



# MOORE INFORMATION

OPINION RESEARCH • STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

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TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Poll of Latino Voters in "Competitive" California Congressional Districts

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A recent poll of Latino voters in 10 California Congressional Districts expected to be competitive in 2014 contains valuable insights for Republican candidates across the country. The poll was conducted by Moore Information, Inc. in conjunction with Grow Elect, a political organization dedicated to electing Latino Republicans in California.

## **The Political Landscape.**

Latinos represented almost 20% of the California electorate in 2012, and that number is expected to grow, as Latinos represented 38% of the state's population in the 2010 census. In the past two presidential elections, Republicans John McCain and Mitt Romney have fared poorly with Latino voters, winning just 31% and 27%, respectively of the Latino vote nationwide, while both winning the white vote. Republicans have not always performed this poorly with the Latino segment. In 2004, George W. Bush won 40% of the Latino vote nationwide. Even in California, not all is lost for the GOP, as in the 21<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, Republican David Valadao won 58% of the vote in a district where 46% of the turnout was Latino. It is generally acknowledged that a Republican could win statewide in California by capturing 35% of the Latino vote. Settling for less will relegate the GOP to a permanent minority status statewide.

## **Overview.**

The following results from our poll show that there are challenges and opportunities for Republican candidates to win Latino votes in these 10 potentially competitive California Districts.

The survey clearly demonstrates that the Republican Party is not deemed a racist party by Latinos, but is certainly viewed as being out of touch with people of color, whether it is favoring the rich, being on the wrong side of the immigration debate or health care. So, despite the fact that many Latinos share similar conservative values, and even prioritize the same issues and economic policies as Republicans, there remains a clear lack of trust for the GOP among Latino voters. Our survey shows us that many Latino voters don't believe Republicans understand where they've come from or the challenges they face – especially in relation to their economic well-being/standard of living. As a result, the key to developing a relationship with the Latino voter is not necessarily a philosophical Conservative/Liberal issue, nor is it even an issue-driven resolution; but rather, a demonstration by Republicans, through communications (and ultimately policy) that they are working on behalf of Latinos to improve their way of life. To this end, economic and education issues are key, but communications need to convey how voters of color are affected personally and what GOP

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efforts will do to ensure their children have a better life. Following are several opportunities found in the survey findings.

- *Traditional GOP Issues are Priorities for Latinos.*
  - A majority of Latino voters are most concerned about issues that are traditional GOP strengths, including the economy and jobs, the federal deficit and debt, taxes, and terrorism and national defense.
- *Candidates Need to Address Issues Important to Latinos and Avoid Being Defined as Wrong on High-Profile Issues in Order to Negate Stigma of Being Out of Touch.*
  - There are gains to be made by GOP candidates who can do the following:
    - Focus on the economy/jobs and education and how they will provide Latinos and others opportunities to improve their standard of living. At the top of that list would be supporting policies making college more affordable.
    - Not let themselves be defined by their views on immigration and health care.
- *Personal Views Held by Latinos Make the GOP a Potential Ally, but Tone and Priorities Matter.*
  - One-in-three Latinos are self-described Conservatives, while just 22% consider themselves Liberal.
  - A candidate who opposes gay marriage and abortion is as popular as a candidate who supports gay marriage and pro-abortion rights.
  - A plurality of Latino voters prefer cutting government services over increasing taxes to balance the federal budget.
  - Almost four-in-ten (39%) believe government does more to hurt than to help people trying to improve their standard of living.

More details follow.

### **Challenges for the GOP.**

The Republican Party suffers from an unfavorable image in these 10 Congressional Districts (31% favorable, 49% unfavorable), while the Democrat Party enjoys a favorable image (64% favorable, 24% unfavorable). Even among GOP Latinos the GOP's image is not particularly impressive (59/35%). President Obama also enjoys a widely favorable image (70% favorable, 23% unfavorable) among Latinos in these districts. The leading complaint Latinos have about the Republican Party is "they favor the rich" (38%), followed by "they support policies that are anti-immigrant/hurt people of color" (20%), "they are too Conservative" (13%) and "they don't understand people like me" (10%). Importantly for Republicans, most Latino voters do not consider Republicans racist. Rather, they are more likely to be seen as out of touch. Just 21% of these respondents believe Republicans are racists, while 41% are of the belief that Republicans aren't racists but simply don't understand people of color and 22% say Republicans aren't racists and treat everyone equally regardless of their color.

The key to GOP candidates winning Latino voters is listening and talking to these voters about issues they consider important and to avoid being defined as wrong on some high-profile issues. Certainly the debate among GOP presidential hopefuls in 2012 on immigration helped define Mitt Romney as being on the wrong side of the immigration issue. In these 10 districts, the number one issue concern for Latino voters is the economy and jobs (35%), followed by education (17%), health care (16%), immigration (10%), the federal debt and deficit (8%) and taxes (6%). Further, the economy and jobs is the leading

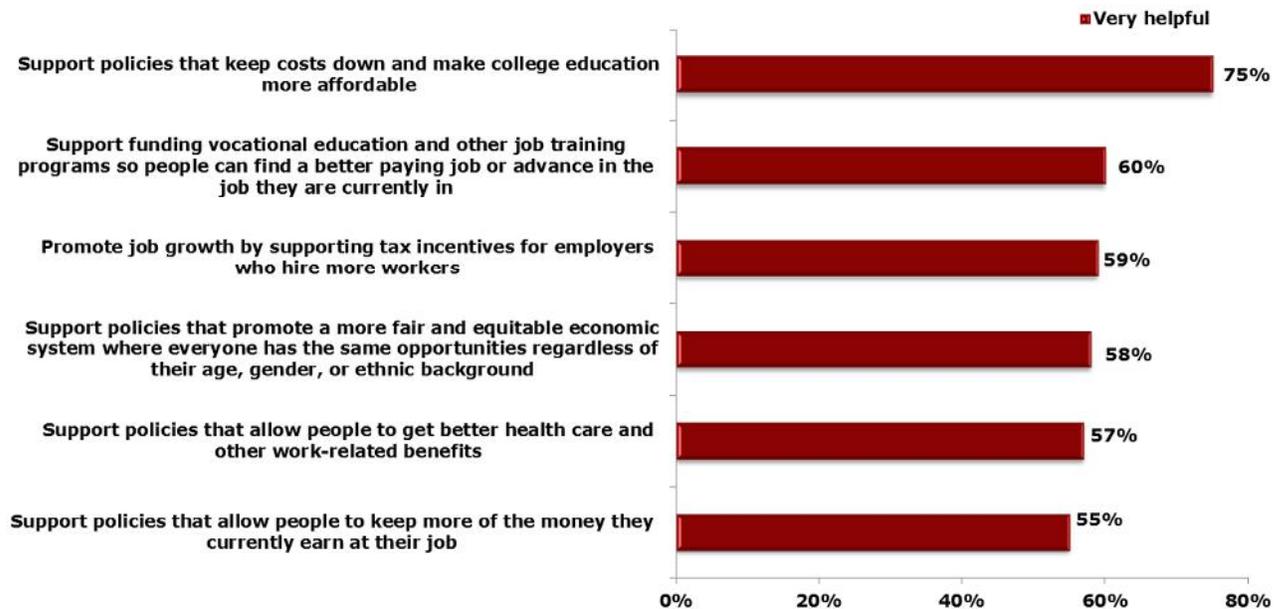
concern among all Latino voter subgroups, with men age 18-44 the most likely to be concerned about the issue. Note: this means the immigration issue is *fourth* on the list of concerns. For GOP candidates this means that Latino voters are more interested in GOP views on the economy, health care and education than they are on immigration.

**Education.**

Certainly a major reason for concern about the economy and jobs stems from a desire for an improved standard of living. On that issue, Latinos are not widely convinced that government is helpful; in fact, 39% of respondents say government does more to hurt people trying to improve their standard of living, while 45% say government does more to help people and 16% have no opinion. This is hardly a ringing endorsement for governmental involvement.

In order to find out what members of Congress and state legislators could do to help improve people’s standard of living, we asked respondents to rate the helpfulness of several possible strategies. The strategy that generates the most enthusiasm is making college more affordable. Reactions to each are shown in the following chart.

**What is “Very” Helpful to Improve People’s Standard of Living?**

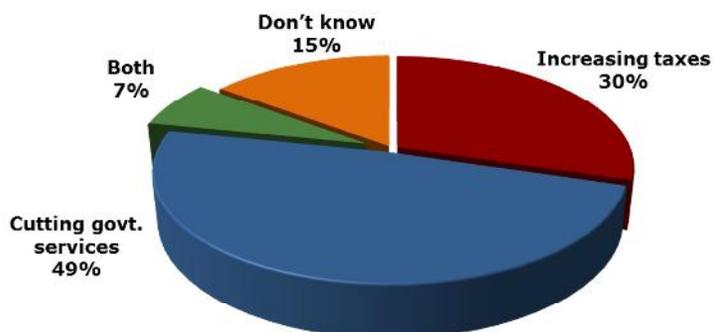


**The Federal Budget.**

As indicated by Latinos’ reactions to overall issue concerns, more Latinos are concerned about the federal deficit and debt and taxes than are concerned about the immigration issue. When asked what Congress’ main focus should be in order to balance the federal budget, 49% say cutting government services and only 30% say increasing taxes. Another 7% volunteer they would do both and 15% have no opinion.

### Balancing the Budget

"In order to balance the federal budget, which do you think should be the main focus of Congress?"



There is widespread support for cutting services among GOP and Decline to State (DTS) Latino voters. Even among Democrats, 38% favor cutting government services while 38% favor increasing taxes.

A Democrat could potentially be vulnerable on this issue. When respondents are asked their major concern or complaint about the Democratic Party, the leading complaint is, "they spend and tax too much" (34%), distantly followed by "they favor unions and other special interests" (14%), "they aren't concerned enough about stopping illegal immigration" (14%) and "they are too Liberal" (13%).

**Immigration.** Latino voters in these 10 Congressional Districts are divided over whether undocumented immigrants should be allowed to earn "legal status" or be allowed to earn "citizenship." While 43% would allow undocumented immigrants to earn legal status if they pay a fine, have a job and learn English, 45% would allow undocumented immigrants to earn citizenship if they pay a fine, have a job and learn English. The remaining 12% have no opinion. There are no major differences in attitude on this question among Democrat, Republican or DTS/other Latino voters. More likely to favor the citizenship option are women age 18-44, lower income Latino voters and Latinos in Spanish-speaking households.

**Gay Marriage and Abortion.** Here is interesting news for Republican candidates. When given a choice between a candidate who supports gay marriage and abortion rights or a candidate who opposes gay marriage and opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the mother's life is in danger, 44% of Latinos prefer the socially Liberal candidate while 45% prefer the socially Conservative candidate. The remaining 12% are undecided. Democrats, Liberals and Latino voters age 18-29 are more likely to prefer the socially Liberal candidate, while Republicans, Conservatives and Latinos age 60+ are more likely to prefer the social Conservative.

**2014 and Beyond.** Republicans face major challenges in winning Latino votes in these 10 Congressional Districts, due in large part to the fallout from the last two presidential campaigns. The GOP is now viewed by Latinos as out of touch with their concerns and needs. Immigration reform is important, but more is necessary. Republicans need to focus on issues most likely to concern Latino voters, such as economy and jobs and education, while avoiding being defined as insensitive on immigration and health care. A key is to offer opportunities for helping Latinos improve their standard of living, and foremost in that area is ensuring a college education is affordable for those who want it.

Ideologically, Latinos are more likely to consider themselves Conservative than are Democrats or DTS/other voters, they are more pro-life than the electorate as a whole, and are also more likely to attend church on a regular basis. However, one of the problems some Republicans may have in relating to Latinos is that for many Latinos, being Conservative is a way of life rather than a political agenda. Tone and priorities can make a difference for GOP candidates in winning Latino votes. This will require time and effort, but in the long run, more focus on issues that impact Latino's lives on a daily basis and less bombast on immigration and red meat issues will help win this growing segment of the electorate.

**Methodology.** The survey was conducted April 2-4, 2013, by telephone, using live interviewers among a representative sample of 400 Latino voters in 10 California Congressional Districts expected to be competitive in 2014; 3, 7, 10, 16, 21, 24, 26, 31, 36 and 52. Respondents were randomly selected from a list of Latino registered voters and all were offered the opportunity to complete the interview in English or Spanish. Thirty percent of the interviews were conducted among cell phones. Quotas were set for Congressional District, age, gender and party registration, based on voter registration. The potential sampling error is plus or minus 4.9% at the 95% confidence level.

Sample Demography (may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Party registration: Democrat 61%, Republican 20%, Decline to State/Other 20%.
- Philosophy: Conservative 33%, Moderate 38%, Liberal 22%, Don't know 7%.
- Age: 18-34 34%, 35-59 40%, 60+ 25%
- Gender: Male 46%, Female 55%