



## **On immigration, 4 groups putting pressure on House GOP**

By: Stephen A. Nuño- July 8, 2013

---

As the Republican caucus of the House of Representatives takes up the subject of immigration this week, reform will depend on how House Republicans calculate the political forces around them. The pressure on House Republicans will come from several directions pushing them toward reform – and four groups are leading the charge.

The first group is composed of influential party leaders, from John McCain and George Bush to Karl Rove, who have all pleaded with House Republicans to consider the bigger picture for the GOP as the Latino population exerts more electoral power on the outcomes of national elections. Unlike House representatives in smaller districts, Republican senators in Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and elsewhere are forced to see a more comprehensive picture of the impact Latinos will continue to have on elections.

The second group are Latino Republicans who have either formed or are involved in PACs with Republican colleagues to demonstrate the potential gains for the party. Carlos Gutierrez, former US Secretary of Commerce, formed his own PAC, and he and Governor Brian Sandoval of Nevada sit on the advisory committee of the Hispanic Leadership Network, and they have worked to build a bridge between the Latinos and core Republicans across the country.

There are plenty of goodies loaded into the Senate bill for Republican interests that can have some influence on House members. The third group includes business interests: there is big agribusiness, which would benefit from visa reform for migrant labor. The technology industry – including leaders from companies such as Facebook, Dropbox, LinkedIn, and others – is craving to access the growing skill set of foreign workers who can contribute to the ingenuity of their extremely competitive market.

A fourth group is making the free-market argument and hoping this resonates with conservatives. The Cato Institute has long been an advocate of immigration reform that allowed a greater flow of labor from around the world to respond to market forces. Cato has been persuasive among Republicans on other issues, and they have been using their influence to gain a welcome ear in Washington.

The Libre Initiative, a non-profit national grassroots organization that says it “works to advance the principles of economic freedom in the Hispanic community” has also launched a campaign for immigration reform to promote the interests of the growing population of small businesses

in the Latino community. Their campaign, “Estamos Contigo”, comes from a growing, but non-traditional, sector of Latino interests who identify closer with Republicans.

The question is whether or not any combination of these pressure points will be enough to convince 17 or more Republican House members that immigration reform contains enough good policy or good politics to join the Democrats.

With only 28 Republican-held districts being projected as at risk of a Democratic challenger, external pressure from the growing Latino population threatening House seats for the GOP is less important than those internal forces within the party pushing them towards reform.

While the pressure points advocating for reform are diverse, it’s not clear they will be persuasive enough to overcome the old adage coined by former House Speaker Tip O’Neill that “all politics is local”.