



Latinos Look To GOP To Lead – Immigration Included

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After weeks of political legwork, the U.S. Senate recently passed a comprehensive immigration reform package. While far from perfect, it sets the stage for meaningful debate as details continue to be hammered out among members across the political spectrum. House Republicans must now lead on the immigration issue and move quickly to pass legislation.

The Latino community in particular, but not exclusively, is now looking to the Republican Party to take this leadership opportunity and show the American people that our party understands the necessity for reform and the need to use this as a means to secure our nation and improve our economy.

Even if the House does not take up the Senate bill, it can pass one or more pieces of legislation which would chart the course for repairing our broken immigration system and help to create jobs. Despite campaigning on the promise of immigration reform, the Obama administration has avoided finding realistic bipartisan solutions to address our broken system. Instead, they have been focused on playing politics.

We cannot continue to maintain the status quo of ignoring the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of our country, which is tantamount to amnesty.

The Latino community is watching Congress closely as they work toward reform. Moreover, they are expecting results. The most recent poll conducted in March by Latino Decisions found 75 percent of registered Latino voters responded that they have read or heard about the immigration reform legislation in Congress.

An overwhelming 74 percent said that it was extremely or very important for Congress to pass immigration reform in 2013. These high percentages emphasize the importance this community puts on this subject matter in particular.

When asked directly, over half of Latino voters listed immigration as the most important issue they want the President and Congress to address. This number has actually jumped to 58 percent from 35 percent since last polled in November 2012.

At the same time, the poll also found 38 percent of Latino voters listed the economy as their top priority. This isn't very surprising considering the fact that the Latino

community has been adversely affected by the Obama administration's economic policies much like every other group.

The Department of Labor recently announced the June unemployment rate held at 7.6 percent. An even more troubling number is the unemployment rate among Latinos. When we look specifically at this segment of the population, we find that the unemployment rate jumps up to 9.1 percent among Latinos.

Comprehensive immigration reform has the unique opportunity to not only fix our broken immigration system, but also grow our economy and create jobs for all Americans. A study released by the CATO Institute predicts implementing immigration reform would increase U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) by at least .84 percent each year. Moreover, it found the higher earning power of newly legalized workers would translate into an increase net personal income of \$30 to \$36 billion.

Even more striking, the study estimates the increase in net personal income would generate \$4.5 to \$5.4 billion in additional net tax revenue which would be enough to support 750,000 to 900,000 new jobs. The fact is immigration reform makes economic sense.

Congress has the opportunity to pass groundbreaking legislation which would clear a path for our economy to rebound and create jobs for all Americans. Knowing immigration reform and the economy are top priorities for so many people, the U.S. House must choose to lead on the issue instead of solely reacting.

We must seize the opportunity before us to make sure the next generation still sees America as the land of opportunity that rewards hard work.

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