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No New Latino GOP Votes Until Immigration Reform

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Here in Arizona Alice Cooper says, "I wanna love you but I better not touch." Much commotion has been made concerning a recent Republican effort to win over Latino voting support. While it might be admirable for the GOP to make an attempt to reach out to Latinos during a Presidential election year, I am afraid that their efforts will be fruitless until they reverse the actions of their dismal record regarding last December's 2010 DREAM Act vote. We are now seeing former Senator Norm Coleman attempting to win over Latino voters via his Hispanic Leadership Network program, even though he told me in March of this year that the GOP cannot support legal immigration reform because it is simply not their priority. Fair enough, but given that, Latinos should not prioritize voting for the GOP.

The Republican Party can no longer claim to be pro-family, when over one million families have been forced apart or detained through their "attrition through enforcement" policies. It can no longer pride itself on pro-life views, since they attacked American-born baby rights via the 14th Amendment. It can no longer pride itself on jobs and the economy, because they are hurting the economy through their protectionism. Daniel Griswold from the CATO Institute told me that one low-skilled undocumented farm worker produces 3.1 middle income jobs to native born Americans via packaging, transportation and marketing. Since the passage of Georgia's harsh anti-immigrant law, Georgia farmers have become desperate in their need to replace 11,000 farm workers who fled in mass exodus.

What was Coleman thinking and why would his advisors believe it would be a good strategy to use Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval to reach out to Latinos, when Sandoval supported Arizona's SB 1070? Latinos in New Mexico are becoming increasingly upset with Governor Susana Martinez' initiative to take driver's licenses away from the undocumented, so why is the GOP using her for Latino outreach? Latino grassroots leaders in Nevada and New Mexico tell me that Hispanics voted for Sandoval and Martinez because the Hispanic surname was misleading to many who believed they would take immigrant-friendly positions in the Southwest. Latino voters will not make that mistake again in 2012 as an immigration scorecard is being developed and will be released to multiple Latino media outlets.

Extreme rhetoric must be moderated from the top, and this is important because without this key component, there will be no bottom-up grassroots. Trust and rapport begins from the bottom-up, not vice versa. The Republican National Committee (RNC) leadership is

eerily silent with the anti-immigrant Tea Party crowd. They need to step in and moderate the rhetoric.

SOMOS Republicans became the largest Hispanic Republican group in the nation as it grew out of crisis, because it was the only Latino GOP group that stood up for immigrant rights and stood against fellow Republicans (as well as Democrats) who supported anti-immigrant laws. The other Latino GOP groups seemed to be afraid to fight for the Latino community on the immigration front, and most simply toed the party line, equated most immigrants to drug mules, supported Arizona's harsh anti-immigrant law, or did not support the DREAM Act.

What happened to the Republican Party? Republicans who used to champion the DREAM Act and Immigration Reform under George W. Bush, are now nowhere to be found. When did the "Big Tent Party" become the "isolationist Tea Party"?

Since the failure of the DREAM Act, SOMOS Republicans saw a significant drop in new Latino Republican membership, members told us they were switching back to the Independent or Democratic Party, Internet traffic significantly diminished, and 15 of the organization's 20 top national leaders were considering changing their voting registration to Independent. How were these top Latino Republican leaders going to answer to the Latino community after the DREAM Act vote was aired live by UNIVISION?

So what will it take for the GOP to save itself from losing an entire generation of Latino voters? Toning down the rhetoric alone will not do it anymore - not in this Information Age. The only way the GOP can make up for past DREAM Act sins and reverse a complete political shift in the Southwest is for Senate Republicans to display leadership for comprehensive legal immigration, since most State legislators believe the federal government is not carrying out its federal responsibility to fix the broken immigration system. I hear New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez is seeking GOP sponsors and is open to ideas that will fix the problem.

Conservative pundits were quick with their efforts to create self-fulfilling prophecies by giving the false perception that Latinos are not going to vote in large numbers during the 2012 Presidential elections. This only shows how out of touch they are with the Latino community, and their falsehoods created the spark necessary for the National Tequila Party Movement. The Tequila Party quickly received strong support from Democrats, Independents, and Republicans who viewed the anti-immigrant Tea Party as kryptonite. The Tequila Party soon became a strong movement comprised of Democrats, Independents and Republicans who unified ourselves in supporting a strong Latino GOTV, organizing rallies as we push for legal immigration reform. We became the Latino counter-movement, as the Tea Party was making clear to all Americans their refusal to work in a bipartisan fashion, which was evident in the debt crisis discussions no matter the global financial cost.

In order for the GOP to acquire new Latino voters for 2012, they must support legal comprehensive immigration reform to make up for their dismal DREAM Act vote in 2010. There is no way around this. Republican lawmakers across the nation have spoken loud and clear and have said the immigration system is broken. I agree, so let's fix it.