



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Alex Cranberg  
**FROM:** Whit Ayres  
**DATE:** February 27, 2008  
**RE:** Republican and Independent Views on Immigration in  
Congressman Tom Tancredo's Congressional District

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Our recent survey of Republican and Independent voters in Congressman Tom Tancredo's congressional district (Colorado's 6<sup>th</sup> district) reveals far more complex attitudes about immigration than conventional wisdom suggests.

Sharp distinctions emerge in attitudes toward legal and illegal immigrants, and a broad consensus exists on how these voters distinguish between "good" and "bad" immigrants. Contrary to conventional wisdom, both Republicans and Independents in the 6<sup>th</sup> district oppose mass deportation of illegal immigrants. Surprisingly, these voters actually support a temporary-worker program and allowing many illegal immigrants to become permanent U.S. residents provided a series of conditions are met.

### *Attitudes Toward Immigrants and a Temporary-Worker Program*

**1. Nine out of ten Republicans and Independents think most legal immigrants are good for America.** Ninety-two percent think most legal immigrants are good for America (36 percent very good and 56 percent mostly good). Six percent think they are bad for America (4 percent mostly bad and 2 percent very bad).

**2. Seven out of ten Republicans and Independents think most illegal immigrants are bad for America.** Sixty-nine percent think most illegal immigrants are bad for America (23 percent very bad and 46 percent mostly bad). Twenty-four percent think they are good for America (23 percent mostly good and 1 percent very good).

**3. A broad consensus emerges on seven conditions to distinguish between "good" and "bad" immigrants.** In order of importance, they are:

- *Pay taxes* 93 percent very important
- *Not have a criminal record* 86 percent very important
- *Come here legally* 85 percent very important
- *Stay off welfare* 79 percent very important
- *Learn English* 78 percent very important
- *Work at a steady job* 72 percent very important
- *Use no more social services than they pay for* 69 percent very important

Only one of the conditions tested fell outside of the consensus: *Do work for which there is a shortage of American workers*. Only 34 percent thought that condition was very important to being a "good" immigrant, 39 percent thought it was somewhat important, and 20 percent thought it was not too important.

**4. If the conditions above are met, both Republicans and Independents support a temporary-worker program by a three-to-one margin.** Respondents were asked: *"If all of the conditions we just discussed were met, would you support or oppose a temporary-worker program where foreign workers would come to America for a limited period of time to work, after which they would be required to return home and not become U.S. citizens?"* By a margin of 67 to 23 percent these voters support a temporary-worker program under these conditions, including a 68 to 22 percent margin among Republicans, and a 65 to 26 percent margin among Independents.

***Dealing with Illegal Immigrants Already Here***

The survey then delved into the emotional issue of dealing with the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants who are already in America.

**1. The preferred option for dealing with illegal immigrants already here is deporting the criminals and giving temporary legal status to the rest.** Respondents were given four possible options for dealing with illegal immigrants already in America. In order of preference, the options are:

- *Deport those with criminal records and give temporary legal status to the rest* 47 percent
- *Deport all of them back to their home countries* 27 percent
- *Deport those with criminal records and give permanent legal status to the rest* 14 percent
- *Maintain the status quo* 3 percent

**2. A "touch-back" provision, or temporarily returning to their home countries, is viewed as the most appropriate penalty for immigrants who came to America illegally.** Respondents were given six possible penalties for immigrants who are in the country illegally. In order of preference, they are:

- *Temporary expulsion from the U.S.* 35 percent
- *Permanent expulsion from the U.S.* 19 percent
- *A fine of \$500 to \$2,500* 10 percent
- *No penalty* 9 percent
- *A fine of less than \$500* 8 percent
- *A fine of more than \$2,500* 7 percent

**3. Less consensus exists on the conditions voters would require for illegal immigrants to become permanent residents of the U.S.** *If legislation were passed to give some illegal immigrants legal status, which of the following conditions would you require of illegal immigrants to become permanent residents of the U.S.?* On conditions with strong support, Republicans and Independents agree. On conditions that approach an even split, Republicans support the condition and Independents oppose it. In order of priority, they are:

	<i>Would Require</i>	<i>Would Not Require</i>
• <i>Pass a test of written and spoken English</i>	73 percent	23 percent
• <i>Pay all back taxes for the time they have been in the country illegally</i>	63 percent	32 percent
• <i>Have an America sponsor who would be responsible for their whereabouts</i>	48 percent	45 percent
• <i>Return to their home country for a period of time before returning to the U.S.</i>	47 percent	46 percent
• <i>Pay a fine of \$2,500 or more for coming here illegally</i>	42 percent	51 percent

**4. If the conditions above are met, both Republicans and Independents support a program to allow illegal immigrants to become permanent residents of the U.S.** Seventy-four percent would support permanent residency for illegal immigrants under the specified conditions, while 19 percent oppose permanent residency. Support among Republicans stands at 73 to 21 percent, and among Independents support is 77 to 16 percent.

## ***Conclusion***

About one quarter of Republican and Independent voters in Colorado's 6<sup>th</sup> congressional district can be considered hard-core anti-illegal immigrant voters. Twenty-three percent think most illegal immigrants are "very bad" for America, 23 percent oppose a temporary-worker program even under the conditions specified, and 27 percent want to deport all 12 million illegal immigrants back to their home countries. These voters tend to be the most intense and the most vocal on the issue. But they are also a minority of voters, even of Republicans in Tom Tancredo's district.

The remaining three quarters of Republican and Independent voters have far more complex and even positive views about immigration. They overwhelmingly want immigrants to learn English, pay taxes, come here legally, obey the law, and not become a drain on social services. But if they meet those conditions, most Republicans and Independents in this district are willing to support a temporary-worker program. Moreover, if they pay a penalty for coming here illegally, most Republicans and Independents also support allowing illegal immigrants to become permanent residents of the United States. That is a far cry from the conventional wisdom about Republican and Independent views on illegal immigration.

## ***Methodology***

This survey of 371 Republican and 130 Independent voters in Colorado's 6<sup>th</sup> congressional district was conducted February 17-21, 2008. Respondents were selected randomly from a list of registered voters in the district. Republican respondents were weighted down to reflect their proportion among registered voters in the district: two-thirds Republican and one-third Independent.

By ideology, 23 percent are very conservative, 37 percent somewhat conservative, 27 percent moderate, 8 percent somewhat liberal, and 2 percent very liberal. Among Republicans the proportions are 32 percent very conservative, 43 percent somewhat conservative, 20 percent moderate, 2 percent somewhat liberal, and 1 percent very liberal. Among Independents the proportions are 5 percent very conservative, 24 percent somewhat conservative, 40 percent moderate, 20 percent somewhat liberal, and 4 percent very liberal.

The proportion of men and women overall is 50 percent male and 50 percent female. Among Republicans it is 51 percent male and 49 percent female. Among Independents it is 46 percent male and 54 percent female.

The margin of error for the entire sample is plus or minus 4.9 percent. The margin of error for Republicans is plus or minus 5.09 percent, and plus or minus 8.6 percent for Independents.