

# THE TARRANCE GROUP

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*June 22, 2006*

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Ed Goetas and Brian Nienaber  
**Subject:** Key findings from a nationwide survey of registered likely Republican voters<sup>1</sup>

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### Overview

The four (4) major findings from this data are:

1. Likely Republican voters want a solution to the problem of illegal immigration.
2. While likely Republican voters strongly support border enforcement, there is more support for a comprehensive immigration reform plan that provides current illegal immigrants with an opportunity for earned citizenship.
3. The charge of amnesty is not as powerful a weapon against immigration reform proposals as conventional wisdom suggests.
4. Support is much stronger among likely Republican voters for a comprehensive approach to immigration reform than an enforcement with guest workers only plan.

### Desire for a Solution

- While likely Republican voters are remarkably positive about the direction of the country (52% right track), the issue of immigration is clearly one of their top concerns. On an issue matrix about determining their vote for Congress, “illegal immigration” (15%) is the second most selected issue behind only “terrorism and national security” (20%) and is tied with “moral values” (15%).
- In addition, 71% of likely Republican voters describe illegal immigration as an extremely (37%) or very (34%) serious problem. A plurality (42%) of likely Republican voters select “concerned” as the emotion that best describes how they feel about the current immigration situation.
- These attitudes lead 72% of likely Republican voters to select that it is extremely (40%) or very (32%) important that Congress solve the problem of illegal immigration this year.

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<sup>1</sup> These findings are drawn from telephone interviews with N=804 registered likely Republican voters. The confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is  $\pm 3.5\%$ . Responses to this survey were gathered June 12-15, 2006.

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## Strong Support for Enforcement and Strong Support for Earned Legalization

- Likely Republican voters are presented with a variety of proposals for dealing with the 12 million illegal immigrants currently living in the United States.
- While 82% of likely GOP voters support tightening the borders and tougher penalties on illegal immigrants and on employers who hire illegal immigrants, 80% of likely Republican voters support an earned legalization program in which illegal immigrants can earn legal status and eventual citizenship by working, paying taxes, learning English, and waiting behind those already waiting to emigrate to the United States.
- Regarding a proposal to deal with the 12 million illegal immigrants by deporting them by any means necessary, a strong majority (68%) of likely GOP voters oppose this proposal.
- In addition, 85% of likely Republican voters believe it is not realistic to deport 12 million illegal immigrants.
- Regarding a proposal to deal with the 12 million illegal immigrants through a policy of attrition, a majority (50%) of likely GOP voters oppose this proposal.
- In addition, 76% of likely GOP voters believe that illegal immigrants would not return home if an attrition policy was implemented.
- In fact, a comprehensive approach to immigration that includes earned legalization is supported by 75% of likely GOP voters while an approach that includes only tougher enforcement and a guest workers plan is supported by just 47% of likely GOP voters.

## The “Amnesty” Charge Not As Negative As Conventional Wisdom Suggests

- On the issue of amnesty, 48% of likely GOP voters do not believe the comprehensive reform like the one passed by the Senate is amnesty while 39% do believe it is amnesty.
- Among those likely GOP voters who believe this legislation is amnesty, 62% support its passage. In addition, 50% of likely Republican voters who believe this legislation is amnesty are more likely to support a candidate who supports this legislation.
- For an enforcement with guest workers plan, 70% of likely GOP voters do not believe this plan is amnesty while 18% do believe it is amnesty.
- Among those likely GOP voters who believe this type of plan is amnesty, 49% support its passage. In addition, 48% of those likely GOP voters who believe this plan is amnesty are more likely to support a candidate who supports this legislation.

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- Given the choice between doing nothing about illegal immigration and doing something that they believe contains amnesty, a majority (53%) of likely Republican voters would rather do something.

## **Stronger Support for Comprehensive Approach to Immigration Reform**

- Fully 75% of likely Republican voters support passage of a comprehensive immigration reform plan that contains the following elements:
  - 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.
- Support for this plan is strong even among base Republican voter demographics like strong Republicans (77%), very conservative Republicans (72%), white conservative Christians (76%), and those who listen to news talk radio on a daily basis (72%).
- A strong majority (60%) of likely Republican voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate who supports this type of plan.
- Only 17% of likely Republican voters oppose this plan and 8% are unsure.
- In contrast, support among likely Republican voters for an enforcement with guest workers plan stands at only 47%. This plan is described as follows:
  - Tighten the borders,
  - Put tougher penalties on employers and workers who violate immigration laws,
  - Create and expanded guest worker program that allows people to work her only temporarily, and
  - Most current illegal immigration would never be eligible for citizenship.
- There is not a notable increase in support for this plan among base Republican voter demographics like strong Republicans (47%), very conservative Republicans (51%), white conservative Christians (50%), and those who listen to news talk radio on a daily basis (51%).
- Only 46% of likely Republican voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate who supports this type of plan.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of likely Republican oppose this plan and 7% are unsure.