

DEMOCRACY CORPS
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Date: October 11, 2006
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Anna Greenberg
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RE: THE IMMIGRATION MOMENT — UPDATED

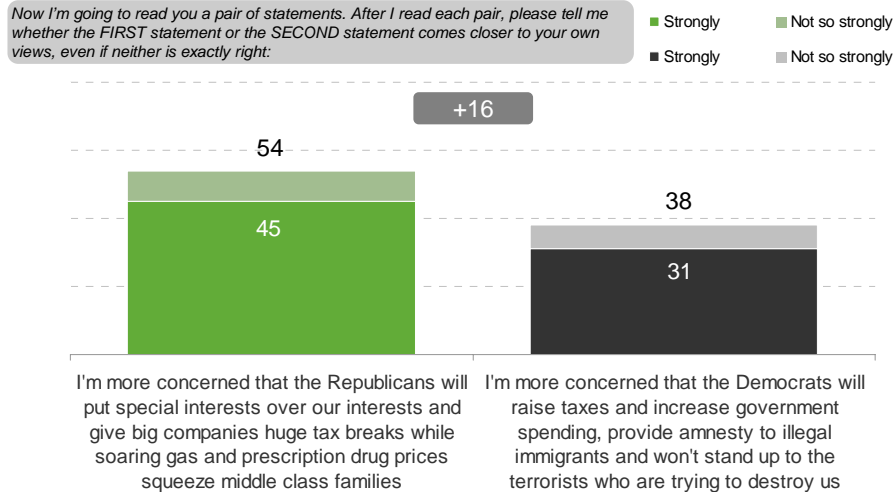
As we close in on the final month before the mid-term elections, the GOP has placed a clear marker on immigration. In districts ranging from Arizona to Pennsylvania, the Republicans are attacking Democratic candidates on allegedly supporting amnesty. Clearly, Republicans believe that raising the immigration issue will both rally base supporters and potentially bring in more conservative swing voters. But it is not clear that their strategy is working. In fact, the Democrats are currently favored over the Republicans on the issue of immigration, and a strong push back on immigration beats a Republican attack accusing Democrats of supporting amnesty.

Our most recent data¹ show:

- Immigration into the country receives net negative ratings – 44 percent cool and only 26 percent warm – while immigration voters (19 percent of the electorate) favor Republicans by 37 points, 68 to 31 percent. Yet, as a general matter, the Republicans’ immigration attack embedded in a larger critique of the Democrats loses to a description of the Republicans looking out for corporate America over the middle class.

¹ Democracy Corps national survey of 1000 likely voters, conducted October 1-3, 2006.

Republicans' immigration critique loses to Democrats' message



- Democrats are favored over Republicans by 9 points on immigration, 42 to 33 percent. Among independent voters, this margin increases to 11 points, 38 to 27 percent.
- Democrats have very powerful arguments on immigration that beat a Republican attack that claims that Democrats support amnesty and benefits for illegal immigrants and also asserts Republican support for the security fence. The Democrats' push back has three powerful elements:
 - Support for stronger, more effective security along our borders.
 - Noting the federal failure to curb illegal immigration, including voting against laws to increase border agents and lack of enforcement of existing laws.
 - Opposition to the fence because it will both be ineffective and waste billions of dollars of taxpayer money that could be better spent on reducing the cost of health care.
- These arguments are powerful among independent voters, but also in swing districts and states.

It is very important to note that it is not sufficient to oppose Republican proposals: Democrats must reinforce their support for more effective and tough security measures *and* remind voters of the fact that it is the current Administration and Congress that have failed to deal with the immigration problem. There are powerful examples of this failure; for example, the precipitous decline in enforcement of sanctions against employers in the last five and a half years.

Immigration is a major piece of the Republican attack on Democratic candidates this election cycle. Not only do Republicans lack an advantage on the immigration issue, but also, as these data make clear, Democrats have stronger arguments to make on the issue. Democratic candidates should feel emboldened to push back against this attack, just as they should be on security and Iraq.

Republicans' enforcement failures most powerful immigration message

Now let me read you statements from two candidates for Congress. After I read them, please tell me which statement comes closest to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.

	Strongly	Total	Total Independents
<p>The Democratic candidate says, Republicans have failed to enforce our immigration laws. On their watch, millions of illegal immigrants have entered the U.S., and Republicans have voted against more border agents and voted to protect employers who hire illegal immigrants. Democrats say, it's time to secure our borders, enforce our existing immigration laws, and enact new laws to keep America secure</p>	34	49	50
OR			
<p>The Republican candidate says, Democrats in Congress want to give illegal immigrants all the rights of American citizens, including access to American health care and Social Security benefits. I oppose amnesty for illegal immigrants. I supported creating a security fence along the Mexico border to keep illegal immigrants out, and I will support tougher penalties for immigrants entering the country illegally</p>	32	41	40

Effective to critique fence as unable to halt illegal immigration

Now let me read you statements from two candidates for Congress. After I read them, please tell me which statement comes closest to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.

	Strongly	Total	Total Independents
<p>The Democratic candidate says, in order to secure our borders, Bush and the Republicans are going to build a fence along the Mexico border. But the fence won't keep illegal immigrants out, and it will waste billions of dollars that could be spent on education and health care. Democrats say, we need to secure the border by adding more agents to patrol - not by wasting taxpayers' money</p>	38	50	48
OR			
<p>The Republican candidate says, Democrats in Congress want to give illegal immigrants all the rights of American citizens, including access to American health care and Social Security benefits. I oppose amnesty for illegal immigrants. I supported creating a security fence along the Mexico border to keep illegal immigrants out, and I will support tougher penalties for immigrants entering the country illegally</p>	33	42	45