



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on October 17, 2014

Immigration Debate May Help GOP in November Elections

As the Republican Party intensifies its efforts to gain control of the Senate in the November 4 elections, an amazing turn of events that no one would have predicted two years ago has occurred. The intense debate about “immigration reform” appears to be helping, rather than hindering, GOP prospects.

Realizing that President Obama’s brand of “immigration reform” by executive action was becoming unpopular, the White House issued an e-mail statement to major news organization on September 6 stating that President Obama “believes it would be harmful” to his immigration policy to announce any administrative action on immigration before this November’s elections. The statement blamed “the Republicans’ extreme politicization of this issue” for the president’s delay on following through on his previously promised executive actions.

As recently as June 30, Obama said in a statement:

I have also directed [Department of Homeland Security] Secretary [Jeh] Johnson and Attorney General [Eric] Holder to identify additional actions my administration can take on our own, within my existing legal authorities, to do what Congress refuses to do and fix as much of our immigration system as we can.

However, between June — when the White House threatened to pass “immigration reform” through executive action by summer’s end — and September, the political climate changed considerably. The crisis caused by the massive surge of illegal immigrant children across our southern borders made many Americans much less inclined to accept “reform” that included amnesty for illegal aliens. With control of the Senate at stake, some Democratic senators asked Obama to hold off on his executive actions, for fear they would alienate enough voters to harm Democrats running for election.

The change in the way the political winds were blowing had an impact on Republicans, as well. After Mitt Romney’s loss to Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election, the Republican National Committee commissioned an “autopsy” to figure out how the GOP could improve its chances in future elections. Among the report’s conclusions, the Republican Party “must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform.”

Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said: “What you have to recognize, which is an absolute truth, is that there is consensus with the Republican caucus that serious immigration





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reform has to happen.”

In reply to charges from critics who said that “immigration reform” necessarily included amnesty for illegal immigrants, Priebus said in an interview with Breitbart News last February:

Wherever the rhetoric came from that somehow saying that we need something big is amnesty [is] a joke. It means we have a broken immigration system that needs to get fixed, but it doesn’t mean, you know, amnesty or programs that are going to lead to a glide path to citizenship.

Many people may have gotten the idea that even the GOP’s approach to “immigration reform” included amnesty from the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” immigration bill passed by the Senate in June 2013. During debate on that bill, which was drafted by the committee of four Republicans and four Democrats, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) stated: “We need to send Washington a strong signal of the overwhelming grassroots opposition to this amnesty bill from Americans across the country.” The bill was never brought up for a vote in the Republican-controlled House.

The December 2012 Republican “Growth & Opportunity Project,” which sought to improve Hispanic voters’ willingness to vote Republican touched on some legitimate shortfalls, including a drop in support among these voters from 44 percent who voted for George W. Bush to just 27 percent for Mitt Romney. However, the report sought to correct a problem that did not exist: “If Hispanic Americans perceive that a GOP nominee or candidate does not want them in the United States (i.e. self-deportation), they will not pay attention to our next sentence.”

It would be difficult to find a single Republican candidate who ever advocated that Hispanic Americans who are in this country legally — especially Hispanic voters, who by necessity must be U.S. citizens — are not welcome in the United States or should “self-deport.” Only those who have entered our country *illegally* can or should be deported.

However, this mindset may well have influenced the Republican senators who joined Democrats in passing the Senate’s “Gang of Eight” bill.

As noted earlier, however, political winds have shifted. The massive influx of illegal aliens from Central America during the summer months caused many Americans to become unsympathetic to granting amnesty (often described as “a path to citizenship”) to those who have violated our immigration laws.

A report in *U.S. News* on October 15 observed: “If the 2014 campaign trail is the testing ground, evidence shows Democrats are playing defense on immigration and the GOP’s resistance to change is paying off.”

The report noted that Democratic Senate candidate Alison Lundergan Grimes released a campaign ad in Kentucky this week insisting that she does not support “amnesty.” “I’ve never supported amnesty or benefits for illegal immigrants, and I never will,” Grimes says in her ad, which reminds voters that her Republican opponent, Senator Mitch McConnell, voted in favor of a 1986 immigration bill that legalized millions of illegal immigrants.

An October 16 report by NBC News observed that things have changed considerably since some GOP strategists predicted the demise of the party unless it embraced “immigration reform.” The article cited data from the Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project indicating that the average percentage of eligible Latino voters in the eight states with the most competitive Senate races averaged only 4.7 percent. The national average is a much higher 10.7 percent.

When NBC asked the National Republican Senatorial Committee’s Rob Collins about how different



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candidates around the country are addressing the immigration issue, he replied that Republicans echo what their constituents want. "Immigration works differently in all these states, and Brown's position might not be the same as what Ernst is saying, but both positions mirror where their voters are," Collins said.

And where are the voters? A Rasmussen Report post on October 1 carried the headline: "Voters Strongly Oppose Legal Rights, Government Benefits for Illegal Immigrants." The report noted:

The latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey finds that 68% of Likely U.S. Voters say the new illegal immigrants should not have the same legal rights and protections that U.S. citizens have. Just 19% disagree. Thirteen percent (13%) are not sure....

Seventy-one percent (71%) say these illegal newcomers should not be eligible for government services and benefits. Sixteen percent (16%) believe they are entitled to government aid. Again, 13% are undecided.

On another question, Rasmussen found:

Most voters oppose the president's reported plan to unilaterally grant amnesty to several million illegal immigrants and think Congress should challenge him in court if he goes ahead with it. Consistent with surveying for years, two-out-of-three voters (67%) think securing the border to prevent future illegal immigration should come before amnesty is granted for some illegal immigrants already in this country. Just 26% believe amnesty should come first.

The true constitutionalist position, however, is that amnesty should not come ever, either before or after securing the border.

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