

New Poll: Americans Prefer House Approach on Immigration

Poll Is First to Offer the Public a Choice Between House, Senate Plans

WASHINGTON (May 3, 2006) -- A new Zogby poll of likely voters, using neutral language (i.e., avoiding the words "amnesty" or "illegal alien"), finds that Americans prefer the House of Representatives' enforcement-only bill by 2-1 over Senate proposals to legalize illegal immigrants and greatly increase legal immigration. The poll was conducted for the Center for Immigration Studies. Complete results are on line at <http://www.cis.org/articles/2006/2006poll.html> .

* On immigration generally, Americans want less, not more, immigration. Only 26 percent said immigrants were assimilating fine and that immigration should continue at current levels, compared to 67 percent who said immigration should be reduced so we can assimilate those already here.

* While the Senate is considering various bills that would increase legal immigration from 1 million to 2 million a year, only 2 percent of Americans believe current immigration is too low. This was true for virtually every grouping in the survey by ethnicity, income, age, religion, region, party, or ideology.

* When offered by itself, there is strong support for the House bill: 69 percent said it was a good or very good idea when told that it tries to make illegals go home by fortifying the border, forcing employer verification, and encouraging greater cooperation with local law enforcement, while not increasing legal immigration; 27 percent said it was a bad or very bad idea.

* Support for the House approach was widespread, with 81

percent of Republicans, 72 percent of independents, 57 percent of Democrats, and 53 percent of Hispanics saying it was good or very good idea.

* When offered by itself, there is also some support for the Senate approach, though not as much as for the House bill: 42 percent said the Senate approach was a good or very good idea when told it would allow illegal immigrants to apply for legal status provided they met certain criteria, and it would significantly increase legal immigration and increase enforcement of immigration laws; 50 percent said it was a bad or very bad idea.

* There were few groups in which a majority supported the Senate plan, even when presented by itself. Exceptions included Hispanics, 62 percent of whom said it was a good or very good idea, and the most liberal voters (progressives), 54 percent of whom approved of it.

* When given three choices (House approach, Senate approach, or mass deportation), the public tends to reject both the Senate plan and mass deportations in favor of the House bill; 28 percent want the Senate plan, 12 percent want mass deportations, while 56 percent want the House approach.

* But when given a choice between just the House and Senate approaches, without the choice of mass deportations, the public prefers the House approach 64 percent to 30 percent.

* One reason the public does not like legalization is that they are skeptical of the need for illegal-immigrant labor. An overwhelming majority of 77 percent said there are plenty of Americans to fill low-wage jobs if employers pay more and treat workers better; just 15 percent said there are not enough Americans for such jobs.

* Another reason the public does not like Senate proposals to legalize illegals and double legal immigration is that 73 percent said they had little or no confidence in the ability of the government to screen these additional applicants to weed out terrorists and criminals.

* The public also does not accept the argument we have tried and failed to enforce the law: 71 percent felt that past enforcement efforts have been "grossly inadequate," while only 19 percent felt we had made a "real effort" to enforce our laws.

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The Center for Immigration Studies is an independent, non-partisan research organization which examines and critiques the impact of immigration on the United States.