



To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group, Hart Research, and BSP Research on behalf of FWD.us, Immigration Hub, and America's Voice
Date: June 24, 2021
Re: **NEW SURVEY - Moving from Defense to Offense on Immigration**

Three leading Democratic polling firms (Global Strategy Group, Hart Research, and BSP Research) recently partnered with FWD.us, Immigration Hub, and America's Voice to conduct a new survey around key immigration issues, measuring attitudes around what's happening at the border and on citizenship legislation facing Congress. What follows are key findings from a survey conducted in late May and early June among 1,500 voters across eight key Senate battleground states, including an oversample of 502 Latino voters.

Top Takeaways:

- 1. Pathway to citizenship proposals remain incredibly popular as there is a large and stable consensus for reform. This provides Democrats a clear opportunity to go on offense on immigration.** The Democratic Party has a significant trust advantage over Republicans on citizenship issues. As such, Democrats should push these debates to the fore as aggressively as possible and not let the immigration conversation be defined exclusively by the border.
- 2. While it is important to bring citizenship to the forefront, Democrats do not have to run away from the border debate. Efforts supported by Democrats to build a fair, orderly, and humane system at the border are very popular.** Voters will respond positively if President Biden executes on his plan to do so, and communicates on it forcefully. If Democrats do not do so, voters will continue to only hear the Republican side of the story.
- 3. While President Biden may have low approval ratings on immigration, voters are not embracing the Republicans on this issue.** Republicans do not have an advantage on immigration, and in fact it is Biden and the Democrats who have a slight advantage on who is more trusted on the issue.

Key Findings:

President Biden is in good standing across the Senate battleground considering the current, highly polarized political environment.

- Across an eight-state battleground sample that was nearly tied between President Biden and former President Trump in the 2020 election, President Biden's job approval is net positive by 6 points (52% approve/46% disapprove), including +28 (62% approve/34% disapprove) with Latino voters.

However, President Biden's approval rating is underwater on the issue of immigration. This is in large part because voters are not hearing the Democratic side of the story on the border, and voters do not have a clear view of what the administration is doing on the issue.

- Voters do not have a clear handle on where Biden stands on immigration (just 32% say they know "very well" where he stands) and are hearing mostly negative things about Biden in relation to the issue (only 19% say they are hearing "mostly positive" things about Biden and immigration while 41% say "mostly negative.")
- As a result, President Biden's approval rating on immigration is net negative (36% approve/57% disapprove), and his approval rating on how he's handling the situation with migrants at the border is similar (35% approve/54% disapprove).
 - While the President has positive numbers on his handling of immigration with Latinos (52% approve/40% disapprove), he is still underperforming his generic approval rating with these voters (62%/34%).

Despite all of this, Republicans do not have an advantage on immigration. Biden and the Democrats are competitive with Republicans on who is more trusted on the issue, and Democrats have a distinct advantage on issues relating to undocumented immigrants already in the country.

- Despite the negative ratings for the President on the border, Biden and the Democrats still have a 1-point advantage over Republicans in Congress in terms of who they trust more to deal with immigration (46% to 45%), and Democrats have far greater trust among Latinos (+38 trust Democrats more).
- Democrats have a particular advantage with voters around dealing with undocumented immigrants already in the country. Democrats earn a 23-point advantage over Republicans on who voters trust more to protect DREAMers and a 16-point advantage over Republicans on who they trust more to create a pathway to citizenship.
 - By comparison, Republicans have just a 5-point trust advantage on handling the situation involving migrants at the border despite the challenges facing Democrats on the issue.

Pathway to citizenship proposals remain incredibly popular as there is a large and stable consensus for reform. Given our strength on citizenship issues, Democrats should push these debates to the fore as aggressively as possible and not let the immigration conversation be defined exclusively by the border. As indicated in nearly every national poll on the issue, there is widespread public support (at least around 70%) for various pathways to citizenship proposals facing Congress.

- Pathway to citizenship proposals remain supported by a strong majority of voters, including pathways to citizenship for DREAMers (71% support/22% oppose), farmworkers (71%/21%), and for those with Temporary Protected Status (68% support/22% oppose). Notably, there is minimal opposition to all of these proposals (for example, just 12% strongly oppose a pathway to citizenship for farmworkers).
- Additionally, across these Senate battlegrounds, 73% of voters say their own United States Senator should vote for these citizenship proposals, while only 27% say their Senator should vote against them. Further, there is a political price to pay for Senators who stand in the way -- 50% of voters say they are less likely to vote for a Senator who blocks these bills, while only 29% say they would be more likely to vote for a Senator who blocks these bills.

Democrats have an extraordinary opportunity to take sole credit for action on the popular issue of providing citizenship to DREAMers, farmworkers, and TPS holders. However, if these efforts fail, Republicans will not be punished alone, and Democrats will share in the blame for an unsuccessful effort at reform. In particular, base Democrats who we need to show up in the 2022 midterms will be upset if undocumented immigrants remain vulnerable to deportation.

- Voters are ready to credit Democrats for passing these proposals -- 58% of voters would credit Biden and the Democrats if these proposals pass, while just 12% would give credit to Republicans.
- However, if they do not pass, voters will be upset over inaction -- 66% of all voters, including 93% of Democrats and 76% of Latinos, would be upset if these immigration citizenship proposals do not pass and undocumented immigrants remain vulnerable to deportation.
- And if they do not pass, Democrats will receive some of the blame. Three in five voters (61%) would at least partially blame the Democrats for this scenario -- with 36% blaming both parties equally and 24% blaming the Democrats alone.

While it is important to bring citizenship to the forefront, Democrats do not have to run away from the border debate. Efforts supported by Democrats to build a fair, orderly, and humane system at the border are very popular. Voters will respond positively if President Biden executes on his plan to do so, and communicates on it forcefully. If Democrats do not do so, voters will continue to only hear the Republican side of the story.

- When we introduce the following proposal to voters, President Biden's approval rating on the border moves dramatically from the negative ratings mentioned earlier (35% approve/54% disapprove) into a positive position (52% approve/42% disapprove).

President Biden says that what is happening at the border is a serious problem that is a direct result of a broken immigration system that has been ignored for too long. That's why Biden is acting

decisively to put solutions in place to address the problem. Biden is working to safely and securely manage the southern border with new investments in technology and infrastructure, while also addressing the root causes of migration and building capacity to process migrants and children in a humane way that reflects American values. President Biden is focused on solutions and moving forward quickly with policies that can ensure both order and justice at our border.

- Notably, Democrats -- who represent the largest gap between Biden's overall approval rating and his approval on immigration -- fully consolidate around the President when they hear his border messaging. Democrats move from two-thirds support on the border initially (65% approve/19% disapprove) to near-universal support for the President on the issue (89% approve/7% disapprove).
 - We also see significant increases with independents (from 23%/58% to 42%/42%) and Latinos (from 52%/37% to 69%/25%) after hearing pro-Biden messaging on the issue.
- Specific solutions on the border all have strong support with voters:
 - 77% say it is an "excellent" or "good" idea to *"update and modernize all aspects of the U.S. immigration system to make it more efficient."*
 - 76% say it is an "excellent" or "good" idea to *"improve technology at the border to modernize the way the border is managed."*
 - 71% say it is an "excellent" or "good" idea to *"create a new, fair, and orderly process for those seeking asylum to apply in their home country to come to the United States legally."*
 - 63% say it is an "excellent" or "good" idea for *"Vice President Harris to be working with Central American countries to address the root causes of migration."*
- In a head-to-head match-up against conservative messaging, solutions-oriented Democratic messaging, like the above message, wins out by a clear margin. When asked about the best way to handle migrants at the border:
 - 55% say it's best to "build a functioning immigration system that processes people in a fair, orderly, and humane way";
 - Just 45% favor "more border security, more border patrol agents, and crackdowns on illegal immigration."
- In debates with Republicans on immigration policy, Democrats can go on the offense against the GOP's immigration record and avoid having voters consider President Biden's policies in isolation from the alternative. The poll results show we achieve significant movement when a positive statement about Biden's approach is combined with criticism of the GOP record of separating families, putting kids in cages, and going four years with no constructive solutions for undocumented immigrants who already are in the country.

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Global Strategy Group, Hart Research, and BSP Research conducted an online survey of 1,500 voters who participated in the 2020 general election across the 2022 Senate battleground, including 1,000 interviews in Democratic-held Senate Seats (NV, AZ, GA) and 500 interviews in Republican-held seats (FL, OH, NC, PA, WI). An additional oversample with Latino voters was conducted to get to 502 total Latino interviews across the battleground. The survey had a confidence interval of +/- 2.5% on the overall sample and 4.4% on the Latino sample. Interviews were conducted between May 20-June 1, 2021. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political and demographic divisions of the population of the electorate are properly represented. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish at the discretion of the respondent.