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### Republicans Must Outflank Democrats On Immigration Reform

Posted by [brandongreife](#) ([Profile](#))

Monday, July 26th at 5:16PM EDT

5 Comments

Immigration is a problem longing for a fix. Unfortunately, it has been accorded leper status in Washington. Too broken to leave alone but too politically perilous to touch with a ten-foot pole. One need look no further than Arizona to realize the incendiary nature of attempting to come up with an immigration solution. Where there is much to lose, there is also much to gain. That is why Republicans must take the initiative, outflank their political opponents, and craft an immigration reform plan that not only preserves conservative values but potentially captures a new bloc of conservative voters.

Republicans have long been labeled as xenophobes when it comes to immigration. It is largely the result of a debate that has been couched in between two equally unattractive views. The word “immigrant” at its worst conjures up images of people who are stealing American jobs and living off our social welfare system without paying a dime in taxes to support it. At its best, they are unskilled laborers, doing the jobs Americans won’t do while living off our social welfare system without paying a dime in taxes to support it. Either way, not exactly a rosy picture. With this mindset, Republicans are doomed to forever fight an uphill battle when it comes to standing behind a viable, working option for immigration reform.

Sadly, without such reform Republicans will be doomed to wander the political wilderness. The fact is Hispanics will be a majority in this country by as soon as 2050. To remain a viable political party you will eventually have to capture this growing voting pool. Fortunately, and many Republicans don’t understand this, Hispanic-Americans tend to be conservative. In 2006 pollster David Winston asked registered voters to rate themselves on a 1 to 9 scale from very liberal to very conservative. Winston found that Hispanic Americans viewed themselves were more conservative than the rest of an already center-right country.

They are a natural source of votes but we’ve got to wise up to capture them.

This is where I’m going to lose some of you. But let me go ahead and say, wising up does not equal selling out. I understand that a party is about more than politics, it is about principle. Fortunately, reforming our stance on immigration isn’t just good politics, it meshes perfectly with conservative principles. But, it will require a change in mindset.

We’ve all heard the melting pot argument. That the United States is a nation of immigrants, melting together to form the essential fabric that binds us to this nation. All true, but very blah. Even with this argument immigration has become a convoluted issue, existing as the enormous elephant in the room. Grasping the “melting pot” argument relies on a sense of history and fairness – concepts that are intangible and don’t really come with any personal benefits. Today, with unemployment staying stubbornly high and deficits clouding our fiscal future, it is a much easier to argue that illegal immigrants are taking our jobs and eating up our taxes. So what can we do to reframe the debate?

Republicans should put forward an immigration reform package that promises to increase jobs, lower

the number of unskilled immigrants, and boosts the number of taxpayers. Sounds conservative. Now, what if I told you it could be done in a way palatable to Hispanic voters.

The first step is to change the make-up of our immigrant population. “Unskilled” and “immigrant” are too often viewed as inseparable. It needn’t be this way. After all you wouldn’t view Albert Einstein this way. But imagine how many fewer jobs America would have without people like these:

- Jerry Yang – Taiwanese founder of Yahoo
- Sergey Brin – Russian founder of Google
- Andrew Grove – Hungarian founder of Intel
- Andrew Carnegie – Scottish business mogul
- Levi Strauss – German inventor of blue Jeans
- John Kluge – German owner of Metromedia – one of largest privately held companies in the US

Immigrants success extends much deeper. A study by Harvard researcher Vivek Wawha found that “one in four engineering and technology companies founded between 1995 and 2005 had an immigrant founder. We found that these companies employed 450,000 workers and generated \$52 billion in revenue in 2006.” Moreover, foreign nationals residing in the United States represented 25.6 percent of all patent applications. In Silicon Valley, one of the primary entrepreneurial centers in the United States, 52 percent of tech and engineering companies were founded by an immigrant.

Immigrants do not have to be the job takers. They can be the job creators. But first we have to create an immigration policy capable of attracting and harnessing their talents. One way to do that would be to change the H-1B visa system. The visa, which is provided for immigrants that want to work in the U.S., has helped draw the top talent in the international work force. Unfortunately, as Darrel West argues in the *Wall Street Journal*,

“[O]nly 15% of our annual visas are now set aside for employment purposes. Of these, some go to seasonal agricultural workers, while a small number of H-1B visas (65,000) are reserved for “specialty occupations” such as scientists, engineers, and technological experts.”

65,000. That’s it. Applications for this type of visa are normally gone within the first two days of the application period. In other words, while the H-1B visa should be luring the best and the brightest international talent, we are shutting off the tap. The Cato Institute argues that such a low cap “is hampering output, especially in high-technology sectors, and forcing companies to consider moving production offshore.” The expansion should not be limited to H-1Bs. Other skilled worker visas such as the L-1, which allows foreign workers to relocate to a multi-national corporation’s US office, and O-1, which allows aliens with “extraordinary abilities” in a particular field, should also be emphasized and revised.

Given the inherent power of these visas to actually create jobs why has the government been so slow to change it? Partially because of the misperception of so many voters who believe that increasing quotas will take away jobs from Americans. This logic doesn’t have a basis in fact. As Cato explains:

“Fears that H-1B workers cause unemployment and depress wages are unfounded. H-1B workers create jobs for Americans by enabling the creation of new products and spurring innovation. *High-tech industry executives estimate that a new H-1B engineer will typically create demand for an additional 3-5 American workers.*”

This is the chance for Republicans to take the lead on immigration. Republicans have long been thought to have lost the debate – and have the lack of minority support to prove it. The key to winning the support and turning the debate around is to focus on immigrants as realistic and viable solution to the economic trouble. Immigration reform could be the jobs bill we've all been waiting for and with a price-tag much cheaper than the so-called stimulus.

by Brandon Greife, Political Director of the College Republican National Committee

**Category:** [College Republican](#), [H-1B](#), [Illegal Aliens](#), [Immigration](#), [Immigration Reform](#)

## 5 Comments

### No offense, but these positions are older than dirt

*[JSobieski](#) Monday, July 26th at 8:32PM EDT ([link](#))*

and filled with some presumptions that aren't true.

Republicans on the whole support legal immigration (i.e. Pat Buchanon and Tom Tancredo are no longer Republicans) and acknowledge that legal immigrants make important contributions.

Illegal immigrants are however more likely to be uneducated. People with PhDs and MDs aren't going to sneak across a border to pick fruit. Thus, toleration of illegal immigration is in many ways a purposeful decision to favor uneducated immigrants over educated immigrants.

Any solution that rewards people for cheating is not going to be acceptable. Rewarding people who take cuts in line is not a conservative policy.

I am a first generation American. Many of my friends are first generation Americans. I love immigrants—I have an almost irrational desire to hear English spoken through a thick foreign accent. To me, such speakers always come across as so un-slick as to appear super-trustworthy (think the opposite of Bill Clinton). All that being said, illegal immigration is intolerable. Why have laws if there is no willingness to enforce them. People hate the fact that we can put man on the moon, but can't seem to put up a fence along a border.

The question of what to do with the illegals that are already here should not even be asked until the flow of illegals is 1% what it currently is.

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### Just right JS

*[eastbaylarry](#) Monday, July 26th at 8:47PM EDT ([link](#))*

“Build the dang fence!”

Then extend the \*legal\* immigrant counts as much as is needed/wanted.

2+2=4 dammit!

[REPLY TO THIS](#)

## Make Legal Immigration Easier

[brandongreife](#) Monday, July 26th at 8:50PM EDT ([link](#))

My argument was merely one part of what is needed - a comprehensive immigration reform package. That package would certainly have to include securing the border. But a fence in and of itself would do little.

Illegal immigration is, in a sense, like taxes. Regardless of the level of individual taxation, gross receipts remain a stable proportion of GDP. This is because at higher levels of taxation people are given more incentive to lower their marginal tax rate. The same is likely true of immigration, put up a bigger barrier, people go to more extreme lengths to find ways around it.

To really reduce the incentive to illegally immigrate you'll have to go a step further - lower the barrier to real citizenship. The current situation is such that the benefit of becoming a citizen is drastically outweighed by the work/time required to do so. Assuming rational actors, which we are, then illegal immigration could be drastically slowed.

[REPLY TO THIS](#)

## When you make purposeful confusions its hard to take your positions seriously

[JSobieski](#) Monday, July 26th at 11:01PM EDT ([link](#))

“Immigration is a problem longing for a fix. Unfortunately, it has been accorded leper status in Washington. Too broken to leave alone but too politically perilous to touch with a ten-foot pole. One need look no further than Arizona to realize the incendiary nature of attempting to come up with an immigration solution. Where there is much to lose, there is also much to gain. That is why Republicans must take the initiative, outflank their political opponents, and craft an immigration reform plan that not only preserves conservative values but potentially captures a new bloc of conservative voters.”

We all want to solve the problem, but we don't agree on what the solution is.

“Republicans have long been labeled as xenophobes when it comes to immigration.”

Be democrats. The right thing to do doesn't change because people slander us.

“It is largely the result of a debate that has been couched in between two equally unattractive views.”

Actually, the other sides view has been implemented many times since 1950, but nobody ever tries implementing our view.

“The word “immigrant” at its worst conjures up images of people who are stealing American jobs and living off our social welfare system without paying a dime in taxes to support it.”

No, "ILLEGAL immigrant" conjures those images. Americans like LEGAL immigrants. Are you even trying to convince conservatives?

"At its best, they are unskilled laborers, doing the jobs Americans won't do while living off our social welfare system without paying a dime in taxes to support it. Either way, not exactly a rosy picture."

The non-rosy picture is our lack of interest in sustaining borders in a world where middle east terrorists are now teaming up with terrorist groups such as FARC and dictatorships like Venezuela. How's that for a non-rosy picture? Why are you purposely avoiding the issue of security?

"With this mindset, Republicans are doomed to forever fight an uphill battle when it comes to standing behind a viable, working option for immigration reform."

Securing the border first is actually quite popular, and has been for the last 6 years.

"Sadly, without such reform Republicans will be doomed to wander the political wilderness."

Only if they deny the will of the American people, instead of taking the side of the illegal immigrants, like you seem to propose.

"The fact is Hispanics will be a majority in this country by as soon as 2050."

Due primarily to illegal immigration? Most Hispanics I know (the legal immigrants) don't like illegal immigration any more than I do.

"To remain a viable political party you will eventually have to capture this growing voting pool."

So we need to adopt Democratic ideas and values, and chuck away our own? THIS is a definition of victory that makes no sense, because under your view, a lawless Democrat vision will prevail one way or another, so we should vote for the guys with R's at the end of their names?

"Fortunately, and many Republicans don't understand this, Hispanic-Americans tend to be conservative."

We get it, which is why we are the party of law and order, not lawlessness and chaos.

"In 2006 pollster David Winston asked registered voters to rate themselves on a 1 to 9 scale from very liberal to very conservative. Winston found that Hispanic Americans viewed themselves were more conservative than the rest of an already center-right country."

Conservatives support the rule of law, so it looks like we won't be in that wilderness that you described.

"They are a natural source of votes but we've got to wise up to capture them."

By becoming democrats when it comes to the law? Security?

"This is where I'm going to lose some of you."

You lost me way back up there.

“But let me go ahead and say, wising up does not equal selling out. I understand that a party is about more than politics, it is about principle.”

The principle of winning elections by selling out?

“Fortunately, reforming our stance on immigration isn’t just good politics, it meshes perfectly with conservative principles. But, it will require a change in mindset.”

Changing the definition of conservative to mean “not conservative”?

“We’ve all heard the melting pot argument. That the United States is a nation of immigrants, melting together to form the essential fabric that binds us to this nation. All true, but very blah.”

Actually its very cool. To say that it is blah makes me think that you aren’t even a Republican.

“Even with this argument immigration has become a convoluted issue, existing as the enormous elephant in the room. Grasping the “melting pot” argument relies on a sense of history and fairness – concepts that are intangible and don’t really come with any personal benefits.”

If comes with LAWFULNESS—something totally absent in discussing ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION.

“Today, with unemployment staying stubbornly high and deficits clouding our fiscal future, it is a much easier to argue that illegal immigrants are taking our jobs and eating up our taxes.”

Which is true of ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS. They are poorer than the average American, and thus take up more social welfare services than the average American.

“So what can we do to reframe the debate?”

We focus on the distinction between LEGAL immigration and ILLEGAL immigration?

“Republicans should put forward an immigration reform package that promises to increase jobs, lower the number of unskilled immigrants, and boosts the number of taxpayers.”

Lowering the number of unskilled immigrants is the first interesting thing that you have said.

“Sounds conservative.”

I am skeptical, but shall continue reading.

“Now, what if I told you it could be done in a way palatable to Hispanic voters.”

Even more skeptical now. Hispanic voters, the conservative ones anyway, don’t like ILLEGAL immigration.

“The first step is to change the make-up of our immigrant population. “Unskilled” and “immigrant” are too often viewed as inseparable.”

Uh, an unskilled and illiterate migrant fruit picker cannot easily obtain an engineering degree or become a licensed physician. That is to say, those skill sets ARE distinct.

“It needn’t be this way. After all you wouldn’t view Albert Einstein this way.”

How many Albert Einstein-level minds came to this country as ILLEGAL immigrants?

“But imagine how many fewer jobs America would have without people like these:

Jerry Yang – Taiwanese founder of Yahoo

Sergey Brin – Russian founder of Google

Andrew Grove – Hungarian founder of Intel

Andrew Carnegie – Scottish business mogul

Levi Strauss – German inventor of blue Jeans

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What do they all have in common? All were LEGAL immigrants and NONE came from Mexico. Very persuasive . . . NOT.

“Immigrants success extends much deeper. A study by Harvard researcher Vivek Wawha found that “one in four engineering and technology companies founded between 1995 and 2005 had an immigrant founder.”

Again, how many were formed by ILLEGAL immigrants? How many illegal immigrant college educated engineers do you think we have in this country? Your inability to distinguish between LEGAL and ILLEGAL immigrants is astounding. Close to troll level, or you just aren’t that clear in your thinking.

“We found that these companies employed 450,000 workers and generated \$52 billion in revenue in 2006.” Moreover, foreign nationals residing in the United States represented 25.6 percent of all patent applications. In Silicon Valley, one of the primary entrepreneurial centers in the United States, 52 percent of tech and engineering companies were founded by an immigrant.”

Again, HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE WERE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS?

“Immigrants do not have to be the job takers. They can be the job creators. But first we have to create an immigration policy capable of attracting and harnessing their talents. One way to do that would be to change the H-1B visa system. The visa, which is provided for immigrants that want to work in the U.S., has helped draw the top talent in the international work force. Unfortunately, as Darrel West argues in the Wall Street Journal ,”

Again, HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE WERE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS? Most republicans are not against expanding the H1-B visa system, we just want to stop illiterate migrant farm workers from adding to our list of unemployed. Surely you understand that NOBODY is asserting that skilled immigrants should be kept out?

“[O]nly 15% of our annual visas are now set aside for employment purposes. Of these, some go to seasonal agricultural workers, while a small number of H-1B visas (65,000) are reserved for “specialty occupations” such as scientists, engineers, and technological experts.”

This is like saying buy low and sell hi—nobody disagrees with this line of thinking.

“65,000. That’s it. Applications for this type of visa are normally gone within the first two days of the

application period. In other words, while the H-1B visa should be luring the best and the brightest international talent, we are shutting off the tap. The Cato Institute argues that such a low cap “is hampering output, especially in high-technology sectors, and forcing companies to consider moving production offshore.” The expansion should not be limited to H-1Bs. Other skilled worker visas such as the L-1, which allows foreign workers to relocate to a multi-national corporation’s US office, and O-1, which allows aliens with “extraordinary abilities” in a particular field, should also be emphasized and revised.”

Few of these folks will come from Mexico or cross the Mexican border. So this issue isn’t really related to the unskilled labor pool. Why will Hispanic voters like us more for importing skilled labor from non-Mexican countries?

“Given the inherent power of these visas to actually create jobs why has the government been so slow to change it? Partially because of the misperception of so many voters who believe that increasing quotas will take away jobs from Americans. This logic doesn’t have a basis in fact. As Cato explains:”

Actually there are unemployed engineers and computer programmers in this country, but I still like expanding the H-1B program.

“Fears that H-1B workers cause unemployment and depress wages are unfounded. H-1B workers create jobs for Americans by enabling the creation of new products and spurring innovation. High-tech industry executives estimate that a new H-1B engineer will typically create demand for an additional 3-5 American workers. ”

Again, these AREN’T the people crossing the southern border illegally.

“This is the chance for Republicans to take the lead on immigration. Republicans have long been thought to have lost the debate – and have the lack of minority support to prove it. The key to winning the support and turning the debate around is to focus on immigrants as realistic and viable solution to the economic trouble. Immigration reform could be the jobs bill we’ve all been waiting for and with a price-tag much cheaper than the so-called stimulus.”

If you mean expand the H-1B program fine, but why will Hispanics like us for this? If an expanded H-1B program is in exchange for amnesty, we have already heard that tune played out before, i.e. its old dirt. If you are saying lets expand H-1B by itself, I don’t see why Hispanic voters will love us.

by Brandon Greife, Political Director of the College Republican National Committee

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## What exactly is wrong with the current system?

[snowshooze](#) Monday, July 26th at 9:18PM EDT ([link](#))

Honestly, I do not know.

We have quotas I imagine...and we have a perfectly legal means of entry for immigrants..

I mean, aside of the fact that the borders are not protected, where is the fault in the existing system, if



implemented? I have friends who are naturalized citizens, and I do not recall any complaints. Laborers are admitted with the " Green Card " work permits...

Where is the case for reform? Is there any reason to think that a reformed but still not upheld policy would be any more or less effective?

My entire point being only that if we did fully implement our immigration policies and border security, would it work? How could I tell if we never gave it a chance? If we don't even follow the plan we have, I'll be darned if we need another one. Don't reform it...IMPLEMENT IT!!!

[REPLY TO THIS](#)