

Poll: Voters Unaware of Candidates' Immigration Positions

McCain Supporters Farthest Off the Mark

WASHINGTON (March 31, 2008) – A new poll using neutral language finds that primary and caucus voters have little knowledge of candidates' immigration positions. The results also show that voters often do not share their candidate's position.

For results and tables, go to http://www.cis.org/articles/2008/voter_release_08.html

Among the findings:

- Only 34 percent of McCain voters, 42 percent of Clinton voters, and 52 percent of Obama voters correctly identified their candidate as favoring eventual citizenship for illegal immigrants who meet certain requirements.
- Of McCain voters, 35 percent mistakenly thought he favored enforcement that would cause illegals to return home, another 10 percent thought he wanted mass deportations, and 21 percent didn't know his position.
- Voters often held different positions from the candidate they supported. Only 31 percent of McCain voters had the same immigration position as he does. For Clinton voters, 45 percent shared her position; 61 percent of Obama voters shared his position.
- This lack of knowledge, coupled with disagreements with their candidates' positions, makes it very difficult to draw any conclusions about the fact that all three remaining candidates favor legalization for illegal immigrants.
- Whoever wins the presidency will face significant opposition to giving eventual citizenship to illegal immigrants. Just 25 percent of Republican and 50 percent of Democratic primary/caucus voters said they would support such an effort.
- Pro-enforcement voters have a greater intensity of views than supporters of legalization. Among Republicans, almost nine out of ten who favored causing illegals to return home said they strongly supported that view; on the other hand, fewer than half of Republicans who backed legalization strongly supported that view.
- This greater intensity also exists among Democrats. Of Democrats who favored causing illegals to return home, more than seven out of ten strongly supported that view; on the other hand, fewer than six out of ten who favored legalization strongly supported that view.

Methodology: The survey of 1,276 persons who voted in a primary or caucus was conducted March 12-13. The survey was conducted by Pulse Opinion Research.

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The Center for Immigration Studies is an independent research institute
which examines the impact of immigration on the United States.



Center for Immigration Studies

National Survey of 546 **Republican** Primary Voters Conducted March 12-13, 2008 by Pulse Opinion Research

Question 1: The government estimates that there are 12 million illegal immigrants in the country. What is the best way to deal with illegal immigration? Should we allow them to stay and be put on a path to citizenship provided they pay a fine, learn English, and undergo a background check? OR should we have a program of mass roundups and deportations? OR should we enforce the law causing illegals to go home over time by securing the border, penalizing employers who hire illegals, and getting the cooperation of local law enforcement?

	All Rep.	McCain	Romney	Huckabee	Paul	Thompson	Giuliani	Other
Allow illegal immigrants to stay	28 %	31 %	26 %	28 %	35 %	14 %	33 %	36 %
Mass roundups and deportations	9 %	9 %	7 %	11 %	8 %	14 %	0 %	9 %
Enforce law & cause them to leave	56 %	52 %	60 %	53 %	54 %	73 %	67 %	45 %
Not sure	7 %	8 %	6 %	7 %	4 %	0 %	0 %	9 %

Question 2: How strongly do you support your above position?

Allow them to stay with conditions	All Rep.	McCain	Romney	Huckabee	Paul	Thompson	Giuliani	Other
Strongly support	13 %	13 %	9 %	14 %	27 %	9 %	17 %	27 %
Somewhat support	12 %	13 %	15 %	11 %	4 %	5 %	17 %	0 %
Barely support	3 %	4 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Not sure	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	9 %

Mass deportations

Strongly support	8 %	8 %	7 %	10 %	8 %	14 %	0 %	0 %
Somewhat support	1 %	0 %	0 %	1 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	9 %
Barely support	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Not sure	0 %	0 %	1 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Cause them to leave

Strongly support	48 %	45 %	54 %	46 %	35 %	68 %	67 %	18 %
Somewhat support	6 %	5 %	6 %	5 %	8 %	5 %	0 %	27 %
Barely support	1 %	1 %	1 %	0 %	8 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Not sure	1 %	0 %	0 %	3 %	4 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Question 3: Which proposal best describes the approach of the candidate you voted for?

	All Rep.	McCain	Romney	Huckabee	Paul	Thompson	Giuliani	Other
Allow illegal immigrants to stay	24 %	34 %	18 %	18 %	27 %	9 %	25 %	18 %
Mass roundups and deportations	8 %	10 %	4 %	5 %	12 %	14 %	0 %	18 %
Enforce law & cause them to leave	44 %	35 %	54 %	43 %	38 %	68 %	42 %	27 %
Not sure	25 %	21 %	24 %	35 %	23 %	9 %	33 %	36 %

Question 4: No matter who is elected president, if the new president attempted to pass legislation that offers citizenship to illegal immigrants, would you support or oppose this effort?

	All Rep.	McCain	Romney	Huckabee	Paul	Thompson	Giuliani	Other
Support	25 %	26 %	23 %	26 %	42 %	5 %	8 %	36 %
Oppose	62 %	58 %	67 %	61 %	54 %	82 %	58 %	64 %
Not sure	13 %	16 %	10 %	13 %	4 %	14 %	33 %	0 %

Center for Immigration Studies

National Survey of 730 **Democratic** Primary Voters Conducted March 12-13, 2008 by Pulse Opinion Research

Question 1: The government estimates that there are 12 million illegal immigrants in the country. What is the best way to deal with illegal immigration? Should we allow them to stay and be put on a path to citizenship provided they pay a fine, learn English, and undergo a background check? OR should we have a program of mass roundups and deportations? OR should we enforce the law causing illegals to go home over time by securing the border, penalizing employers who hire illegals, and getting the cooperation of local law enforcement?

	All Dem.	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other
Allow illegal immigrants to stay	50 %	45 %	61 %	35 %	20 %
Mass roundups and deportations	7 %	8 %	4 %	8 %	25 %
Enforce law & cause them to leave	37 %	40 %	29 %	53 %	55 %
Not sure	6 %	7 %	6 %	4 %	0 %

Question 2: How strongly do you support your above position?

Allow them to stay with conditions	All Dem.	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other
Strongly support	29 %	23 %	40 %	14 %	20 %
Somewhat support	17 %	18 %	17 %	18 %	0 %
Barely support	3 %	4 %	4 %	4 %	0 %
Not sure	1 %	1 %	1 %	0 %	0 %

Mass deportations

Strongly support	5 %	6 %	3 %	6 %	25 %
Somewhat support	1 %	1 %	1 %	2 %	0 %
Barely support	0 %	1 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Not sure	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Cause them to leave

Strongly support	27 %	30 %	21 %	41 %	40 %
Somewhat support	8 %	8 %	6 %	8 %	10 %
Barely support	1 %	1 %	0 %	2 %	0 %
Not sure	1 %	2 %	0 %	2 %	5 %

Question 3: Which proposal best describes the approach of the candidate you voted for?

	All Dem.	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other
Allow illegal immigrants to stay	44 %	42 %	52 %	33 %	20 %
Mass roundups and deportations	7 %	8 %	4 %	8 %	20 %
Enforce law & cause them to leave	23 %	24 %	19 %	29 %	45 %
Not sure	26 %	26 %	24 %	29 %	15 %

Question 4: No matter who is elected president, if the new president attempted to pass legislation that offers citizenship to illegal immigrants, would you support or oppose this effort?

	All Dem.	Clinton	Obama	Edwards	Other
Support	50 %	46 %	59 %	29 %	40 %
Oppose	36 %	38 %	28 %	57 %	55 %
Not sure	15 %	16 %	13 %	14 %	5 %