



Latino Policy Coalition

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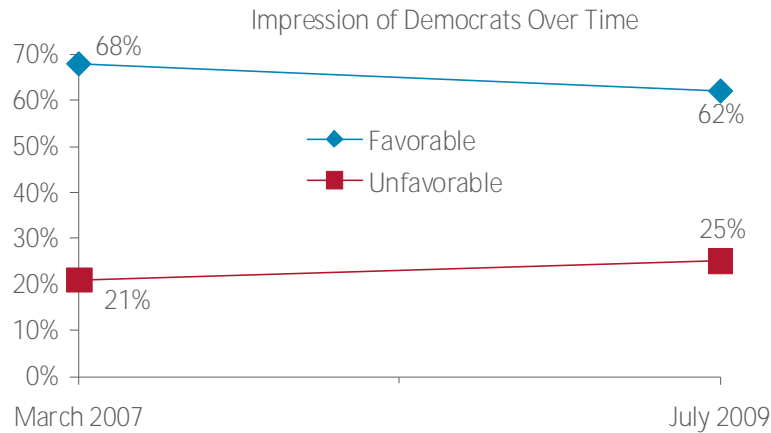
Alan C. Wolf
Chief Operating Officer

To: Interested Parties
From: Celinda Lake and Joshua Ulibarri
Date: August 27, 2009
Re: Latino Attitudes Over Time

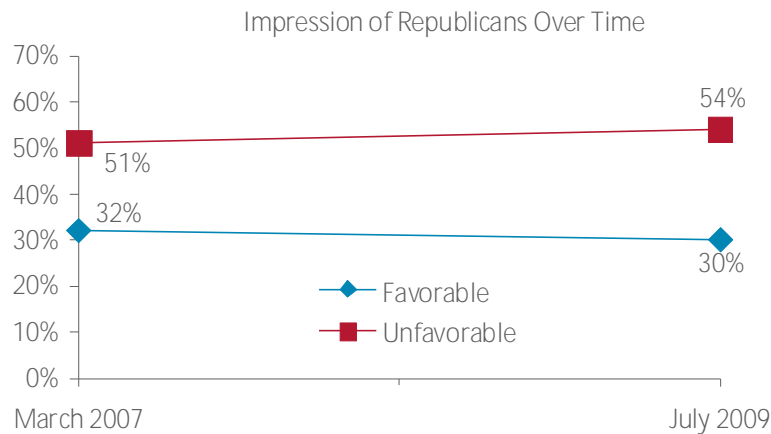
Lake Research Partners, on behalf of the Latino Policy Coalition (LPC), recently concluded another round of survey research among Latino/a registered voters. This was the fifth installment of survey research that began in April 2006. LPC has also funded four rounds of focus groups over the last three years that inform the continuing research. In this case, 1,000 Latino registered voters in the 23 states with the highest Latino populations were interviewed from July 23 to 28.

This current survey focused on health care reform, the Sotomayor nomination, the economy, and attitudes toward the two parties. While the survey research focuses on the salient issues of the day, an added value of this on-going research is tracking the Latino electorate over time. Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, and their importance as a voting bloc continues to increase in size and salience. Their impact on the issue debates and policy developments of our time will continue to grow in significance. This is a bloc of voters that has been changing rapidly in its political views and LPC provides a unique opportunity to look at these changes over time.

Democrats In Stronger Position, Republicans Viewed Negatively
Latinos have a more favorable attitude toward Democrats than they do toward Republicans. This is a trend that is unchanged since LPC began tracking Latino attitudes; but importantly, even Democrats have seen some slippage in this economy. Currently, 62% of Latino voters have a favorable impression of Democrats in Congress, 25% have an unfavorable impression, and 13% have no opinion. These favorable ratings are down 6 points from March 2007 when 68% of Latinos had a favorable impression of Democrats in Congress, 21% had an unfavorable impression, and 10% had no opinion. Although the overall favorable rating has dropped, the intensity (those with a very favorable impression) has remained steady at 27% in both March 2007 and July 2009. In sum, Democrats are in a strong position, but like all Americans, Latinos will judge their elected officials on whether this economy turns around and, as of now, Latinos are unconvinced.



Republicans remain in horrible shape. Some of this is not surprising. Republicans were in bad shape three years ago, and since then they have stood in the way of bipartisan immigration reform, overwhelmingly opposed Sonia Sotomayor’s nomination as the first Latina Supreme Court Justice, and denounced the President’s aim to comprehensively reform our system of health care (among other things). Currently, just under a third (30%) of Latinos have a favorable impression of Republicans in Congress while 54% have an unfavorable impression, and 15% have no impression. Republicans in Congress’s standing among Latinos has decreased in the past two and a half years. In March 2007, 32% of Latinos had a favorable impression of Congressional Republicans, 51% had an unfavorable impression, and 16% had no opinion - and their intensely unfavorable numbers have increased as well from 29% to 33% in that time.



It is of course no surprise then, that Congressional Democrats continue to fare well at the ballot-box among Latino voters. In a generic Congressional match up, Latinos prefer the Democratic candidate by 36-points. Fifty-five percent indicate they would vote for a Democrat, 19% would vote for a Republican, and 26% are

undecided. Support for a Democratic candidate is down slightly from September 2006 just before the Democratic wave and takeover of Congress - likely do to current concerns over the economy. With that said, however, Republicans have not improved their standing. In September 2006, Latinos supported a Democratic candidate by 42-points with 61% supporting the Democrat, 19% supporting the Republican, and 20% undecided. The current data, however, reveal an uptick from April 2006 when Latinos preferred a Democratic candidate by 29-points (50% Democrat, 21% Republican, 28% undecided.)

Former President George W. Bush is held in low esteem and his standing has worsened. Currently, 26% of Latino voters have a favorable impression and 67% have an unfavorable impression. In March 2007, 31% had a favorable impression, 65% were unfavorable and 4% had no opinion which is consistent with the data in April 2006 (30% favorable, 64% unfavorable, 7% no opinion.) The former President's very unfavorable numbers have increased from 47% in March of last year to 55% now.

Latinos Continue to Favor Democrats on their Issue Priorities

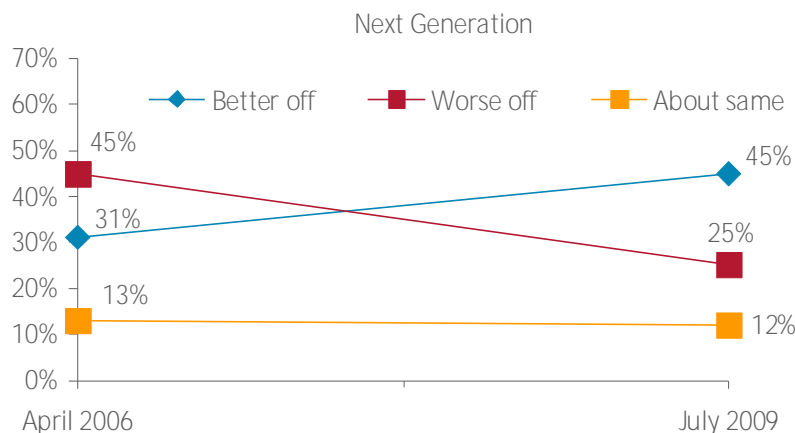
Latino voters continue to believe Democrats would do a better job than Republicans on important issues such as health care, immigration, and economic issues - issues they have prioritized in the past.

Issue	July 09			Sept 06			April 06		
	Dem	Rep	Dem Net	Dem	Rep	Dem Net	Dem	Rep	Dem Net
Health care/Rx drugs	60%	15%	+45	--	--	--	61%	18%	+43
Economic issues	60%	17%	+43	56%	18%	+38	--	--	--
Immigration	52%	12%	+40	51%	16%	+35	50%	17%	+33
Homeland security/terrorism	37%	34%	+3	38%	28%	+10	42%	29%	+13

Democrats' margin has increased on the economy, health care, and immigration. Democrats in Congress hold a 45-point advantage over Congressional Republicans (60% Democrats, 15% Republicans) when it comes to health care and prescription drugs. The gap between Congressional Democrats and Congressional Republicans has only grown wider since April 2006 when Democrats had a 43-point advantage (Democrats 61%, Republicans 18%). Republican opposition to reform has cost them support among Latino voters, and they risk further losing support if they remain so entrenched against the comprehensive reform Latinos favor (please see the August 10 memo on LPC's website regarding a further discussion of health care).

There is also a large gap among Latino voters between Congressional Democrats and Congressional Republicans when it comes to economic issues facing families. By a margin of 43-points, Latinos think Democrats in Congress would do a better job handling economic issues than Republicans in Congress. Even though Latino voters have some concerns that the economy is not recovering and only give Obama mixed reviews on the economy¹, the gap between Congressional Democrats and Congressional Republicans has widened since September 2006. Then, Latino voters gave Democrats a 38-point advantage (56% Democrats, 18% Republicans.) Despite some concern about the economy, there is an underlying optimism that it will get better as a plurality of Latinos (45%) feel their children will be better off than they are, while 25% feel they will be worse off. This was the opposite in April 2006 when 31% said better off and 45% said worse off.

¹ An additional memo on Latino attitudes toward the economy and President Obama can be found at www.latinopolicycoalition.org/pressroom.htm



Similar to health care and the economy, Latino voters feel Congressional Democrats would do a better job handling immigration than Congressional Republicans, and again, this gap has widened since 2006. Currently, Latinos give Congressional Democrats a 40-point advantage on immigration as 52% feel Democrats would do a better job while 12% feel Republicans would do a better job. The Democratic advantage has increased 7-points since April 2006 when Democrats were 33-points better than Republicans (50% Democrats, 17% Republicans).

Latino voters are more polarized on who would better handle homeland security and terrorism as they only give a slight advantage to Democrats. Thirty-seven percent feel Democrats would handle this better, while 34% feel Republicans would do a better job handling it - a 3-point Democratic advantage. This is one issue where Democrats have slipped among Latinos since 2006. In April 2006, Democrats had a +13 point advantage on homeland security and terrorism (42% Democrats, 29% Republicans) showing a 10-point decrease in the Democratic advantage over the past 3 years.

Increased Latino Optimism Since 2006

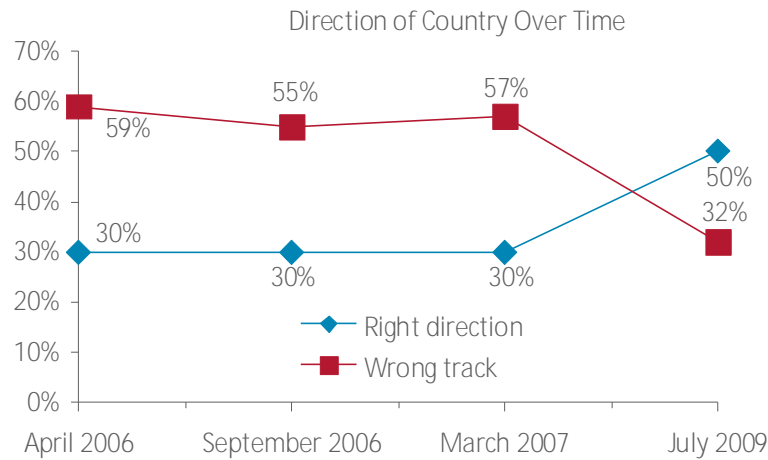
Notably, this is the first time in three years when more Latinos feel the country is moving in the right direction than think it is off on the wrong track. Latinos are much more optimistic today than they were a few short years ago when President Bush was in office. Half (50%) of Latinos believe the country is moving in the right direction, while a third (32%) feel things are off on the wrong track. While Latinos expressed mixed emotions on the country's direction, these data represent the most hopeful they have been at any point in the LPC research - covering three years and nearly 40 months. Since April 2006, their optimism has grown by 20-points (in April 2006 only 30% said things were moving in the right direction.)

As the graph below demonstrates, when LPC began polling in 2006, 59% of Latinos said things were off on the wrong track.² These attitudes continued through September 2006³, just before the Democratic take-over of Congress, as relatively the same share (30%) felt the country was moving in the right direction and 55% felt it

² April 20-26, 2006 - Survey of 1,000 Latino adults in the 23 states with the highest Latino population density, including 800 Latino registered voters.

³ September 16-27, 2006 - Survey of 600 Latino/a registered and likely voters in the 22 states with the highest Latino population density and an additional 1,200 likely, registered Latino/a voters in the following congressional districts (300 respondents in each): NM-01, AZ-08, CA-11, and CO-07

was off on the wrong track. In March 2007⁴, when Americans replaced the Republican Congress with a Democratic one, Latinos were still strongly pessimistic about the country's direction, with 57% believing things were off on the wrong track and, again, 30% felt things were moving in the right direction



Evaluating Latino trends over time is equally as important as evaluating where they currently stand on the issues. For instance, when looking at the current data one may conclude that Democrats are soaring among Latino voters and Republicans are viewed negatively. The time series shows a more subtle picture. Intense dislike of Republicans is up, especially for former President Bush. Democrats have maintained or have increased their advantage on economic issues and optimism has increased since Democrats took control of Congress and the White House. However, Democrats still have work to do to translate that energy into favorability for them individually and into the vote. There are still huge margins for the Democrats on many of these measures, but these have been even bigger in the past.

METHODOLOGY

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 Latino/a registered voters in the 23 states with the highest Latino population density. A quarter of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. These states include: CA, TX, FL, NY, IL, AZ, NJ, NM, CO, GA, NV, NC, WA, MA, VA, PA, CT, MI, OR, MD, IN, OH, and WI. The survey was conducted July 23 through July 28, 2009. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from files of registered voters. The data were weighted slightly by age and education. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1 percentage points.

⁴ March 13-21, 2007 - Survey of 1000 Latino/a registered voters in the 23 states* with the highest Latino population density.