino vote while Republicans took only 30 percent.²⁸

America's demographic changes are shifting the electorate and American politics.

- Hispanic women voted for Democrats over Republicans in the 2014 election by 66 percent to 32.²⁹
- Millennials voted for Democrats over Republicans in the 2014 elections 68 to 28 percent in 2014.³⁰ Millennials are the most diverse generation in history with 43 percent non-white and they support an activist government.³¹ There are over 800,000 U.S. born children of immigrants that turn 18 each year and are eligible to vote.³²
- Today, 14 percent of American population is foreign born with the majority from Latin America and Asia. Over the next 5 decades, the majority of population growth will continue to be from Latin America and Asia.³³
- It's estimated that there are 8.7 million immigrants in the United States eligible for naturalization. Between 50 and 60 percent will become voting citizens, mostly Democrats.³⁴
- A statistical analysis of nine separate elections showed a one-percent increase in immigration in America's 100 largest counties produced a 0.59 percent drop in the GOP's vote share.³⁵

To truly address their immigration problem, Republicans must:

- Recognize that Republicans do not have a Hispanic problem, as many call it, they have an immigration problem. A huge swath of the immigration flow is less educated, low-skilled, and low-income and vote based on their pocketbooks.

- Understand that the current trends are generated by the perpetuation of an Industrial Revolution model of importing low-skilled workers into a 21st century economy, and this is slowing economic assimilation.
- Develop a message that convinces Hispanics that Republicans will help them move up the economic ladder. This includes convincing Hispanic Americans that reducing unskilled immigration will help minorities move up the economic ladder by reducing unfair competition for jobs and downward pressure on wages.
- Shift U.S. immigration policy to a skills-based model. This will convert our immigrant population from one that tends to affiliate with the Democratic Party, to one that—over time—is more receptive to core Republican messages of smaller government and reduced spending.

¹ See Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 § 203, 8 U.S.C. § 1153 for the general rules on family and employment-based immigration.

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⁶ RedState, Latinos Are Liberal – Immigration Reform Won't Help With That, January 2013, available at <http://www.redstate.com/diary/sanchez101/2013/01/31/latinos-are-liberal-immigration-reform-wont-help-with-that/>

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¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Fonte, John; Nagai, Althea; Hudson Institute; America's Patriotic Assimilation System Is Broken, April 2013, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/files/publications/Final04-05.pdf>

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Horowitz, Daniel, Conservative Review, Limitless Immigration Creating Permanent Democrat Majority, October 2015, available at <https://www.conservativereview.com/commentary/2015/10/report-limitless-immigration-creating-permanent-democrat-majority>

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²⁰ Pew Research Center, Support For Same Sex Marriage At Record High – But Key Segments Remain Opposed, June 2015, available at <http://www.people-press.org/2015/06/08/support-for-same-sex-marriage-at-record-high-but-key-segments-remain-opposed/>

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²² Coulter, Ann, The Daily Caller, February 2013, Amnesty Won't Turn Hispanics Into Republicans, available at <http://dailycaller.com/2013/02/20/amnesty-wont-turn-hispanics-into-republicans/>

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