



## **Opinion: Republicans, not Democrats, should get the blame for anti-immigrant laws**

Stephen A. Nuño | 07/11/2012

There is an emerging cultural divide in how we view undocumented immigrants and their role in our society that will have important consequences for the future of our country.

The California Senate recently passed the Trust Act, which prohibits local police from detaining anyone unless they have previous convictions for serious crimes.

The reasoning for this is as sound as it is, ironically, conservative. [Assembly Bill 1081](#) is a repudiation of President Obama's "Secure Communities" program, which is a cooperative effort between the Federal government and local officials to deport dangerous criminals who are not legally in the country. This would be well and good, but after three years of implementation, tens of thousands of Latino families have been ripped apart by the President's immigration policy.

This has resulted not only in families left in shambles, but in communities that are anything but secure. President Obama's policies violated the primary component of good policing, community trust. Without trust, crimes go unreported and lives go unrepaired.

Society benefits when government operates smoothly, but without any sense of reciprocity in trust and cooperation, government has more difficulty doing its job and society grows more anxious without the assurances of safety and stability government is obligated to provide.

In California, immigration is intimately intertwined with the social fabric of its citizens and so the California Senate declared that this cooperative effort should be ended to stop harming its efforts in policing the community in a positive manner.

This, by contrast, is the exact opposite approach to immigration in states like Arizona and Alabama, who have chosen instead to create an environment so hostile to Latino citizens, that they will be forced to "self-deport" and take with them any family member who is undocumented.

In addition to the social damage this tactic imposes on Latinos, economists like [Alex Nowrasteh](#) have noted the financial damage these policies have on businesses and the overall economy. Nowrasteh, an economist with the libertarian think tank, Cato Institute,

has been a thorn in the side of shady economists from anti-immigrant websites falsely claiming that these people and their families are a burden on the economy.

The self-deportation perspective has been explicitly supported by the GOP and Mitt Romney and creates a conundrum for Latinos. While Obama's policies have wreaked havoc on Latino families, he claims these policies are a symptom of the GOP's insistence that he first enforce the laws on the books before any progress can be made on some comprehensive immigration reform.

Are Latinos to believe him? I'm not sure they have a choice. Not a single Republican in California voted for the Trust Act. Several Republicans abstained, which I suppose is progress, but otherwise, the idea that Republicans are sensitive to the damage these policing efforts have done to Latino families is pretty assuredly non-existent.

Within this context, Latinos should take note of the research from [Karthick Ramakrishnan and Pratheepan Gulasekaram](#), who has looked at the cultural divide in the approach to immigration. They claim that it is a mistake to assume that immigration growth, economic stress, and the prevalence of a Spanish-speaking population are the greatest contributing factors to anti-immigrant laws.

Rather, they conclude that the greatest factor in predicting anti-immigrant laws is which political party is in power. They write, "restrictive ordinances are 93 percent more likely to pass in Republican counties than in Democratic ones."

Latinos too have varied views on these issues, and the Democrats have certainly fallen short in these areas as they pertain to Latinos. One might think this would create an opportunity for the GOP to give their policies the hard sell, but that's not what's happening.

This cultural divide is a suicide pact for the Republicans in some states, as they will soon lose Arizona as they have California and continue to pay an electoral price in Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico. There are still sensible Republicans in Texas, but the GOP in California is a lost cause unless someone with courage can convince the party to get with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Good luck with that.