

## **National Immigration Survey Key Findings**

*After hearing arguments for and against the bipartisan immigration reform plan, **67% of Republicans surveyed say they support the bill.***

Americans for Tax Reform, the National Immigration Forum Action Fund, and the Partnership for a New American Economy commissioned a public opinion research study conducted by The Winston Group of voters to better understand attitudes toward the recent bipartisan immigration reform proposal being discussed in Congress. The survey was conducted April 22-23, 2013 via live telephone interview, with a sample of 800 registered voters nationwide and an oversample of Republican voters in order to better understand this critical part of the electorate.

The following are some key takeaways from this research:

### **Republicans are frustrated with the status quo on immigration and want to see significant changes or a complete overhaul of America's current immigration system.**

- Some 82% of Republicans surveyed say that the current immigration system is working “fairly” or “very” poorly, as do 74% of voters overall.
- Asked how much change they think America's immigration system needs, 39% of Republicans and 41% of conservatives say that they believe our system needs a “complete overhaul.”
  - In total, 68% of voters overall and 72% of Republicans surveyed say the system needs either “a lot of changes” or “a complete overhaul.”

### **Many view immigration as a positive thing.**

- Some 44% of respondents said immigration tends to be a “good thing” for America, while 35% said immigration was neutral.
- Only 15% of voters surveyed and fewer than one out of four (24%) Republicans say that immigration tends to be “bad for America.”

### **Republicans initially react quite positively to the immigration reform bill as described in the survey.**

- Given an initial description of the bill (“A bipartisan group of senators recently introduced legislation to reform the immigration system. The plan establishes border security measures focused on high-risk areas of the Southern border, requires illegal immigrants to pass multiple criminal background checks, pay fines, learn English and pay taxes before getting in line for citizenship, makes E-Verify mandatory for all employers, and creates a new work visa program that regulates immigration according to unemployment.”), some 78% of Republicans surveyed say they support that bill.
  - This definition of the bill appeals to conservatives; some 50% of conservative respondents “strongly support” the bill as described, far greater than moderates (42%) or liberals (33%).

**Of the four components, as described, Republicans are quite supportive of each, particularly border security.**

- Some 90% of Republican respondents and 80% of respondents overall say they support the part of the plan that “will strengthen border security by putting more resources on the border so that at least nine out of ten illegal crossers are apprehended, so that 100% of the border will be under surveillance, and so that we have a system in place to track immigrants who enter and exit the country.”
  - Nearly three out of four Republicans surveyed (74%) say they *strongly* support this.
- The component describing the path to citizenship, leading with a description of the hurdles to achieving citizenship (“The plan will require illegal immigrants in the U.S. to register for legal status, pay fines, learn English, pay taxes, and wait in the back of the line to apply for citizenship, until everyone who is currently in line to legally enter the U.S. gets in.”) is supported by 85% of Republicans surveyed, with 58% saying they strongly support that component.
- Some 89% of Republicans surveyed support the component of the plan that “will require employers to use E-Verify to make sure that all employees are legal, and any companies that employ illegal immigrants would pay large fines,” and 62% support “[tying] the amount of legal immigration to the state of the economy to attract more immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators, increasing the number of visas when employers cannot fill jobs and decreasing the number of visas when unemployment is high.”

**After hearing the plan presented in this way, Republicans are even more supportive of the overall plan, and say they think these ideas would improve the economy.**

- After hearing the more detailed messages describing four components of the bill (border security, E-verify, pathway to citizenship, and linking work visas to unemployment figures), respondents

were again asked if they supported or opposed the plan that had just been described; support goes even higher among Republicans on that second asking, rising to 87%.

- Some 61% of Republican respondents think that the plan would help the economy, while 20% say it will have no effect and 11% say it will be harmful.
- Asked if they thought the plan as described would strengthen or weaken border security, 71% of Republican respondents say they believe it would strengthen border security.

**It is important for supporters of the bill not to position it as a “once and for all” solution.**

- Despite these positive attitudes toward the plan as described, Republicans were largely unconvinced that this would “fix the problems in our immigration system once and for all,” with 68% of Republicans saying they did not think that was the case. Only 26% of Republicans thought the plan sounded like it would fix things for good.

**Republicans are likely to hear arguments on both sides of this debate, and when presented with strong opposition messages, they still remain supportive of the plan.**

- Respondents were presented with a variety of positive and negative messages about the bill that could come from either conservative supporters or critics of the bill. (Examples include: “Opponents of the bill say it is being written in secret and is being rushed through Congress so no one can read it.”, “Supporters of the bill say it is a strong start, supported by conservative leaders.”, “Opponents of the bill say our immigration laws today are being ignored by the Obama administration. We should enforce the laws we have before talking about changing them and giving anyone amnesty.”, etc.)
  - After hearing messaging from both sides, some 67% of Republicans still said they supported the plan that had been described to them. While a slight decline from the initial 78% who said they support the bill, this represents a strong potential base of support among the Republican respondents for the plan even after hearing more about the debate, including some quite powerful negative arguments.