



To: The Editorial Board
From: Frank Sharry, Executive Director of America's Voice
Date: October 8, 2010

Latino Voters Poised to Impact the Elections

Key Factors Will Influence Latino Turnout in 2010 Mid-Terms

Latino voters have the power to change the outcome of a number of crucial races in 2010. Whether they make the choice to vote or the choice to stay home will be decisive. Recent polls attempt to answer the all-important question of turnout. While it is too soon to tell whether Latino turnout will be up or down, the polls illuminate a number of factors that will determine the outcome.

Turnout Predictions Vary; Final Answer After Election Day: According to a recent Pew Hispanic Center poll, “half (51%) of Latino registered voters say they are absolutely certain they will vote in this year’s midterm election, while seven-in-ten (70%) of all registered voters say the same.” The latest Latino Decisions research, however, identifies 73% of Latino voters as “almost certain” they will go to the polls.

What’s going on here? Well, it’s notoriously difficult to predict Election Day turnout by asking people whether they plan to vote weeks or months before an election. Massive voter mobilization efforts targeting Latinos and naturalized citizens are just now kicking into high gear. And the Pew Hispanic Center poll was conducted from mid-August to mid-September, while the Latino Decisions research is much more recent—and shows an uptick in voter interest following the September congressional session.

We will wait until November 3rd to answer the question about Latino turnout in 2010. For now, here are the factors that will influence this result:

Like Other Americans, Latino Voters Are Frustrated and Angry with Lack of Progress on Key Issues: The lack of progress on many issues is frustrating Latino voters, and has a potential dampening effect on Latino voter turnout. As Matt Barreto, a political science professor and pollster for Latino Decisions said, “Latinos feel that on many of their key issues, promises were made and not delivered on.” In addition to feeling down about the economy and jobs, many Latino voters are also disappointed that promises to advance immigration reform were not realized.

Still, Latino Voters Who Care the Most about Immigration Are Getting Motivated to Vote: According to the recent Pew Hispanic Center poll, 66% of Latino registered voters say they have discussed the immigration debate with someone in the past year. This group is more likely to say they will vote in November (58%), compared to the group that has not followed the immigration debate as closely (39%). Similarly, polling released this summer by Dr. Ricardo Ramirez of the University of Southern California for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Education Fund (NALEO) found that 57% of Latinos in California, Colorado, Florida, and Texas said that “the current immigration debate” made them more likely to vote this November. Clearly, the national attention to Arizona’s anti-immigration law is having an effect on Latino political behavior heading into November—one that will help the Democratic Party and hurt the GOP.

Congressional Action on DREAM Increased Voter Interest, Support for Democratic Party: Latino Decisions’ weekly tracking polls show real results for the Democratic Party following the short DREAM Act debate in September, making it clear that when politicians lean into the issue, they galvanize support. According to polling released October 4, 72% of Latino voters said the Senate “should have passed” the DREAM Act as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill, while only 17% thought the Republican Party’s successful efforts to block it were “the right thing to do.” The poll also showed an increase in voters expressing an intention to vote, from 67% to 73%; more support for Democratic candidates seen as advancing the issue; and less support for Republicans seen as blocking it. Just imagine what would have happened if Congress had had a full-on immigration debate this year.

Immigration is a Defining, Personal Issue for Latino Voters: According to Latino Decisions, immigration is the second-most important issue voters look at when deciding who to vote for, behind the economy. Pew Hispanic Center asked the question a little differently, wondering which issues were “personally important” to voters, and immigration was lower on the list. However, in that survey, naturalized citizen voters were ten points more likely to support Democrats and eight points less likely to support Republicans than native-born Latinos. Immigrant Latino voters—those closest to the immigration debate—are the crucial swing voting group that nearly broke even for Bush in 2004, and swung wildly for Obama in 2008 after the GOP’s full conversion to an anti-immigrant platform.

Other polls have asked about the importance of immigration to Latino voters in different ways. In 2009, Bendixen & Amandi showed that 62% of Latino voters know someone who is undocumented, and 72% refuse to even consider voting for a candidate who advocates mass

deportation. And, millions of Latino citizens today are former undocumented immigrants who legalized their status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act and other laws, as [Latino Decisions](#) points out. Clearly, immigration is not just an issue Latinos hear about on the nightly news; it's a deeply personal issue, one that impacts their political behavior at a visceral level.

Voter Mobilization Efforts Are Gearing Up Now: Numerous national and local organizations that work with immigrants and Latinos have been conducting voter registration drives across the nation, and are now shifting to "Get Out the Vote." For example, the Campaign for Community Change is engaged in a robust voter engagement effort in ten swing states. The program features integrated deployment of direct mail, canvassing, phones, and online and paid media and will make over 2.5 million voter contacts this cycle. NCLR, NALEO, and other Latino organizations just announced their Vote for Respect campaign on October 6, and the re-launch of the historic Ya es Hora ¡Ve y Vota! Campaign, which includes the bilingual www.yaeshora.info website and (888) VE-Y-VOTA voter hotline. The NALEO Educational Fund is also contacting 250,000 low-propensity Latino voters in five states for its GOTV campaign. Democracia USA has registered almost 100,000 voters nationwide and the organization estimates that it will turn out 70,000 voters on Election Day. The We Are America Alliance is conducting a voter mobilization and education campaign in nearly 20 states, reaching out to over 700,000 current and potential voters, and looking to turnout nearly 200,000 voters on Election Day.

Mi Familia Vota Civic Participation Campaign signed up 21,000 Latino voters in Arizona to the Permanent Early Voter List--a 20% increase over the last cycle--and they as well as Promise Arizona's Faith, Hope, Vote campaign and others are now carrying out GOTV operations in state. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights surpassed its voter registration goal of 10,000 and has shifted into mobilization mode, working to turn out over 133,000 immigrant voters in November. The NC Equals project of the Latin American Coalition is shifting to GOTV operations in state, and there are coordinated state GOTV tables in Colorado, Nevada, and other locations. Additional operations will be announced in the coming days.

In 2010, Latino voters are poised to influence over [forty competitive races](#) whether they make the choice to show up or the choice to stay home, and they will have an even bigger impact in 2012. As the [results](#) of the 2008 elections and these new Latino polls show, when candidates demonize Latino families they lose crucial support, and when they lean into the issue they are rewarded.

The next four weeks will be crucial in determining whether Latino voters turn out to vote, and what impact they will have on the make-up of Congress and statehouses nationwide. Do Latinos see candidates who are fighting for them, or fighting each other? Do politicians embrace anti-Latino rhetoric and anti-immigration policies, or do they stand up for common sense immigration solutions? What impact will the struggling economy have on Latino turnout? Only time will tell, but candidates in both parties need to understand the factors that drive Latino political engagement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To speak with Frank Sharry, Executive Director; Lynn Tramonte, Deputy Director; or Maribel Hastings, Senior Advisor of America's Voice, please contact Michael Earls at 202-261-2388 or press@americasvoiceonline.org. Additionally, please find relevant background information below:

- **Power of the Latino Vote in America:** Includes a list of “Races to Watch”—forty-one battleground House, Senate and gubernatorial contests in 2010 where Latino voters will play a key role, assesses candidates’ stances on immigration in each of these forty one races, and details the congressional districts where Latino voting power is most concentrated.
http://americasvoiceonline.org/research/entry/the_power_of_the_latino_vote_in_america
- **Latino Decisions’ Public Opinion Polling:** Weekly tracking polls of Latino voter sentiment on a range of issues – including the immigration debate.
<http://latinodecisions.wordpress.com/>
- **The New Constituents:** Examines the role Latinos will play in determining Congressional apportionment following the 2010 Census in the eighteen states projected to gain or lose at least one congressional seat as a result of the Census.
http://amvoice.3cdn.net/cb6e7c434e0c1bd026_bim6y6dzt.pdf

###