

TO: Interested parties
FROM: Geoff Garin, Guy Molyneux, Aileen Cardona
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RE: Winning the Immigration Debate During COVID-19

Results from two recently completed national surveys on behalf of the Center for American Progress Action Fund point to a striking upward trend in public support for immigrants and a resounding rejection of the Trump administration’s policies on immigration. The two surveys, conducted among representative cross sections of just over 1,000 registered voters each on April 10 to 14 and June 30 to July 5, reveal a growing advantage for progressives on key policy debates on immigration.

In particular, the surveys demonstrate strong support for key Democratic immigration priorities as Congress works to complete the next round of COVID-19 relief legislation.

- Voters rebuff the premise that citizens and those who file taxes with a taxpayer identification number (ITIN) in mixed-status households should be denied federal benefits during the pandemic simply because of the immigration status of other members of their households.
- The voting public supports proposals to extend legal status and/or a pathway to citizenship to immigrants who are providing essential services during the pandemic.
- At the same time, voters continue to strongly favor both the DACA and TPS programs and oppose efforts by the Trump administration to end protections for recipients under these programs.

Despite President Trump’s and Republicans’ efforts to the contrary, the coronavirus pandemic has served to bolster the public’s awareness about the contributions of both documented and undocumented immigrants and served

to provide additional reasons to support policies that are more welcoming of immigrants in the United States.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

1. Over the past three months—even as President Trump has made immigration restrictions a centerpiece of his coronavirus response—public sentiment on immigration has shifted away from the president and toward embracing progressive priorities. On question after question, we see marked improvement for Democrats and advocates of fair and humane immigration policies.

- Fifty-five percent (55%) of voters disapprove of the job Trump is doing on immigration, up from 50% in April.
- The proportion of voters who want to decrease immigration fell eight points, from 38% to 30%.
- A 61% majority say that immigrants contribute a great deal or a fair amount to the nation’s efforts to combat COVID-19, and 55% now recognize the contributions of undocumented immigrants, a remarkable 16-point increase since April.
- Voters’ top immigration goal today is “treating immigrants fairly and humanely” (42%).

2. Voters support extending financial relief benefits to mixed-status households and all persons who file taxes with a taxpayer identification number (ITIN), including undocumented immigrants.

Ensure that all U.S. citizens are eligible for federal financial relief even if a member of their household is an undocumented immigrant.

<i>Support</i>	63%
<i>Oppose</i>	28%
<i>Not sure</i>	9%

Make undocumented immigrants eligible for federal financial relief if they file their taxes with a taxpayer ID number

<i>Support</i>	60%
<i>Oppose</i>	33%
<i>Not sure</i>	7%

A minority of just 9% believe no one in mixed-status households should be eligible for assistance, which is the current policy under the CARES Act. Nine in 10 believe either that everyone in the household (35%) or citizens (56%) should be eligible.

Democrats win a debate with Republicans over including mixed-status households in federal relief programs.

Democrats in Congress have proposed making of families with both citizens and undocumented immigrants eligible for some cash assistance from federal coronavirus relief funds. Now you will see a pair of statements about this issue. Please indicate which statement you agree with more.

Democrats say: All Americans who pay into the system should receive cash assistance, regardless of who they live with or who they marry. It is wrong to discriminate against U.S. citizens based on who they marry or who their parents are.

Republicans say: It is wrong to take billions of dollars from U.S. taxpayers for a handout to people who broke our immigration laws--federal assistance should be reserved for Americans and legal residents.

<i>Agree with Democrats</i>	<i>54%</i>
<i>Agree with Republicans</i>	<i>46%</i>

3. There is strong support for providing legal status to a diverse group of essential workers because the public values their contributions as the country faces the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Nearly three-fourths of voters support a path to citizenship for these workers, more than those who favor just giving temporary legal status for the duration of the pandemic.

Provide legal status and a path to citizenship to undocumented immigrants who are working in critical infrastructure jobs or providing essential services to combat the coronavirus.

<i>Support</i>	<i>73%</i>
<i>Oppose</i>	<i>22%</i>
<i>Not sure</i>	<i>5%</i>

Provide legal status for the duration of the public health emergency to undocumented immigrants who are working in critical infrastructure jobs or providing essential services to combat the coronavirus

<i>Support</i>	64%
<i>Oppose</i>	28%
<i>Not sure</i>	8%

Democrats also convincingly win a debate with Republicans over a path to citizenship for essential workers.

Democrats in Congress have proposed providing a pathway to citizenship to undocumented immigrants who are currently working in an essential critical infrastructure job or providing essential services. Now you will see a pair of statements about this issue. Please indicate which statement you agree with more.

Democrats say: As our country works to rebuild our economy, immigrant workers who were essential in the pandemic are going to be essential to rebuilding our economy. We should extend a pathway to citizenship to essential workers now because we need them to help move our nation forward.

Republicans say: The Democrats want to reward people who entered our country illegally with citizenship, including many who could be public safety risks. We should not offer amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants, especially when it would jeopardize the economic and physical security of American citizens.

<i>Agree with Democrats</i>	58%
<i>Agree with Republicans</i>	42%

More broadly, voters see immigrants' contributions during the coronavirus as a convincing reason to support legal status for more immigrant workers, both for the debt of gratitude the country already owes them and the essential role they will continue to play as the nation rebuilds our economy.

When our country emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, we will owe a significant debt of gratitude to those who worked at great personal risk on the frontlines, regardless of their immigration status. (66% convincing)

During this crisis, immigrants across our nation, from janitors, to doctors, to farm workers, are working shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Americans to keep the country moving forward. (65% convincing)

4. Voters continue to voice strong support for DACA (70%) and TPS (71%), including large majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans.

Since 2012, there has been a government program to temporarily allow some undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, also known as Dreamers, to remain in the United States without being deported if they met certain conditions, including having no criminal record and either being a student, being in the military, or having earned a high school degree. This program is also known as the DACA program.

Based on what you know, do you support or oppose the DACA program?

<i>Support</i>	<i>70%</i>
<i>Oppose</i>	<i>21%</i>
<i>Not sure</i>	<i>9%</i>

DACA is supported by 82% of Democrats, 60% of independents, and 61% of Republicans.

Do you support or oppose this proposal by Democrats in Congress: Extend current work permits for people with TPS (Temporary Protected Status), a program only for immigrants already here who have been allowed to stay and work temporarily in the United States because they come from countries that are severely affected by violent conflict or natural disasters.

<i>Support</i>	<i>71%</i>
<i>Oppose</i>	<i>19%</i>
<i>Not sure</i>	<i>10%</i>

Despite the identification of this proposal with Democrats in Congress, it is supported by 64% of Republican voters, as well as by 73% of independents and 77% of Democrats.