Why Do Elephants Put their Heads in the Sand?

November 2011 Update

One year out from the 2012 election, the Republican Party’s stance on immigration—and what it means for their candidates’ ability to compete for Latino voters—is shaping up as one of the major storylines this election cycle.

As Republicans continue to embrace hard-right positions on immigration, the Party is distancing itself not only from the legacy of Ronald Reagan and other past Republican leaders, but also from Latino voters in numerous states that are shaping up to be key 2012 battlegrounds.

The brand image of the Republican Party as hostile and unwelcoming to Latino voters—reinforced by the GOP’s embrace of harsh state laws like Alabama’s—threatens Republican competitiveness with Latino voters in 2012 and beyond. Their failure to embrace a practical solution also sends a message to general-election voters that the Republican Party is more interested in political grand-standing than problem-solving.

With immigration a minor issue for a majority of non-Latino voters, and a defining, personal issue for a majority of Latino voters, the GOP’s position on immigration is self-defeating.

Read on for more on the Republican Party’s immigration stance in recent years, the positions embraced by current 2012 contenders, and the role immigration plays in influencing the Latino vote.
INTRODUCTION

The GOP on Immigration: An Anniversary and a Look Forward

November 2011 marks not only one year before the 2012 election, but also the 25-year anniversary of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which granted legal permanent residency to nearly 2.7 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

With the prominent role immigration has played thus far in the 2012 election cycle, it is worth remembering the words of a cherished Republican icon, President Ronald Reagan, upon signing this law: “The legalization provisions in this act will go far to improve the lives of a class of individuals who now must hide in the shadows, without access to many of the benefits of a free and open society.”

President Reagan also famously referred back to his vision for America in his farewell address to the nation. He called America a “shining city upon a hill,” saying, “And if there had to be city
walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and heart to get here.”

Such a policy approach and welcoming rhetoric stands in sharp contrast to the current crop of Republican presidential contenders, most Republicans in Congress, and many Republican state leaders, all of whom continue to promote deportation-only policies backed by anti-immigrant rhetoric. It says something about the current state of the Republican Party on immigration when a top-tier Republican presidential candidate like Herman Cain calls for an electrified fence and “real guns and real bullets” to deter border crossers, and then wonders why many aren’t laughing at his “joke.”

As Republican strategist Ana Navarro told POLITICO, “We have a unique opportunity to capitalize on a broken promise to the Latino community, and instead of capitalizing on that, we are fighting over who is tougher and meaner and stricter when it comes to immigration. We’re completely missing the boat.”

As we look forward to the 2012 election, and remember Ronald Reagan’s role in passing immigration legislation, it is notable how far right the Republican Party has moved on immigration. This narrow approach will have significant long-term political costs for the Party of Reagan.

Running Up Against Demographics and Recent History

The Republican Party’s stance on immigration is especially curious due to the fact that both demographic changes and recent electoral history would suggest that the GOP should be moving toward a pro-immigrant policy stance.

The Republican anti-immigrant push flies in the face of four facts:

1. The nation is undergoing massive demographic changes that are altering electoral maps and electorates;
2. Latino voters do care about and vote on immigration issues;
3. Recent electoral cycles have proven the dangers of embracing hard-line immigration stances; and
4. Outside of small slivers of the electorate, most Americans want immigration solutions, not Republican extremism on immigration.

Even former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, a leading architect of the Tea Party movement, seems to agree. He recently said, "Who in the Republican Party was the genius that said that now that we have identified the fastest-growing demographic in America, let's go out and alienate it?" Armey also drew a contrast between the immigration stance of President Reagan
and the current state of the Party on immigration, noting “Republicans have got to get off this goofiness...Ronald Reagan said, 'Tear down that wall.' Tom Tancredo said, 'Build that wall.' Who's right?”

**Changing Demographics & Political Calculus**

At the same time the Republican Party has moved to the right on immigration, the demographics of the nation have changed rapidly. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, “the Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010 and accounted for more than half of the total U.S. population increase of 27.3 million. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, or four times the nation's 9.7 percent growth rate.” Even many of the traditionally Republican states which have gained political power and new congressional seats as a result of the 2010 Census have done so because of the growth of the Latino population within their states.

Unsurprisingly, these demographic changes are altering the political calculus of what it takes to assemble a winning electoral coalition. Experts and strategists from both sides of the aisle agree: the Republican Party now needs to win at least 40% of the Latino vote in order to have a chance at winning a presidential election. Matthew Dowd, an advisor and strategist to President George W. Bush, said in reference to Republican presidential candidates, “If they don’t get back to a place where they are getting roughly 40 percent net of the Hispanic vote, there is no way they can ever win.”

2012 battleground states like Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico all have sizeable and growing Latino voter populations.

**Latino Voters Care About Immigration**

Despite assertions to the contrary from Rep. Lamar Smith and anti-immigration “think tanks” like the Center for Immigration Studies, Latino voters see immigration as a core priority. It is an issue that affects their families, their future and their sense of being fully accepted in America.

In June 2010, a LatinoMetrics poll on behalf of the Hispanic Federation and LULAC asked Latino voters for their “top issue of personal concern.” Immigration, at 24%, ranked a close second to jobs and the economy at 25%. In July 2010, polling for NALEO by Dr. Ricardo Ramirez of the University of Southern California asked, “What general issues would be most important to you in deciding whom to vote for?” Immigration ranked first at 27%, with the economy and jobs at 23.5%.

Polling has consistently shown that immigration is among the top voting issues for Latinos. In a 2010 election eve poll conducted by Latino Decisions in eight states, 83% of Latino voters said that immigration was an important issue in their voting decisions, and fully 60% said it was the most important issue or one of the most important issues. Polling of Latino voters in twelve states by Bendixen & Amandi found that 72% of Latino voters would not even consider voting
for a congressional candidate who was in favor of forcing most undocumented immigrants to leave the country (only 19% of Latino voters said they would even consider it).

In polling released in October 2011 by Latino Decisions and impreMedia, Latino voters ranked immigration reform along with the economy/jobs as “the most important issues facing the Latino community that [they] think Congress and the President should address” (tied at 42%). The same poll also showed that Republican candidates are far behind the curve. Only 9% of Latino voters said they were certain to vote for the Republican presidential nominee, and only 22% of Latino voters said they were certain or likely to do so.

**Not Learning from Recent History**

It is often said that the most important poll is the one that happens on Election Day. Latino voter turnout and support for Democratic candidates, aided by Republican demagoguery on the immigration issue, were large factors in the Democratic takeover of Congress in 2006; President Obama’s victory and congressional Democrats’ success in 2008; and in stopping the Republican wave from taking over the Senate in 2010. Now, the Republican Party appears to be ratcheting up its anti-immigrant bona fides just in time for 2012.

Latinos voted for the Democratic presidential nominee over the Republican by a margin of 59% to 40% in 2004 (Kerry-Bush) and 67% to 31% in 2008 (Obama-McCain). By 2010, Latinos voted for Democrats over Republicans by roughly 75%-25%, or a 3-1 margin, according to election eve polling of Latino voters conducted by Latino Decisions in eight key states (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, NM, NV, and TX). Overall, Latino immigrant voters (foreign-born, Latinos who are now naturalized citizens) supported Democrats by even larger margins.

The salience and political importance of the issue was evident in several key 2010 races. For example, Meg Whitman’s fumbling hypocrisy on immigration marked the turning point in her losing campaign for governor of California, and offered a case study of the dangers of allowing Republican primary politics to drive general election strategy. And in one of the most-watched match-ups of the 2010 cycle, Sharron Angle of Nevada bet the farm on her anti-immigrant wedge strategy—and lost handily to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who leaned into the immigration issue and won his race with 90% of the Latino vote.

In October 2011, U.S. Sen. Harry Reid touted the importance of appealing to Latino voters in the West and said “I would not be the majority leader in the United States Senate today, but for the Hispanics in Nevada.”

**Non-Latinos – Including Republicans – Want Immigration Solutions, Not GOP Extremism**

One would think by listening to the Republican presidential candidates that immigration is a top issue for the electorate, and that voters overwhelmingly oppose common sense immigration reform. But neither is the case – even among swing voters and Republicans.
In fact, there is a wide disparity in the level of importance Latinos and non-Latinos place on the immigration issue, making the current GOP position all the more illogical. For most Latinos, immigration is a motivating issue. For most non-Latinos, it is not. In fact, in Gallup national polling, only 3% of respondents named immigration as the “most important problem facing the country” in October 2011; only 4% named it as such in Gallup’s September 2011 poll.

What’s more, the vast majority of voters support comprehensive immigration reform—just like Latino voters. For example, a recent Fox News poll—a news outlet not renowned for its pro-immigration coverage—found that, by a 63-31% margin, Americans agreed that “illegal immigrants who have lived in the United States since they were children should be eligible for legal citizenship.”

May 2011 polling from Pew Research Center found overwhelming 72%-24% support for a path to legal citizenship for undocumented immigrants, “provided they pass background checks, pay fines and have jobs.” Notably, Pew divided voters into eight distinct subgroups across the ideological and demographic spectrum. Support for citizenship was at least 58% among seven of the eight subgroups, while the “staunch conservatives” subgroup split 49%-49% on the topic.

And a December 2009 survey from Benenson Strategy Group showed strong support for comprehensive immigration reform across the political spectrum, including among Republican voters. The results were consistent with a similar poll conducted in May 2009. For example, in the Benenson poll, when given three choices for how to deal with the 12 million immigrants then living in the U.S. illegally, 59% of Republican respondents said “they should be required to register, meet certain conditions, and eventually be allowed to apply for citizenship.” Thirteen percent of Republicans said “they should be legally allowed to stay on a temporary basis but not allowed to become U.S. citizens,” and only 27% said “they must leave the country.”

The fact is, candidates could appeal to both Latino and non-Latino voters with the same common sense, practical policy—if only they could see past the loudest, angriest voices during the primary campaigns.

“Attrition Through Enforcement” is Just a Nicer Way of Saying Mass Deportation

At the Republican primary presidential debate in September 2011, Noticiero Telemundo anchor José Díaz-Balart challenged the Republican candidates to explain what they propose doing about the estimated 11 million undocumented people in the nation, provided that the border was secure to their satisfaction. The candidate field offered little more than rhetorical fumbling in response to this question, but the general thrust of their responses was this: to continue to enforce the law and hope that millions of people would leave the country either through government action or on their own.

The failure of political leaders to deal with immigration reform has led to the situation we are in today: millions of people living in the country without immigration status or any way to become
legal. While most candidates seem to realize that governmental deportations of every single undocumented immigrant would be extremely expensive, their preferred policy—enforcing immigration laws aggressively and hoping those who can’t be deported will pack up and leave, sometimes called “attrition through enforcement”—is no more desirable an option.

The “attrition through enforcement” agenda, championed by anti-immigrant groups and politicians, is now playing out in Alabama following implementation of that state’s extreme anti-immigrant law. From decimating the state’s agriculture sector to damaging tourism to destroying the state’s hard-earned efforts to move past its civil rights-era reputation, Alabama is seeing firsthand that enforcement-only approaches have consequences. Arizona learned a similar lesson after Republican Governor Jan Brewer signed its “papers, please” immigration law in April 2010. Even though many key provisions of the Arizona law were blocked by the courts, the costs to the state have been huge. A July 2011 report from the Center for American Progress on the economic impact of Arizona’s 2010 immigration law found that direct tourism losses had already reached at least $141 million and that “Fewer tourists has meant that an incredible 2,761 jobs, $253 million in economic output, and $9.4 million in tax revenues have disappeared, with the potential for far worse results in the future.”

Thus far in the 2012 cycle, the only Republican presidential candidate to take a position on the Alabama law is Herman Cain, who endorsed Alabama’s approach, saying, “Under the Cain presidency, the Department of Justice would not be suing Alabama. The Department of Justice would be helping Alabama.” With the state of Alabama essentially implementing the candidates’ vision for immigration policy, it’s curious that the others have not yet spoken up about this law. Perhaps this is a sign that even they realize that their positions on immigration are hurting them with Latinos.

Now that the law is in effect, the public deserves to hear each candidate articulate whether he or she is for or against the Alabama law—and all of its consequences.

**THE 2012 GOP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES: WHERE THEY STAND ON IMMIGRATION**

As documented here, the Republican candidate field has moved far to the anti-immigrant right end of the spectrum. Yet early returns from outside groups allied with Republican causes show that the Party will nonetheless attempt to speak to Latino voters in 2012. For example, Spanish-language advertising buys from Republican-allied Super PACs show that the Party may try to have it both ways when it comes to immigration and Latino voters. Republicans may try to present a less incendiary image to Latino voters through large advertising buys, while telling hard-line primary voters that their policies haven’t changed one bit.

But their records and their rhetoric are in black and white for all to see. Below are snapshots of the current Republican presidential candidates’ positions on immigration reform, updated through October 31, 2011.
MICHELE BACHMANN

Michele Bachmann is a true believer in deportation-only policies and skilled at appealing to the most extreme elements of the base – as she showed when she engaged in racial dog-whistling by praising the immigration laws of the 1950s. She has been increasingly vocal about her hard-line views on immigration, including holding immigration-focused events in the key early caucus state of Iowa.

HER RECORD

• **Bachmann’s voting record over her career has** earned her an A from extreme anti-immigrant group NumbersUSA. Bachmann is a member of the anti-immigrant House Immigration Reform Caucus. She cosponsored the Birthright Citizenship Act of 2009 in the 111th Congress, but has not yet signed on as a cosponsor of the 2011 version in this Congress.

• **Bachmann called for an illegal boycott of the 2010 Census to make a point about immigration.** In 2010, according to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Bachmann “called for a boycott of the census unless it includes a question about resident status.”

• **Federal PAC Immigrants’ List named Bachmann to its Immigration Hall of Shame in April 2011.** The group cited Bachmann’s spreading of the 2010 rumor that Phoenix is the “kidnapping capital of the United States,” and a 2008 interview in which she told Bill O’Reilly that all local cops should check immigration status of everyone they stopped.

2012 CAMPAIGN

• **In August 2011, Bachmann referred to native-born U.S. citizen children of undocumented immigrants as “people who are in the United States illegally” and said taxpayers should not support them.** During a campaign appearance in South Carolina in August, Bachmann said she would support legislation to (in the words of CNN) “stop the ‘anchor baby’ problem.” She went on to say that when children are born in the U.S. to undocumented parents, “A whole new set of implications arise for the United States. I do not believe that the American taxpayer should be paying benefits to people who are in the United States illegally.”

• **Bachmann said that if the United States did not build “a fence on every part of that border,” it would give up its national sovereignty.** When asked about border security at the September 7th MSNBC debate, Bachmann said that “In Mexico right now, we’re dealing with narco-terrorists.” She continued, “To not build a border or a fence on every part of that border would be, in effect, to yield United States sovereignty not only to our nation anymore, but to yield it to another nation. That we cannot do.”
• Bachmann showed off her racial dog-whistling skills by praising early-20th-century immigration laws that effectively excluded immigrants of color. When asked by an MSNBC moderator at the September 7th debate what to do with undocumented immigrants already here, Bachmann claimed that “our immigration law worked beautifully back in the 1950s, up until the early 1960s.” While that date might seem innocuous to most people, those familiar with the history of our immigration system knew that Bachmann was praising a system based on racial quotas that was explicitly designed to keep non-European immigrants out of the country. Before the Immigration and Nationality Act (which Bachmann was implicitly blaming for the failures of the current system) passed in 1965, laws like the National Origins Act and Asian Exclusion Act based the number of immigrants who were allowed to enter the U.S. on the country’s ethnic makeup as of 1890. It was virtually impossible for nonwhites to immigrate under the system Bachmann praises for working “beautifully.”

• Bachmann called in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students “madness.” During the September 22nd Fox News-Google debate, Bachmann reiterated her support for building a fence “on every foot, on every inch of our southern border” to protect “sovereignty.” She then added: “And here's the other thing I would do. I would not allow taxpayer-funded benefits for illegal aliens or for their children. That's a madness. End the madness for illegal aliens to come into the United States of America.”

• Bachmann attempted to use Perry, Iowa as an illustration of “the consequences of our weak immigration laws”—but Republicans in Perry disagree. In a clear jab to Rick Perry, Bachmann visited the town of Perry, Iowa in October to speak about immigration and border security. In the speech, she claimed that illegal immigration cost taxpayers $113 billion each year, and promised to build a “secure double fence” along the U.S./Mexico border. Bachmann campaign spokeswoman Alice Stewart explained Bachmann’s choice by telling the Des Moines Register that “Perry, Iowa, is dealing with the consequences of our weak immigration laws”—referring to the 33% Hispanic population in Perry, IA. However, a Republican county supervisor named Mark Hansen rebuked Bachmann’s campaign for the choice: “What I think is kind of funny is Bachmann’s chosen Perry to diss Perry. But she doesn’t have any understanding of what the Hispanic population has meant for Perry, Iowa.”

HERMAN CAIN

Not once, but twice, Herman Cain has gotten in trouble for proposing extreme and violent policies in the name of “border security,” and has tried to get away with it by claiming he was making a joke. Cain might not have so much difficulty getting the public to understand his unusual sense of humor if he’d made any serious proposals on the campaign trail about how to fix our broken immigration system. As it is, the “jokes” are representative of the stance Cain’s shown on immigration reform. He enthusiastically embraces mass deportation policies—most
notably, when he became the first (and so far only) presidential candidate to endorse Alabama’s extreme anti-immigrant law, HB 56.

2012 CAMPAIGN

• **After President Obama joked that Republicans would call for “a moat with alligators” on the border, Cain endorsed the idea.** In May 2011, President Obama gave a speech on immigration in El Paso where he joked about Republicans’ ever-escalating demands for border security: “Maybe they’ll need a moat. Maybe they want alligators in the moat.” In June 2011, speaking in Iowa (as reported by Think Progress), Herman Cain described his plan for a border fence as follows: “It will be a twenty foot wall, barbed wire, electrified on the top, and on this side of the fence, I’ll have that moat that President Obama talked about. And I would put those alligators in that moat!” When asked at a later GOP debate if he was serious, Cain said that “America needs to learn how to take a joke” but maintained that “we must secure the border with whatever means necessary.”

• **Cain said that “promoting the path to citizenship that we already have” will solve the immigration problem.** On a Fox News appearance in May 2011, Cain explained that the following steps were necessary to address immigration: increasing border security and interior enforcement, allowing states to make their own immigration enforcement laws, and “Promoting the path to citizenship that we already have. We don't need a new path.” During his campaign announcement, according to the *Augusta Chronicle*, Cain called for promoting “immigration through the front door, and not through the back door, not through the side door. We don't need a new path to citizenship. We already have one! Why don't you ask the millions of people who came here legally? They'll tell ya!”

• **Cain proposed that the only thing to do with the 11 million undocumented immigrants already here is to “empower the states to do what the federal government can't do, hasn’t done, and will not do” to crack down.** During the Palmetto Freedom Forum in September 2011, candidates were questioned by a panel including Rep. Steve King (R-iA), one of the champions of anti-immigrant policy in the House of Representatives. When King asked Cain if he opposed “amnesty in every form,” Cain answered that he did, and proceeded to outline the three steps from his platform above. However, he added a fourth step: “fourthly, what I would do with those illegal aliens that are already here, empower the states to do what the federal government can't do, hasn't done, and will not do.” This rhetoric aligns closely with King’s and other advocates of the deportation-only strategy known as “attrition through enforcement,” which holds that most of the undocumented immigrants currently in the country should leave, and can be forced to do so through aggressive anti-immigrant policies.

• **Cain called for an electric fence and “real guns with real bullets” at the border; in the speech, he acknowledged some thought his idea was “insensitive” but said “I’m not worried about being insensitive.”** At a campaign rally in Tennessee in October 2011, Cain said, “We’ll have a real (border) fence. 20 feet high, with barbed wire. Electrified! With a
sign on the other side that says, ‘It can kill you!’ Then I get criticized, ‘Mr. Cain, that’s insensitive.’ What do you mean, ‘insensitive’? What’s insensitive is when they come to the United States, across our border, and kill our citizens, and kill our border patrol people. That’s insensitive! And I’m not worried about being insensitive to tell people to stop sneaking into America!” The crowd applauded and cheered throughout Cain’s remarks, especially after he said “electrified.” Cain also called for border patrol agents to use “real guns with real bullets” on immigrants.

- After trying to play it off as a joke, Cain embraced the electric fence proposal again after meeting with anti-immigrant hero Sheriff Joe Arpaio. When David Gregory of “Meet the Press” asked Cain about the electric fence proposal the day after the Tennessee rally, Cain interrupted him: “That’s a joke, David. It’s a joke. That’s a joke. That’s not a serious plan.” Two days later, however, Cain met with Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona, a hero of the anti-immigrant movement whose tactics have damaged civil rights and public safety. Speaking with reporters after the meeting, Cain initially apologized for the “joke,” but changed his tune when a reporter pointed out he didn’t appear to be joking in the video footage of the speech. “You’re right,” Cain said, and added that the border fence “might still be electrified.”

- Cain said that if he were president, “the Justice Department would be helping Alabama” enforce its extreme anti-immigrant law HB 56. After Alabama started to enforce most of its “Arizona-plus” law HB 56 at the beginning of October, the devastating consequences of the law for immigrant and citizen Latino families, farmers and small businesses began to make headlines throughout the country. As civil rights leaders expressed their outrage and the U.S. Department of Justice sued Alabama over the law’s constitutionality, the GOP’s presidential candidates stayed silent for weeks. In late October, Cain became the first candidate to express support for the Alabama law by contrasting himself with the Obama Administration: “Under the Cain presidency, the Department of Justice would not be suing Alabama. The Department of Justice would be helping Alabama.”

**NEWT GINGRICH**

Like his history on many issues, Newt Gingrich has been all over the map on immigration and the political implications of Latino outreach. In recent years, Gingrich has made an effort to reach out to conservative Latinos—which might explain why, unlike most of his opponents, he has continued to articulate a desire to legalize at least some undocumented immigrants throughout the 2012 campaign. Yet Gingrich also helped to mobilize opposition to the 2007 version of comprehensive immigration reform, and hasn’t shied away from making ridiculous or impractical proposals on the campaign trail to look “tough” on the issue.

**HIS RECORD**

- When he was Speaker of the House, Gingrich claimed that “liberals cannot win an honest election” and only won because of undocumented immigrant voters. In 1997, according to
the *Eugene Register-Guard*, “House Speaker Newt Gingrich said Saturday that illegal voting is rampant in the United States because illegal immigrants are voting and because citizens are voting more than once. ‘Liberals cannot win an honest election with only American voters and only American money inside the law,’ Gingrich R-Ga., told a group of about 20 state and local lawmakers in his more district north of Atlanta.”

- **In 2006, Gingrich supported a path to citizenship for anyone who could pass a history test.** According to the *Arizona Republic*, “Gingrich said an undocumented worker should be able to become a U.S. citizen but said such a person should be required to meet two standards: pass a test on American history in English and give up voting in any other nation.”

- **In 2007, Gingrich opposed comprehensive immigration reform, claiming “terrorists and gang members” would receive legal status.** In 2007, Gingrich recorded a video for the interest group Citizens United, urging conservatives to call their legislators and oppose the McCain-Kennedy comprehensive immigration reform bill. In the video, he claimed that the bill would not improve border security, and that it would allow “potential terrorists and gang members” to get legal status.

- **In 2009, Gingrich launched a bilingual news site to appeal to Latinos.** The website, called *The Americano*, is an arm of Gingrich’s firm Gingrich Communications. Editor Sylvia Garcia told *Time* when the website launched that “There really isn’t any media that is covering conservative values for Hispanics. Everything you see is very one-sided.” Gingrich and *The Americano* hosted a forum on Latino issues in December 2010.

- **In December 2010, Gingrich called for the government to have an entirely legal workforce by 2020, and endorsed immigration reform that fell “between deportation and amnesty.”** At a forum for Latino issues sponsored by *The Americano*, Gingrich called for immigration reform that would ensure that all workers in the United States are here legally by 2020. He stressed that “we’re not going to deport 11 million people” and that “there has to be some zone between deportation and amnesty.”

**2012 CAMPAIGN**

- **As a presidential candidate, Gingrich is calling for “citizen boards” to determine which individuals should stay and which should be deported.** During an interview with Jorge Ramos on Univision’s *Al Punto*, Gingrich explained that he did not want to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country, and suggested an equivalent to World War II-era draft boards to determine which immigrants should stay and which should go: “We may want to think about a citizen board that can actually look at things and decide, is this a person that came in two months ago and doesn’t nearly have any ties here? Or is this a person who clearly is integrated into the society but unfortunately has been undocumented, therefore, we have to rethink how we are approaching them.”
• Still, Gingrich has adopted very strident rhetoric and radical ideas on the issue during debates. He called to ship half of all Department of Homeland Security employees in Washington to the U.S./Mexico border. During an August 2011 GOP presidential debate, Gingrich called President Obama’s line about placing “alligators” at the border “the perfect symbol of his failure as a leader.” Gingrich said that Obama “failed to get any immigration reform through when he controlled the Senate and he controlled us. He could ram through Obamacare, but he couldn’t deal with immigration. Now he has the Republicans in the House in charge, and he descends to a level of attack which I think is very sad for a president of the United States on an issue like this.” As president, Gingrich said, he would “take as many people from Homeland Security’s bureaucracy in Washington and move them to Texas, Arizona and New Mexico, as are needed, to control the border.” On September 5th, at the Palmetto Freedom Forum, he specified that he wanted to ship “half the people currently serving in Washington” to the border.

• Gingrich called for English to become the official language, saying the alternative was “a country whose elites are totally confused and are prepared to give up on being an American.” At the August 2011 debate, Gingrich said, “We should have English as the official language of government.” At the Palmetto Freedom Forum the next month, he restated this position, saying that the United States would not be able to “absorb” future immigrants if current immigrants didn’t assimilate: “When you have a country which is proud of its history, which is proud of its language, which is comfortable saying to people, come to America to be Americans, you can absorb more people than if you have a country whose elites are totally confused and are prepared to give up on being an American...When you realize that there are over 200 languages spoken in the Chicago school system, there are over 180 languages spoken at Miami-Dade Junior College, it’s why I favor English as the official language of government.”

• Gingrich called to “outsource” immigration policy to credit-card companies. During the September 7th debate, Gingrich said that “We ought to outsource it, frankly, to American Express, Visa, and MasterCard, so there’s no counterfeiting, which there will be with the federal government.” However, he was the only candidate to acknowledge the 11 million undocumented immigrants already here, and call for dealing with them “in a more humane way” than mass deportation.

JON HUNTSMAN

While he was governor of Utah, Jon Huntsman worked with then-Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano to craft a resolution for the Western Governors’ Association that supported comprehensive reform. His record as governor balances expanded regulation of employers with support for in-state tuition access for undocumented immigrant students.

HIS RECORD
• In 2006, as governor of Utah, Huntsman and Janet Napolitano co-authored a Western Governors’ Association resolution calling for comprehensive immigration reform. The resolution declared that “Western Governors support the development of a comprehensive national immigration policy.” It rejected “blanket amnesty,” but left open the possibility of support for a path to citizenship that included “appropriate sanctions” for the undocumented. It also called for a temporary guest worker program, in addition to increased border and workplace enforcement and reducing the backlog for legal immigration.

• As governor, Huntsman signed a bill requiring state contractors to use E-Verify. In 2008, Huntsman signed an immigration bill that (among other provisions) required all public employers and contractors to use the federal E-Verify system to check the immigration status of newly-hired employees.

• Huntsman also supported in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants and opposed efforts to repeal it. In 2007, Republicans in the Utah state legislature pushed a proposal to repeal in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants (which Utah already provided). Huntsman opposed repeal: according to the Associated Press, he said that “I’m going to fight it” and that he would “very seriously consider vetoing” the bill. The proposal did not pass.

2012 CAMPAIGN

• On the campaign trail, Huntsman initially opposed mass deportation and said a border fence “repulses” him... Speaking in New Hampshire in May 2011, Huntsman said that “the thought of a fence to some extent repulses me, because it is not consistent with ... the image that we projected from the very beginning to the rest of the world...But the situation is such today that I don’t think we have a choice, and before we begin the conversation of processing 11 or 12 million undocumented workers, we’ve got to secure the border.” He clearly supported allowing at least some undocumented immigrants to obtain legal status, saying “There’s got to be an alternative rather than sending people back. That’s unrealistic.”

• ...but then adopted a harder line. When asked at the August 2011 Fox News debate if this statement meant he supported “citizenship for illegal aliens,” he said, “When elected president, I’m simply going to prove to the American people that we can secure the border. That’s what they want done. And I’m not going to talk about anything else until we get it done.” He added that “once that is done, then we can move on. But this discussion has zero in the way of any intellectual credibility until such time as we secure the border.”

GARY JOHNSON

Gary Johnson managed to avoid taking many public positions on immigration as governor of New Mexico in the 1990s. As a presidential candidate, he has stressed the economic contributions of immigrants and the need for a guest worker program, in contrast to the rest of
the Republican field. However, Johnson remains a long-shot contender and hasn’t been included in several of the recent Republican debates.

2012 CAMPAIGN

• Johnson said he would have vetoed Arizona’s SB 1070 because he worries it “will lead to racial profiling.” In April 2011, according to the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, Johnson said that he would not have signed Arizona’s SB 1070 anti-immigration law, saying “I think it will lead to racial profiling.”

• Johnson claims mass deportation would lead to an “economic 9-11.” At an appearance in July 2010, according to the Ruidoso News, Johnson said that deporting all undocumented immigrants “would be equivalent to an economic 9-11. They are here renting, working and buying.”

• Johnson does not support citizenship for undocumented immigrants, but supports allowing them to receive temporary status as guest workers. In an interview with the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel in April 2011, Johnson said that “We should make it as easy as possible for somebody that wants to come into this country and work to get a work visa. Not citizenship, not a green card, permanent non-resident status, but a work visa.” His guest-worker program, according to the Santa Fe New Mexican, would require immigrants to pay income taxes and pay for their own health insurance, and would allow them to stay in the country for two years.

RON PAUL

Ron Paul’s record in the House of Representatives has been consistently anti-immigrant—including support for repealing birthright citizenship. However, a libertarian streak has run through some of his immigration stances, including opposition to mandatory E-Verify legislation.

HIS RECORD

• As a member of the House of Representatives, Paul voted for the aggressive enforcement-only “Sensenbrenner bill” in 2005. The bill would have criminalized undocumented immigrants and anyone, even church groups and pastors, who provided “aid” to them. It was not taken up by the Senate, which instead passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2006.

• In 2005 and 2007, Paul sponsored bills in the House amending the Constitution to eliminate birthright citizenship for children of undocumented immigrants. Paul was the main sponsor of H. J. Res. 16 in 2005 and H.J. Res 46 in 2007, both of which sought to amend the 14th Amendment of the Constitution to limit the Constitutional guarantee of
citizenship for all children born in the United States by excluding children of undocumented parents.

- **Paul voted against the DREAM Act in the House in 2010.**

**2012 CAMPAIGN**

- **Paul has declared his opposition to E-Verify because he does not want businesses to be “policemen.”** At a presidential debate in August 2011, Paul was asked why he opposed “a system that requires employers to verify the immigration status of their workers.” (The question was a reference to the electronic E-Verify system that other congressional Republicans are trying to make mandatory, but current federal law already requires all businesses to check the legal status of their employees). Paul said that “I don’t like putting the burden on our businessmen to be the policemen. That means he has to be policing activity.” He added that despite his harsh position against undocumented immigrants, “if a church helps them and feeds them, we don’t blame the church, or at least we shouldn’t in a free society.”

- **Paul called to bring troops back from Afghanistan and Iraq and put them on the border instead.** During the August 11th debate, Paul said we should, “pay less attention to the borders between Afghanistan and Iraq and Pakistan and bring our troops home and deal with the border. But why do we pay more attention to the borders overseas and less attention to the borders here at home?”

- **Paul revealed that his opposition to “amnesty” for undocumented immigrants stems from not wanting them to become voters.** At the August presidential debate, Paul said straightforwardly, “I don’t think that we should give amnesty and they become voters.” Like several similarly revealing statements Republican politicians have made, this illuminated the fear behind much cynical Republican opposition to comprehensive immigration reform: that Democrats will win the support of 11 million new Latino voters.

- **Paul said he doesn’t think that harsh enforcement tactics are “what America is all about;” called new ID burdens “a penalty against the American people.”** During the September 7th MSNBC debate, Paul said, “the people who want big fences and guns, sure, we can secure the borders -- a barbed-wire fence with machine guns, that would do the trick. I don't believe that's what America is all about. I just really don't...People are worrying about jobs. But every time you think about this toughness on the border and I.D. cards and real IDs, think that it's a penalty against the American people, too.” He went on to explain that he was worried about the border fence being used to keep Americans in.

**RICK PERRY**

The consistent attacks Rick Perry has faced from other candidates for his immigration stance throughout the fall of 2011 say more about how far the Republican Party has tacked to the right
on the issue than they do about Rick Perry. In fact, Perry's hard-line positions on border security, his support of Arizona-style immigration provisions, and his opposition to the federal DREAM Act add up to a candidate who is far from a moderate in the style of Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush on the issue.

**HIS RECORD**

- **Perry maintains that a bill like Arizona’s SB 1070 would be wrong for Texas, but twice tried to pass a bill including similar provisions.** Perry opposed SB 1070 when it was passed in 2010, and has said on the campaign trail (according to Talking Points Memo) that “I didn't think that for the state of Texas an Arizona-exact law was right for the state of Texas. I didn't want to make our law enforcement officers federal immigration officers.” Still, in 2011 Perry made two efforts to pass a bill that would outlaw “sanctuary cities,” once during a January “emergency session” and again in June. The bill was sharply criticized by Latino groups and law enforcement officials around the state, who said that allowing police officers to ask about immigration status would have a similar effect as Arizona’s SB 1070. Additionally, when Perry was asked to name what cities in Texas had “sanctuary policies,” he couldn't name any.

- **Perry signed the Texas DREAM Act in 2001, and continues to defend the bill. But Perry opposes the federal DREAM Act, a bill that would allow those same students who graduate from Texas colleges to work legally in the country.** He told the New Hampshire Sunday News in July 2011 that “to punish these young Texans for their parents' actions is not what America has always been about.” But, in that interview, he also said that he opposes the federal DREAM Act. In an attempt to explain this contradiction, Perry told conservative radio host Mark Levin in September that “it ought to be a state-by-state-issue” – missing the point completely. Texas students who benefit from the state law Perry supports have no way of entering the workforce and contributing legally after graduation unless the federal DREAM Act becomes law. Furthermore, while the current fight over the Texas DREAM Act has focused on granting in-state tuition to undocumented students, the version of the federal DREAM Act that passed the House of Representatives and got 55 votes in the Senate in 2010 did not mandate that states grant in-state tuition to DREAM beneficiaries—it allowed states to make that decision on their own, just as Perry says they should be able to do.

**2012 CAMPAIGN**

- **Perry supports a path to citizenship for military veterans only.** Despite his stated opposition to the federal DREAM Act, on the campaign trail in South Carolina in August, according to Talking Points Memo, Perry endorsed a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who serve in the military: “I think there is a path to citizenship for those young men and women who have served their country. That is a very unique set of individuals, and different than folks who have come here illegally and not given back in that particular way.”
Despite being criticized for questioning the wisdom of a full wall along our southern border, Perry supports a border build-up. He wants “strategic fencing,” drone aircraft and 4,500 more federal troops on the border. In an August 2011 appearance in New Hampshire, Perry laughed off the Obama Administration’s evidence that the border is more secure than it has ever been. Perry said, “I have no idea, maybe he was talking about the Canadian border. I will assure you one thing, if I am president of the United States, the border will be secure.” However, he did not bother to explain why the Obama Administration was wrong. In a September 2011 interview with conservative radio host Mark Levin, Perry called to secure the border using “boots on the ground” and “aviation assets”—meaning unmanned drone aircraft. He rejected the idea of building a wall across the entire border for cost reasons, but supported “strategic fencing” in some regions. In a town hall meeting in South Carolina, Perry elaborated on his “boots on the ground” remarks, saying that he wanted to put 4,500 more federal agents on the border and station National Guard troops there while those agents were being trained. (Perry neglected to clarify that there are already 16,974 Border Patrol agents stationed on the southwest border as of fiscal year 2010, and that President Obama sent 1,200 “emergency” National Guard troops to the border in August 2010.)

Notorious anti-immigrant Sheriff Joe Arpaio claims that Perry called him up for immigration advice. In September, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio – whose extreme (and ineffective) immigration tactics provided the model for his home state of Arizona’s law SB 1070 – tweeted that he’d gotten a call at home from Perry, and talked “especially about immigration and other matters.” Arpaio claims he’s also been contacted by the Romney and Bachmann campaigns, and met with Herman Cain in October.

Perry got into hot water over his defense of the Texas in-state tuition bill for undocumented immigrant students. During the September 22nd presidential debate, Perry stood up to continued attacks on the Texas DREAM Act from Mitt Romney and other candidates: “If you say that we should not educate children who have come into our state for no other reason that they have been brought there by no fault of their own, I don’t think you have a heart.” The debate audience booed him loudly, and the line dominated post-debate press coverage. As hard-line conservative activists continued to sour on Perry over the next few weeks, they frequently cited his position on in-state tuition as the reason for their disapproval. In an interview with conservative website Newsmax the following week, Perry said he regretted the rhetoric he’d used in the debate: “I probably chose a poor word to explain that, For people who don’t want their state to be giving tuition to illegal aliens, illegal immigrants in this country, that’s their call, and I respect that...I was probably a bit over-passionate by using that word. And it was inappropriate.”

Perry tried to distract from attacks on the Texas DREAM Act by appealing to right-wing paranoia about undocumented immigrants voting. At several campaign stops in Iowa in October, Perry attempted to bolster his credibility as an immigration hardliner by pointing to a law he had passed in Texas requiring voters to show identification at the polls. “Legal
votes should not be cancelled out by illegal ones,” he said. The spectre of “illegal votes” has been raised by many hard-line Republicans in border states.

• Perry launched a counterattack on Mitt Romney by accusing him of hiring undocumented workers. During the October 19th CNN Western Republicans debate, Perry turned a question about uninsured children in Texas into a diatribe about undocumented immigration, then reminded Romney of his history of hiring a landscaper that employed undocumented workers. (See section on Mitt Romney for details.) Turning Romney’s attack on him (that in-state tuition is a “magnet” for undocumented immigration) on its head, Perry said, “There is a magnet. And it’s called jobs. And those people that hire illegals ought to be penalized. And Mitt, you lose all of your standing, from my perspective, because you hired illegals in your home and you knew about it for a year. And the idea that you stand here before us and talk about that you’re strong on immigration is on its face the height of hypocrisy.” Unfortunately, Perry did not mention the name of the landscaping firm Romney had employed: Community Lawn Services with a Heart.

• Perry also attempted to smear Romney over health care for undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts. In late October, the Perry campaign heavily promoted a Los Angeles Times report that the Massachusetts health-care law Romney signed in 2006 allowed undocumented immigrants to get needed medical services. Romney's campaign retorted by showing that Texas also allowed undocumented immigrants access to some health programs.

• Perry has sharpened his defense of the in-state tuition bill in recent weeks, contrasting “tax wasters” with “tax payers.” In late October, Perry started to use the following language to defend his in-state tuition bill. According to the Washington Post, Perry said, “Texas had a decision to make: Are we going to kick these young people to the curb and pay for their existence in our state through social programs or some other type of government dollars — up to and including incarceration? Or are we going to require that they pursue United States citizenship and pay full in-state tuition? Are we gonna create tax wasters or are we gonna create tax payers?”

MITT ROMNEY

Mitt Romney has made immigration the centerpiece of his attack on his rival for the nomination, Rick Perry. In the process, Romney has attempted to portray himself as one of the most hard-line immigration candidates in the 2012 Republican field. Romney's attacks on Perry provided the opportunity to talk about his own enforcement-only record as governor of Massachusetts and won him the endorsements of anti-immigrant champions. However, Romney has not always been a vocal anti-immigrant policymaker: he supported President Bush's comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2006, before turning against the Senate reform bill in 2007.
As the presumptive Republican frontrunner, Romney’s current stance on immigration could hurt him among Latino voters. Lionel Sosa, a Republican strategist who worked for George W. Bush and John McCain, predicted to the New York Times that Romney “can make as many trips to Florida and New Mexico and Colorado and other swing states that have a large Latino population, but he can write off the Latino vote. He’s not going to gain it again.”

HIS RECORD

• **As governor, Romney vetoed a state DREAM Act.** In 2004, Romney vetoed a bill that would have allowed undocumented students living in Massachusetts to receive in-state tuition at public universities. According to the Boston Globe, a spokesperson for Romney said that “The Commonwealth should not make it easier for aliens to violate federal immigration laws.” During the 2008 presidential primary, he used this issue to attack Mike Huckabee, who had supported a similar bill in Arkansas.

• **Governor Romney signed an agreement deputizing Massachusetts state police to enforce federal immigration law.** Just before leaving office in December 2006, Romney signed a 287(g) agreement with the federal government to deputize a squad of thirty state troopers to enforce federal immigration law. Before the agreement was implemented, however, his successor Deval Patrick modified it so that state troopers would no longer be involved in immigration enforcement.

• **An exposé revealed that Romney’s landscaper hired undocumented immigrants in 2006.** Romney continued to hire the company until a follow-up article a year later. Romney claims he instructed the owner to check his employees’ status; the owner didn’t recall anything of the kind. In December 2006, the Boston Globe ran a front-page story showing that the landscaping company he had used for a decade, Community Lawn Services with a Heart, employed several undocumented immigrants who had regularly worked on Romney’s property. In December 2007, the Globe discovered that he was still using the company, and that the company was still employing undocumented workers. When Globe reporters asked Romney for comment, he said he would issue a statement later; the statement, released that night, said that Romney had just fired the company after learning that it was continuing to employ undocumented workers (presumably from the reporters who asked him to comment). In the statement, Romney claimed that “‘After this same issue arose last year, I gave the company a second chance with very specific conditions. They were instructed to make sure people working for the company were of legal status.’” The owner of the company, however, maintained that Romney never presented him with such conditions. When the Globe asked the owner if Romney or his family had been wary to rehire his company, he asked the reporter “Why would they have any problem?”

• **In 2005, Romney called President Bush’s immigration proposal, which included a path to citizenship, a “reasonable proposal” and distinguished it from “amnesty.”** During an interview with the Boston Globe in November 2005, Romney said that “I think that an amnesty program is one which all of the illegal immigrants who are here are now citizens
and walk in and get your citizenship. What the President has proposed and what Senator McCain and Cornyn have proposed are quite different from that...those are the things that are being considered, and I think that those are reasonable proposals.”

- **In 2006, Romney explicitly endorsed a path to citizenship.** In comments to reporters in March 2006, while the Senate was debating the McCain-Kennedy comprehensive immigration reform bill (which contained the Bush plan for a path to citizenship) Romney said that “I don't believe in rounding up 11 million people and forcing them at gunpoint from our country. With these 11 million people, let's have them registered, know who they are. Those who've been arrested or convicted of crimes shouldn't be here; those that are here paying taxes and not taking government benefits should begin a process towards application for citizenship, as they would from their home country.”

- **In September 2006, Romney said that Republicans who opposed President Bush's comprehensive immigration reform agenda “made a big mistake.”** The Associated Press reported in September 2006 that while John McCain was under fire from anti-immigrant conservatives for working with President Bush and Senator Ted Kennedy on comprehensive immigration reform, “Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney has made it known that he supports the President’s immigration position, saying that Republicans who have broken rank with Bush ‘made a big mistake.’”

- **In March 2007, Romney started taking a “markedly different” stance on comprehensive immigration reform, saying “amnesty didn't work 20 years ago, and it won't work today.”** In a speech in Washington in March 2007, referring to the Senate comprehensive immigration reform bill endorsed by President Bush, Romney said that “McCain-Kennedy isn’t the answer” because it “gives benefits to illegals that would cost taxpayers millions, and more importantly, amnesty didn't work 20 years ago, and it won't work today.” Later that month, in Arizona, he said that “My view is there should be no advantage for those that are here illegally in pursuing a course of permanent residency.” The Boston Globe called these statements “markedly different” from those he had made to the paper in 2005, in which he called the McCain proposal “reasonable” and distinguished it from amnesty.

- **In December 2007, Romney renewed his support for a path to citizenship and for President Bush’s immigration agenda, but claimed that the Senate bill created a “special pathway.”** During an appearance on “Meet the Press” in December 2007, Romney said that “the 12 million or so that are here illegally should be able to sign up for permanent residency or citizenship” and described the proposal endorsed by President Bush and Senator McCain, which established a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who registered with the government and paid fees, as “reasonable.” He attempted to square this with his stated opposition to McCain’s comprehensive immigration reform bill by saying that “the great flaw in the final bill that came forward from the Senate” earlier that year had been that it gave immigrants “a special pathway, a special guarantee that all of them get to stay here for the rest of their lives merely by virtue of having come here illegally.”
• In 2010, a Massachusetts paper profiled a “new and improved Romney” who would “de-emphasize social issues like...illegal immigration” in his second presidential run. In February 2010, the Boston Phoenix published a piece called “New and Improved Romney,” in which several Republican supporters said that Romney’s 2008 run failed because “he got himself caught up in the social-issues debate.” “As a result,” Phoenix reporter David S. Bernstein wrote, for his 2012 campaign, “the new Romney is now de-emphasizing social issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and illegal immigration.” Bernstein also pointed out that Romney “has refrained from backing conservatives that other presidential hopefuls have endorsed, such as Doug Hoffman in New York or Marco Rubio in Florida.”

2012 CAMPAIGN

• At an August 2011 debate, Romney called for “stapling a green card” to the diplomas of science students, but also called for a crackdown on border security and unauthorized hiring. At the August 2011 GOP presidential debate sponsored by Fox News, Romney was asked, “With the unemployment rate now at 9.1 percent, do you still think that employers need to import more foreign labor?” He responded that “We’re not looking to bring people in and — in jobs that can be done by Americans,” but that “If someone comes here and gets a PhD in — in physics, that’s the person I’d like to staple a green card to their — to their diploma, rather than saying to them to go home. Instead, we let people come across our border illegally or stay here and overstay their visa. They get to stay in the country. I want the best and brightest to be metered into the country.” He also called for securing the border and cracking down on employers who hire undocumented immigrants.

• In September 2011, Romney began to attack in-state tuition for undocumented students. During a speech to the Republican Hispanic National Assembly, Romney made the familiar Republican rhetorical move of praising legal immigration while calling to crack down on undocumented immigrants. During this speech, Romney proudly pointed out that he had vetoed in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts—introducing an attack on Rick Perry that Romney and other candidates continue to use on a daily basis, in stump speeches and every debate to come. This caused the Washington Post editorial board to remark: “It seems daft for the candidate seeking to position himself as the Republican most likely to win a general election to go out of his way to alienate Hispanics, when his party is already doing a pretty good job of that.”

• At the heart of Romney’s attack on in-state tuition is a call to “stop providing the incentives” for undocumented migration—the heart of the mass-deportation agenda. During his speech to the Republican Hispanic National Assembly in September 2011, Romney called to “stop promoting the incentives” such as in-state tuition “that promote illegal immigration.” In stump speeches and debates, he uses the simpler phrase “a magnet for illegal immigration.” This language echoes the hard-line theory of “attrition through enforcement,” popular among anti-immigrant groups like FAIR and NumbersUSA, which predicts that the U.S. can shrink the undocumented population to a “manageable nuisance” by making it “as difficult and unpleasant as possible to live here illegally.” When they
describe the “attrition through enforcement” agenda in the abstract, mass-deportation advocates use language like Romney’s, claiming that undocumented immigrants are “incentivized” by “benefits” and therefore will leave if those benefits are removed. But in reality, “attrition through enforcement” is an even more extreme agenda. It was cited in the preamble as the concept behind Arizona’s “show me your papers” law S.B. 1070, and the coauthor of the even more extreme Alabama law HB 56 has repeatedly said that it is the goal of his law as well.

- **Romney took the lead in characterizing in-state tuition as a “$100,000 discount” for “illegal aliens.”** During the September 22nd Fox News-Google debate, Romney said, “Four years of college, almost $100,000 discount if you are an illegal alien to go to the University of Texas.” He emphasized the words “illegal” and “alien.” He has also taken the lead in calling it a “magnet” for undocumented immigration.

- **When Perry said that people who opposed in-state tuition for undocumented students “don’t have a heart,” Romney implied that Perry was not “opposed to illegal immigration.”** After Rick Perry made headlines during the September 22nd debate by saying that Romney and others who attacked in-state tuition for undocumented students “don’t have a heart,” Romney started saying in stump speeches: “If you’re opposed to illegal immigration, it doesn’t mean that you don't have a heart. It means that you have a heart, and a brain.”

- **As part of his attack on Perry for signing the Texas DREAM Act, Romney produced an attack ad tying Perry to former Mexican President Vicente Fox—a move Hispanic Republicans called “reprehensible.”** On September 29th, the Romney campaign unveiled a video called “Thank You Governor Perry” that asked, “Who supports Governor Perry’s decision to give in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants? Barack Obama. Nancy Pelosi. Harry Reid. Even Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico.” The video then showed a clip of a speech given in English by Fox, thanking Perry for signing the bill. The group Arizona Hispanic Republicans was outraged by the video, and wrote on the website of the Tucson Citizen: “Mitt Romney has crossed the line and has gone beyond the point of no return with Latino community organizers and leaders. In this linked video, Romney has the audacity to paint Mexico President Vicente Fox in a negative light. Keep in mind that Mitt Romney is not acting like a good chief in command. He is not going to be a good leader if he uses wedge issues against a good trading partner of ours, in fact, Mexico’s GDP is growing faster than the United States and is still a good trading partner of the United States. For Romney to use Fox in the manner he has in the video against Rick Perry is reprehensible.”

- **Romney first claimed he’d “never hired an illegal in my life,” then claimed he’d fired his landscaper because “I’m running for office, for Pete’s sake.”** During the CNN Western Republican Presidential Debate on October 18th, Rick Perry attacked Romney for hiring a landscaper that employed undocumented immigrants (see above), calling his actions “the height of hypocrisy.” Romney’s initial response was “Rick, I don’t think I’ve ever hired an illegal in my life,” which may be technically true (if he hired a subcontractor) but misleading.
He proceeded to clarify that “we hired a lawn company to mow our lawn, and they had illegal immigrants that were working there. And when that was pointed out to us, we let them go.” (In fact, as explained above, Romney only fired the landscaper after the second time it was “pointed out” to him, a year after the first.) He continued: “So we went to the company and we said, look, you can’t have any illegals working on our property. I’m running for office, for Pete’s sake, I can’t have illegals.”

- **Romney has received the endorsements of the man who shepherded Alabama’s extreme anti-immigrant law through the state’s legislature, and an Arizona sheriff who called on white nationalists to form a vigilante “posse”...** In early October, as Alabama began to make headlines with the devastating consequences of its extreme immigration law HB 56, Mitt Romney received the endorsement of Alabama Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard. Hubbard insists that not only is he “proud of what we passed,” but that “We have more bills like that coming. We’re just getting started.”

- **...an Arizona sheriff who called on white nationalists to form a vigilante “posse”...** On October 13th, Romney was endorsed by Pinal County (Arizona) Sheriff Paul Babeu. Babeu’s most famous role is as the sheriff in John McCain’s 2010 campaign ad in which he promised to “complete the dang fence”; the ad was shot on the border, but Babeu’s county isn’t actually on the border. Babeu has gotten less attention for his July 2010 appearance on the openly “pro-white” radio show “Political Cesspool,” during which he invited listeners to apply for his department’s “posse” program to catch undocumented immigrants.

- **...and leading anti-immigrant Congressman Lamar Smith.** In late October 2011, Romney received the endorsement of House Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith. Smith is the architect of the current Republican anti-immigrant legislative agenda, including a mandatory E-Verify bill that is sowing serious dissent within the Republican Party and the “HALT Act” which would temporarily strip certain policymaking powers from the Department of Homeland Security, but expire the day a president not named Barack Obama is elected. Furthermore, he is one of the architects of the current broken immigration system, having written the massive immigration overhaul in 1996 (when the undocumented population was only 3.5 million people, as opposed to 11 million today).

**RICK SANTORUM**

Former Senator Rick Santorum was a vocal opponent of comprehensive immigration reform in 2006. He made anti-immigrant rhetoric a key part of his reelection campaign that fall, but it wasn’t a winning strategy. Struggling to break out from the pack in this campaign, he’s tended to follow other candidates' leads on immigration rather than staking out a position of his own—but his confusion of “illegal voters” with “Latino voters” says plenty about how he, and many Republicans, see the nation’s fastest-growing voter bloc.

**HIS RECORD**
• Santorum voted against comprehensive immigration reform as a senator in 2006. Santorum voted against the bipartisan Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006, which was a top legislative priority for President Bush. He wrote on National Review Online that the bill created “incentives for illegal immigrants to raid the Social Security system and lie about their work history,” and proclaimed that the bill sent the message that “America has lost the will to enforce her laws, and her sovereignty is for sale—currently, for around $2,000.”

• In the Senate, Santorum cosponsored amendments to reimburse states for using National Guard troops to secure the border and to add a triple-layer border fence. Before voting against the 2006 comprehensive immigration reform bill, Santorum attempted to add border-enforcement provisions including a “triple-layer” border fence.

• Santorum tried to use immigration as a wedge issue in his failed 2006 Senate reelection bid. Santorum ran several ads during his 2006 reelection campaign against Democrat Bob Casey on the topic of immigration, including his first ad of the campaign. Later in the campaign, he put up a web site that claimed that “13 million illegal aliens were counting on” Casey. He brought up immigration in town hall meetings throughout the state—including in Pittsburgh, even though, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, “this region, by (Santorum’s) own analysis, has remarkably little immigration of any kind.”

2012 CAMPAIGN

• Santorum acknowledged that “we need to have that discussion” about what to do with undocumented immigrants in the country, but refused to actually start it. At the September 7th CNN debate, Santorum was asked what his solution for immigration reform would be, and gave a vague reply about having “a program in place that sets the parameter that says, you’re going to come to this country, come here according to the rules.” As a follow-up, the debate moderator asked him, “there are 11 million people that -- fait accompli. They're here. What do you do with them if you are able to secure the border?” Santorum replied that “we can have the discussion, that whether what we do with people, how long they've been here, whether they had other types of records.” But, he said, “we are going to secure the border first” before allowing that discussion to begin.

• When asked how the GOP could attract Latino voters, Santorum demonstrated why they're struggling—by conflating “illegal vote” with “Latino voters.” At the September 12th CNN/Tea Party Express debate, Santorum was asked “What are the candidates doing to attract the Latino voters?” Santorum responded, “Well, I mean, what Governor Perry's done is he provided in-state tuition for -- for illegal immigrants. Maybe that was an attempt to attract the illegal vote -- I mean, the Latino voters.” While “attract the illegal vote” appeared to be a slip of the tongue (if a revealing one), Santorum deliberately chose to use a question about appealing to Latino voters to attack a position that is incredibly popular with them—a clear indication that attracting Latino voters was far less important to him than alienating them to appeal to the anti-immigrant base.
• Santorum joined in on attacks on Rick Perry for offering in-state tuition to undocumented students, calling him “soft” on immigration—but maintained that undocumented students should still be able to attend state schools. During the September 22nd Fox News-Google debate, Santorum was asked if Rick Perry was “soft on immigration.” He replied, “yes, I would say that he is soft on illegal immigration,” citing his opposition to the border fence and a mysterious “speech in 2001 where he talked about binational health insurance between Mexico and Texas.” Santorum also echoed Michele Bachmann’s extreme claims that a border fence was necessary to protect national sovereignty, calling Perry “very weak on this issue of American sovereignty.” In response, Perry asked Santorum, “Have you ever even been to the border with Mexico?” (Santorum said he had.)

CONCLUSION

Clearly, when it comes to both rhetoric and policy on immigration, each of the leading Republican presidential contenders and most of the minor players are embracing a hard-line, anti-immigrant approach in the primary.

This is a dangerous strategy for whoever emerges as the victor, since Latino voters will be key factors in a number of key battleground states during the general election. Rather than capitalizing on President Obama’s potential vulnerability with many frustrated Latino voters, Republican candidates seem to be doing their best to alienate these voters. This will not only ensure that the eventual Republican nominee performs well below the target 40% with Latino voters, but cede important battleground states to President Obama.

The Republican Party’s immigration position will have long-term consequences for the GOP unless and until it finds its way back to truly being the Party of Reagan.

For more information on the politics of immigration in the 2012 election cycle contact Michael Earls at 202-261-2388 or press@americasvoiceonline.org