



## New Poll: Immigration Key Issue in Contested Races

### Public Wants Illegals to Go Home, Enforcement, No Immigration Increase

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WASHINGTON , D.C. (October 16, 2006) -- A new poll, using neutral language, finds intense voter concern over immigration in 14 tight congressional races. The surveys were conducted by the polling company for the Center for Immigration Studies.

In addition to a [national survey](#), detailed polling on immigration was conducted in four contested Senate races (click on the state/district to see the results): [Missouri](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Montana](#); and in 10 contested House races: [Arizona 5<sup>th</sup>](#), [Connecticut 4<sup>th</sup>](#), [Indiana 8<sup>th</sup>](#), [Kentucky 4<sup>th</sup>](#), [Pennsylvania 6<sup>th</sup>](#), [Texas 17<sup>th</sup>](#), [Louisiana 3<sup>rd</sup>](#), [Georgia 8<sup>th</sup>](#), [Colorado 7<sup>th</sup>](#), and [Ohio 6<sup>th</sup>](#).

Among the findings:

- **Immigration is a big issue throughout country.** Of likely voters nationally, 53 percent said immigration was either their most important issue or one of their top three issues, while just 8 percent said it was not at all important. With the exception of CT-4<sup>th</sup>, in races surveyed only about 10 percent of voters said it was not important at all.
- **When told numbers, voters want less immigration.** When told the actual number of immigrants here (legal and illegal) and the number coming (legal and illegal), and asked to put aside the question of legal status, 68 percent of voters nationally thought immigration was too high, 21 percent about right, and just 2 percent thought it was too low. In every congressional race surveyed, the share who said overall immigration was too low was in the single digits.

- **Voters less likely to vote for immigration-increasing candidates.** Experts agree that the bill recently passed by the Senate would at least double future legal immigration, yet 70 percent of voters said they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who wanted to double **legal** immigration. Overwhelming majorities in every battleground race feel the same way.
- **Voters reject extremes of legalization or mass deportations.** Some previous polls have shown support for legalizing illegal immigrants. But those polls have given the public only a choice between large-scale deportations or an earned legalization, and not the third choice of across-the-board enforcement, causing illegals to go home. This third option, which is the basis of the bill passed by the US House, is voters' top choice.
- **U.S. House immigration plan by far the favorite.** Enforcement approaches with no increase in legal immigration were the most popular policy option -- 44 percent wanted enforcement that causes illegals to go home, the US House's approach, and another 20 percent wanted large-scale deportations. Just 31 percent supported a legalization.
- **Intensity stronger among enforcement supporters.** Nationally, 32 percent of voters said they would be **much more** likely to vote for a candidate who would enforce the law and cause illegals to go home, compared to just 15 percent who said they would be **much more** likely to vote for a candidate who supports legalization. This same pattern holds in battleground contests.
- **Voters skeptical of need for unskilled immigrant labor.** More than 70 percent of voters nationally agreed that there were, "plenty of Americans to do low-wage jobs that require relatively little education, employers just need to pay higher wages and treat workers better to attract Americans," compared to 21 percent who said we need immigrants because there were not enough Americans to do all such jobs. The results were very similar in all the contested states and districts surveyed.
- **Voters think lack of enforcement is reason for illegal immigration.** Three out of four voters in the nation agreed that the reason we have illegal immigration is that past enforcement efforts have been "grossly inadequate." Voters strongly reject the argument that illegal immigration is caused by overly restrictive legal immigration policies. Strong majorities in every battleground contest surveyed felt this way.
- **Numbers make a difference.** One key finding is that when told the scale of immigration (legal and illegal), voters overwhelmingly thought it was too high. Also when told how much the Senate bill would increase **legal immigration** voters tended to reject it. This would seem to undermine the argument that

voters are only concerned about illegality and not the level of immigration. The level of immigration used in the questions are those widely agreed upon by experts based on government data.

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