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To: America's Voice
 From: Pete Brodnitz, Benenson Strategy Group
 Celinda Lake and David Mermin, Lake Research Partners
 Date: January 22, 2009
 Re: Recent Polling on Attitudes Toward Immigration Reform in Swing Districts

In our pre-election polling of nine swing congressional districts, **we found that support for comprehensive immigration reform both increases a candidate's ballot support and improves the public's opinion of him or her on key qualities and attributes.** Candidates associated with support for comprehensive reform were perceived more favorably than candidates supporting enforcement only. After we inform voters that one candidate supports comprehensive reform (who we label "Supporter" in this memo) and another candidate favors enforcement and benefit cut-off (who we call "the Opponent" in this memo), significantly more voters trust the Supporter to handle immigration reform and improving the economy and more voters believe the Supporter will stand up for the middle class. Not only does support for a comprehensive approach not hurt the Supporter on handling the economy and standing up for the middle class, it actually helps increase the public's trust of the Supporter on these important economic-related characteristics.

While the economy is by far voters' top concern, more than 8 in 10 (84%) swing district voters say immigration is a "serious" problem (including 79% of Democrats, 83% of Independents, and 92% of Republicans).

In your view, is illegal immigration a very serious, somewhat serious, somewhat not serious, not serious at all problem facing the country?				
	All	Party ID		
		Dem	Ind	Rep
Difference	+70	+59	+67	+85
Total Serious	84	79	83	92
Very serious	46	35	46	58
Somewhat serious	38	44	37	34
Total Not Serious	14	20	16	7
Somewhat not serious	9	13	9	5
Not serious at all	5	7	7	2
Don't Know	1	2	1	1

Voters in swing districts **overwhelmingly prefer a comprehensive approach** to immigration over solely focusing on border security, ending benefits and requiring people who are in the country to leave. When the choice is between a comprehensive approach and simply enforcing the current laws, by more than 2 to 1, voters prefer a comprehensive approach to immigration reform.

When we tested the public's voting preference in swing districts with one candidate supporting comprehensive reform (the Supporter) and another preferring enforcement and benefit cut-off (the Opponent), the Supporter led by 24%, 57% to 33%. Even after voters heard strong criticisms of the Supporter's position on immigration, the Supporter retained an average 17% edge over the Opponent. When voters were given a response to the attack on the Supporter's support for comprehensive reform, the Supporter's position again improved to a 19% lead over the Opponent.

Support for comprehensive immigration reform improved voter perceptions of the Supporter along a variety of dimensions. We asked voters whether a number of attributes applied better to the Supporter or the Opponent, and the Supporter led on every issue and leadership characteristic, including an advantage on immigration by 30%, standing up for the middle class by 19%, problem solving by 18%, and handling the economy by 16%. Support for comprehensive immigration reform not

only enhances the public’s view of a candidate on the issue of immigration, but it also increases voter support for that candidate along a variety of other dimensions, including voters’ confidence in the candidate’s approach to improving the economy.

	Supporter of Comprehensive	Opponent (prefers enforcement, not comprehensive)	Don’t Know	Supporter Advantage
Represents your views on immigration.	58	28	9	+30
Stands up for the middle class.	49	30	15	+19
Focuses on solving problems.*	47	29	15	+18
Shares your values.*	50	33	12	+17
Has the right approach to improving the economy.*	44	28	22	+16
Stands up for what is right.*	46	31	15	+15

*Asked in 8 out of 9 Congressional Districts.

Swing district voters overwhelmingly favor a comprehensive approach to immigration reform over other options. By 66% to 27%, voters prefer comprehensive immigration reform to border enforcement, benefit cutoff, and deportation. Support for comprehensive reform crosses party lines - more than 6 in 10 Democrats, Republicans, and Independents prefer a comprehensive approach. Comprehensive reform is also preferred by a large majority of persuadable voters - 63% of voters who were undecided as to which congressional candidate to support when we conducted the survey (late September - early October) prefer a comprehensive approach.

Which is closer to your view on the issue of immigration reform: (OPTIONS ROTATED)					
	All	Undec	Party ID		
			Dem	Ind	Rep
We need a comprehensive approach that secures the border, cracks down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and requires all illegal immigrants to register and meet certain requirements to become legal, including working, paying taxes and learning English.	66	63	70	64	63
We need to secure our border, stop giving taxpayer funded benefits to illegal immigrants, and make sure that those who broke our laws by entering this country illegally are forced to leave.	27	28	20	26	33
Don’t know	8	9	10	10	4

When asked specifically what the next session of Congress should do, nearly two thirds (64%) of voters prefer that Congress passes comprehensive reform, while only 27% would rather see the current laws enforced more strongly. Comprehensive reform is preferred by the majority of Democrats (74%), Independents (64%), and Republicans (54%). And among those most conflicted about which candidate to support, nearly two-thirds (63%) prefer that Congress pass comprehensive reform.

Congress may address immigration reform in the next session of Congress. Here are two statements about what Congress could do to address immigration. Please tell me which you agree with more: (OPTIONS ROTATED)					
	All	Undec	Party ID		
			Dem	Ind	Rep
Congress passes comprehensive reform that includes tighter border security, employer enforcement, and requires some people who are now in the country illegally to apply for citizenship.	64	63	74	64	54
Congress does not pass any bill on immigration and the current laws remain in place.	27	26	18	26	37
Don’t know	8	12	7	9	9

Nearly 7 in 10 voters in swing districts support requiring people who are not in the country legally but who are otherwise law-abiding to register, meet conditions and become legal rather than providing them with temporary status or requiring them to leave the country, while only 15% believe “illegal immigrants” should be deported and 13% that they should be allowed to stay temporarily.

Most Members of Congress agree that to deal with the problem of illegal immigration, we need to make our borders secure, crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and deport illegal immigrants who commit crimes. In addition to these steps, what should be done about the 12 million who will remain in the country: (OPTIONS ROTATED)					
	All	Undec	Party ID		
			Dem	Ind	Rep
They must leave the country.	15	17	10	15	20
They should be legally allowed to stay on a temporary basis but not allowed to become U.S. citizens.	13	14	12	12	15
They should be required to register, meet certain conditions, and become legal.	69	65	75	68	63
Don't know	4	4	4	5	3

The Benenson Strategy Group and Lake Research Partners conducted 3371 interviews in 9 swing Congressional districts with likely voters September 23 - October 5, 2008. The margin of error for overall results is ±1.89%.