

**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Hart Research Associates and BSP Research**  
**DATE: August 24, 2022**  
**RE: Immigration and the 2022 Elections**

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*To understand how immigration is impacting voter choices in this year's elections, Hart Research and BSP Research have conducted parallel battleground surveys among likely voters and Latino likely voters on behalf of the Immigration Hub and SEIU. The surveys were conducted in late July, with half of the interviews in Senate battleground states and half in battleground House districts. (See details in Methodology appendix.) This memo reviews the surveys' key findings for both the general electorate and Latino voters.*

## **OVERVIEW**

- With the backdrop of a looming decision by the 5th Circuit that could end DACA, battleground voters want Congress to protect Dreamers and act on other immigration legislation that would stabilize the agricultural workforce and address rising food prices.
- Support for pro-immigrant policies, such as citizenship for undocumented immigrants, remains high in these battleground states and districts, as does opposition to Republican anti-immigrant positions. Republican attacks have failed to undermine voter support for pro-immigrant solutions.
- This applies even more strongly to Latino voters, who overwhelmingly support legislation to provide legal status to undocumented immigrants. While immigration is not the number one issue for Latino voters, there is a critical segment of Latinos for whom immigration is a compelling personal issue, and it will be a motivating issue to get them to the polls this fall.
- Republican attacks on the border issue have some traction, especially if left unanswered. However, the poll demonstrates that if Democrats respond aggressively on the immigration issue, and go on offense against Republicans, there will be a substantial shift towards Democrats.

## **BATTLEGROUNDS VOTERS' VIEW OF IMMIGRATION.**

- An overwhelming 70% of battleground voters—including 76% of swing voters, 82% of Latinos, 74% of independents, and 76% of moderates—agree with Democrats that undocumented immigrants should be provided a path to citizenship. The Republican preference for deporting law-abiding immigrants is endorsed only by GOP base voters.
- Battleground voters also side with Democrats on several key immigration policy disputes:

- Fully 65% of battleground voters say that Congress should act to protect Dreamers if a federal court overturns the DACA program.
  - By two to one (67% to 33%), voters embrace a path to citizenship for undocumented farmworkers, which would also address rising food prices.
  - A solid 57% majority favors granting temporary legal status and a work permit to undocumented workers in critical industries that are facing labor shortages.
  - Among Latino battleground voters, fully 78% support Congressional action to protect Dreamers, and by similar margins support citizenship for undocumented farmworkers and Temporary Protected Status to workers in critical industries.
- Voters think that immigrants play a positive role in keeping businesses fully staffed up and open (57% to 21%), and helping businesses grow (53% to 26%).
- Despite this substantive agreement with Democratic priorities, battleground voters initially trust Republicans (48%) more than Democrats (40%) to handle the immigration issue. Fortunately, the survey also reveals that effective messaging by Democrats can largely erase this deficit (as discussed below).

## LATINO VOTERS CAN BE MOBILIZED ON IMMIGRATION

- There is a critical segment of Latinos for whom immigration is a top issue (22%), a personal issue, and it will be a motivating issue to get them to the polls in 2022.
- Fully half of Latino voters say they personally know someone who is undocumented, and, for nearly one-quarter (23%) of Latino voters, this is a family member.
- Two of the most serious concerns Latino battleground voters have about Republicans are, “use of hateful attacks on immigrants that encourage white nationalists and other domestic terrorists, putting all Americans at risk of violence” (73% serious concern) and “support separating immigrant families and putting children in cages” (73%).
- In addition, support for pro-immigrant policies, such as citizenship for undocumented immigrants, remains particularly high among Latino voters (82%), as does opposition to Republican anti-immigrant positions.
- Latino voters are very likely to believe that undocumented immigrants are vital to our economy. Latinos agreed that immigrants help to keep businesses fully staffed up and open (67% to 16%), and help businesses grow (63% to 16%), and an overwhelming 80% believe that allowing more immigrants to fill jobs would help our economy run better.

- Latinos are fully supportive of a humane and managed system at the border that allows refugees to legally request asylum (83%), however, constant Republican arguments about a “border crisis” have penetrated Latino audiences, with 36% now saying they are more likely to support a candidate who says the “southern border should remain closed to asylum seekers until the border crisis is resolved.” Still, a plurality of 43% continues to say they are less likely to support such a candidate.
- Many actions taken by President Biden on immigration are supported by Latino voters, although awareness of those actions is limited. Fully 71% support efforts to extend TPS to undocumented immigrants fleeing persecution, natural disasters, or political turmoil; 70% support efforts to reunify immigrant families that had been separated under the Trump administration; and 70% favor policies to devote more resources to cracking down on drug cartels and human trafficking. While the Biden administration has taken numerous positive steps on immigration, constant Republican attacks on the border issue have crowded out knowledge of Democrats’ actions on the border.

## **RECOMMENDED DEMOCRATIC MESSAGE FRAMING.**

- While battleground voters initially express more confidence in Republicans on immigration, adding some policy content to this choice changes the dynamic dramatically. When we ask voters to choose between a Democrat who favors a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living here and meeting certain requirements, versus a Republican who says we should not let illegal immigrants become legal because they broke the law, an eight-point deficit suddenly becomes a seven-point Democratic advantage. By 48% to 41%, voters prefer the Democrat when the choice is framed in terms of support for legal status and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Framing the immigration debate around this contrast is the most effective way to counter Republican border-related attacks.
- Flipping the political script by bringing the debate back to legal status for qualified immigrants is particularly important for appealing to persuadable voters. It generates substantial gains with moderates (+16), suburban (+19) and rural voters (+19), swing voters (+22), and independents (+27). (See table.)

**Contrast on Pathway to Citizenship  
Reverses Republican Advantage**

	<u>Generic Party Labels</u>	<u>Pathway to Citizenship</u>	<u>Shift</u>
All BG Voters	-8	+7	+15
BG States	-11	+4	+15
BG Districts	-5	+10	+15
Latinos	+30	+40	+10
Swing Voters	-16	+6	<b>+22</b>
Independents	-7	+20	<b>+27</b>
Liberal	+80	+79	-1
Moderate	+4	+20	<b>+16</b>
Conservative	-76	-49	<b>+27</b>
Urban	+15	+18	+3
Suburban	-8	+11	<b>+19</b>
Small Town/Rural	-31	-12	<b>+19</b>

- The survey identifies several powerful message statements by Democratic candidates that help to highlight this key contrast with Republicans on addressing the undocumented population:
  - *Our immigration system should be both secure and accessible, so hardworking immigrant families can build a better life and contribute to our economy and communities, which is good for us all. (Swing voters: 64% to 10% more likely to support)*
  - *Like most of us, immigrant families value hard work, self-reliance, and contributing to our communities, and we need an immigration system that is secure, accessible, and grows our economy. (Swing voters: 54% to 19% more likely to support)*
  - *We need an immigration system that provides security for hardworking American families and values the enormous contributions that immigrants bring to our communities and our economy. (Swing voters: 54% to 17% more likely to support)*

**GOING ON OFFENSE: GOP VULNERABILITIES ON IMMIGRATION.**

- It is not enough to make the case for Democratic principles and policies -- we also need to go on offense against Republicans. Several aspects of their immigration record are deeply concerning to swing voters, and these vulnerabilities should be highlighted.
  - *Republicans support separating immigrant families and putting children in cages. (67% very serious concerns)*
  - *Republicans are trying to deport law-abiding immigrants who have lived in, and contributed to, the United States for many years. (60% very serious concerns)*

- *Republicans use hateful attacks on immigrants that encourage white nationalists and other domestic terrorists, putting all Americans at risk of violence. (60% very serious concerns)*
- *Republicans are trying to deport "Dreamers" who were brought to this country as children and make important contributions to our economy and our communities. (58% very serious concerns)*

## **RESPONDING TO GOP ATTACKS ABOUT THE BORDER**

- Democrats must also be prepared to respond strongly to false Republican attacks. We can expect these attacks to focus on the alleged "crisis" at the southern border and the issue of closing the border to asylum-seekers. On balance, this is a somewhat more challenging aspect of the immigration issue for Democrats. However, the survey identifies multiple Democratic messages about the border that prove compelling to swing voters. These messages stress Democratic support for a balanced approach that both recognizes the need to control the border and commits to fair and humane treatment of migrants.
  - *The best approach to our southern border is smart border management that processes migrants in a fair, orderly, and humane way, while cracking down on drug smugglers and human traffickers. (Swing voters: 65% to 11% more likely to support)*
  - *America cannot have open borders, but we should have a balanced border approach that both enforces our laws and protects families and children fleeing violence. (Swing voters: 65% to 11% more likely to support)*
  - *We need to know who is coming in and out of our country, but in America we don't need to separate families to keep our country safe. Children should not be taken from their families at the border. (Swing voters: 62% to 13% more likely to support)*

## **THE BOTTOM LINE: STRONG DEMOCRATIC MESSAGES LARGELY ERASE REPUBLICANS' INITIAL ADVANTAGE ON IMMIGRATION.**

- After exposing voters to an extended partisan debate on immigration, including messages for and against each party, we ask them again which party they trust more to handle the issue. Remarkably, the result is a substantial shift toward Democrats, large enough to nearly eliminate Republicans' initial advantage. After the debate, the GOP's initial eight-point edge shrinks to just two points (46% to 44%), essentially a level playing field. Among crucial swing voters the change is even more dramatic, moving from a 16-point initial gap to just four points at the survey's conclusion. Clearly, engaging aggressively on the immigration issue—including attacking Republican vulnerabilities—can yield important benefits for Democrats.

## Survey Methodology:

### **Survey of Battleground Likely Voters (Hart Research).**

- A total of 1618 likely voters were interviewed (762 in battleground CDs, 856 in battleground Senate states).
- Interviewing was conducted online from July 22 to 25, 2022.

### **Survey of Battleground Latino Likely Voters (BSP Research).**

- A total of 800 Latino likely voters were interviewed by phone and online, in English or Spanish.
- Interviewing was conducted online from July 26 to August 3, 2022.

Battleground States		
Arizona	Georgia	Nevada
Colorado	North Carolina	Pennsylvania
Florida	New Hampshire	Wisconsin

Battleground Districts			
AZ-01	IA-02	NJ-03	OH-01
AZ-02	IA-03	NJ-07	OH-09
AZ-06	IL-13	NJ-11	OH-13
AZ-09	IL-14	NM-02	OR-04
CA-10	IL-17	NV-01	OR-05
CA-21	KS-03	NV-03	PA-01
CA-25	MD-01	NV-04	PA-07
CA-39	ME-02	NY-01	PA-08
CA-45	MI-05	NY-02	PA-17
CA-48	MI-08	NY-11	TX-15
CA-49	MN-02	NY-19	VA-02
CT-05	MT-01	NY-22	VA-07
FL-13	NC-02	NY-24	WA-08
FL-27	NE-02		WI-03
IA-01	NH-01		

Survey Samples			
	<u>All</u>	<u>Senate States</u>	<u>House Districts</u>
Biden	48	47	49
Trump	48	49	47
Democrats	39	38	40
Independents	16	16	17
Republicans	45	46	43
Whites	77	75	79
Blacks	9	12	6
Latinos	9	9	9
2022 Vote			
Democrat	--	45	45
Republican	--	48	46
Undecided	--	7	9