



Why Do Elephants Put their Heads in the Sand?

January 2012 Update

The Republican Party's stance on immigration—and what it means for its 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 grandstanding 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.

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INTRODUCTION

The GOP on Immigration: An Anniversary and a Look Forward

November 2011 marked 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 that 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 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 December 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” (with “jobs” and “the economy” getting a combined 43%, and immigration getting 42%).

Furthermore, the Republican nominee will start the 2012 general election campaign at a serious disadvantage with Latino voters. In December 2011, only 9% of Latino voters said they were certain to vote for the Republican presidential nominee, and only 20% of Latino voters said they were certain, likely, or even leaning toward doing so. In [November 2011](#), when asked how well the two major parties were doing in reaching out to Hispanics, only 13% of Latino voters said that the Republican Party was “doing a good job” with its outreach. Forty-two percent said Republicans didn’t care too much about Latinos, and 30% saw the Party as openly hostile to their community. For comparison, 45% of Latinos said Democrats were doing a good job; 32% said they didn’t care too much; and only 8% described them as hostile.

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 the 2012 elections.

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 66% of Americans agreed that the federal government should “allow illegal immigrants to remain in the country and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship” if they meet certain requirements. Only 19% favored sending “all illegal immigrants back to their home country.”

December 2011 polling from Pew Research Center [found](#) that when asked what the federal government’s priorities should be regarding immigration, 67% agreed that a path to citizenship should be a top priority. A plurality (43%) felt that both border security and a path to citizenship should be equal priorities—as they have been in all proposals for comprehensive immigration reform--while 24% said a path to citizenship should be the sole priority.

Even in Arizona, a state with a national reputation as leading the charge to enact anti-immigrant policies, an overwhelming majority of voters favor a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who are longtime residents. An [Arizona State University poll](#) in November 2011 found that 78% of Arizona voters would favor legislation that put such immigrants “on a path to becoming American citizens.”

Not only is the general electorate far more moderate than the Republican presidential field on immigration, but so are Republican primary voters themselves. In December 2011 polls by the [Washington Post/ABC News](#) and the [New York Times/CBS News](#), likely Iowa caucus-goers were asked to name the candidates they trusted most to handle immigration. In both polls, Newt Gingrich was the most commonly named candidate, followed by Rick Perry—the two candidates who have been most heavily attacked by their opponents for being “soft” on the issue.

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 a [Republican primary presidential debate in September 2011](#), Noticiero Telemundo anchor José Díaz-Balart prodded 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. Following his lead, debate moderators in November and December 2011 have asked various candidates to explain what they would do about these immigrants once the borders had been secured. Most candidates have offered little more than rhetorical fumbling in response to such questions, but the general thrust of their responses has been 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 only exception has been Newt Gingrich, who defended a proposal to let a very limited number of immigrants stay in the country. But even Gingrich has been a vocal supporter of Arizona's immigration law, which explicitly implements an agenda of ["attrition through enforcement"](#) by harassing undocumented immigrants in the hopes that they will leave the state.

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—is no more desirable an option.

This ["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."

Just as proponents of "attrition through enforcement" ignore the disastrous consequences of their policies, they also obscure the ultimate goal: sending all undocumented immigrants out of the United States. But over the past few months, Mitt Romney has finally made it painfully obvious that supporting "attrition through enforcement" is the same thing as supporting mass deportation. When Romney embraced the "attrition" doctrine in a [November debate](#) with his promise to address immigration by turning off the "magnets" that he claims "attract" undocumented immigrants, reporters pressed his campaign on what Romney would do if not all 11 million undocumented immigrants left once the "magnets" were off. The campaign fumbled to answer the question, but in a December debate Romney [explicitly endorsed](#) mass deportation: "My own view is those 11-- 11 million people should register the fact that they're

here in the country. They should be given some transition period of time to allow them to-- settle their affairs and then return home.”

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 January 4th, 2011.

NEWT GINGRICH

In November Newt Gingrich surged in the polls, and his immigration stance came under scrutiny. Gingrich, alone among Republican candidates, has proposed an immigration plan that would allow a few of the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently in the country to obtain legal status. However, the policy is much more modest than it seems: very few people would meet the criteria Gingrich wants to set (including 25 years of residency), Gingrich would allow community members to make individual decisions about who could stay and who could leave, and even those who got legal status would be permanently ineligible for citizenship. The rest would be deported.

Around the same time, polling of Iowa caucus voters and others made it clear that Gingrich's immigration proposal was not the liability that his opponents hoped. As noted earlier in this report, two separate December polls of Iowa caucusgoers found that Gingrich was the candidate caucusgoers trusted the most to handle the immigration issue. Meanwhile, a [Florida](#) poll found that a 53% majority of likely Republican primary voters considered it “acceptable” for their party's nominee to support “limited amnesty,” and 85% of likely primary voters considered Gingrich an acceptable nominee—meaning that even many Republicans who claimed to reject any candidate who supported “limited amnesty” didn't actually care about the issue enough to disqualify Gingrich for it. A similar pattern held in [South Carolina](#), where 46% of likely Republican primary voters considered “limited amnesty” acceptable in theory, but 86% considered Gingrich an acceptable candidate.

Since Gingrich only wants to deport 9 million people as opposed to 11 million, it would be a mistake to label him a moderate on the issue. In fact, his position on immigration reform is far

to the right of what George W. Bush and John McCain once supported. But the fact that his challengers have attacked him so vociferously on this issue, and failed to gain any traction, speaks volumes about the real politics of immigration. Overall, voters are less focused on the immigration issue that candidates seem to think, and most voters across the political spectrum actually do support comprehensive immigration reform.

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.** At least as early as May, when he was interviewed by Jorge Ramos on Univision’s *Al Punto*, Gingrich [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.

- In defending his commitment to allowing a few undocumented immigrants to stay in the country, Gingrich appealed to social and religious conservatives who have vocally supported immigration.** In the November 23rd debate, Gingrich launched an impassioned defense of letting a very limited number of undocumented immigrants stay in the country—using an appeal to social conservative values. “I don’t see how the party that says it’s the party of the family is going to adopt an immigration policy which destroys families that have been here a quarter century,” he [said](#). This echoes arguments used by religious conservatives and evangelical Christians like Richard Land who have called for a humane solution to the immigration issue. Gingrich also connected immigration reform to social conservatism when describing the hypothetical person he would allow to stay: someone who has “been here 25 years and you got three kids and two grandkids, you’ve been paying taxes and obeying the law, you belong to a local church.”
- Gingrich compared keeping track of immigrants to tracking FedEx packages.** In a November town hall meeting at which he laid out a “seven-part plan” for immigration policy, Gingrich continued to suggest that immigration policy should be outsourced to private business—and compared immigrants to FedEx packages. According to [Politico](#), Gingrich said that FedEx and UPS track 24 million packages daily, then said “There are an estimated 11 million people here illegally and the federal government can’t find them while they’re sitting still. One of my proposals is that we send everybody a package.” He added immediately that this was a joke to “illustrate something about the failure of the bureaucratic state of Washington.”
- Gingrich wants to suspend federal law to complete a border fence by January 1, 2014.** The first step of Gingrich’s seven-step plan as outlined in the [November town hall](#) is the completion of a border fence by January 1, 2014. Gingrich claimed he would be able to do this by sending DHS employees from Washington to help construct it (a suggestion he has made throughout the campaign) and by suspending environmental protections and other federal regulations in order to complete it quickly. Border experts agree that the border fence will be difficult, if not impossible, to complete because the terrain on much of the border is too rough for construction vehicles. Another step in his plan is to “make deportation dramatically easier,” as he put it in the December 10th debate, although he has not clarified how this would work.
- Gingrich actually wants to remove 9 million undocumented immigrants.** On December 18th, during a *Face the Nation* [interview](#) with Bob Schieffer, Gingrich explained his immigration plan in more detail: “Seven or eight or nine million would go home and get a guest worker permit and come back under the law. The last two million are people who have been here a very long time. They are really part of the community.” In fact, there is no way for people to come back with visas “under the law” after being deported, so Gingrich’s plan is tantamount to kicking nine million immigrants out of the country forever. This is not inconsistent with Gingrich’s previous statements on his position, which set very strict criteria for undocumented immigrants to be eligible for legal status. However, millions of

families would be destroyed under this plan—the very outcome Gingrich said in November he wanted to avoid.

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. As a presidential candidate, Huntsman has followed his opponents in claiming that the government must “secure the border first” before any other immigration policy is discussed—but he has also emphasized the economic contributions of immigrants and explained undocumented border crossings as a function not of enforcement, but of the economy.

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 eventually gave in to cries to "secure the border first."** 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."
- **Huntsman has acknowledged the contributions of immigrants to the economy and called for an overhaul of the visa system to encourage economic growth.** At the December 15th Republican debate, Huntsman [pointed to the record low numbers](#) of border apprehensions in 2011, and attributed this trend to the sagging economy: "The president has so screwed up this economy, nobody is coming anymore. There is nothing to come for." He then pointed out that "legal immigration is an engine of growth for this country. Half of the Fortune 500 companies in this country today were founded by immigrants." Unlike Rick Santorum's tendency to confuse "illegal voters" with "Latino voters," Huntsman's connection between undocumented border crossers and high-skilled legal immigrants reinforced the notion that immigration is good for the American economy. Huntsman [called to](#) "completely remake the way people are moving back and forth, our H1B visa system," calling it "an economic development opportunity, and we're missing it."

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.

- **During his 2008 presidential run, Paul put out a mailer promising to “do whatever it takes” to “physically secure our borders and coastlines.”** In December 2007, while running for the Republican nomination in the 2008 election, Paul [sent out a mailer](#) in South Carolina that enumerated a six-point plan to “stop immigration nonsense.” Several of his points reflected positions he has continued to hold during the current campaign, including “No welfare for illegal aliens” and “End birthright citizenship.” Also included, however, was a promise to “physically secure our borders and coastlines,” with the comment that “We must do whatever it takes to control entry into our country.” During the current campaign, Paul has expressed discomfort with extreme border security measures because of their potential threat to Americans’ liberty.
- **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 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, his insistence on deporting each and every undocumented immigrant who is apprehended for any reason 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. Indeed, Perry's increasingly extreme positions garnered him the endorsement of the notorious Joe Arpaio—but still weren't enough to revive a sagging campaign, even as the less-extreme Newt Gingrich soared in the polls. Clearly, Perry's faltering has little to do with immigration and everything to do with his competency as a candidate.

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 sharpened his defense of the in-state tuition bill in late October, 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?"

- **Perry promised to “detain and deport every illegal alien who is apprehended in the United States”—yet continued to defend in-state tuition by claiming inaccurately that students were “working toward U.S. citizenship.”** In a [New Hampshire town hall in late November](#), Perry clearly embraced a policy of unrelenting deportation: “My policy will be to detain and deport every illegal alien who is apprehended in the United States. And we’ll do it with an expedited hearing process.” This position, which differs little from mass deportation positions such as Mitt Romney’s, would seem to be in conflict with his support for in-state tuition—since the same students Perry claims to support would be vulnerable to deportation at all times. However, that same day (also in New Hampshire), Perry continued to defend the tuition law, claiming again that it benefited students who “are working toward U.S. citizenship.” While this statement was no more accurate when Perry made it in the past, it had never before been coupled with the belief that all undocumented immigrants should be deported upon being nabbed by police, even for the flimsiest of reasons.
- **Perry promised to “shut down” the border, and wreck the economy of his own state.** At the same [New Hampshire appearance](#) where he unveiled his support for unrelenting deportation, Perry promised that the border “will be shut down within 12 months of me taking the oath of office.” Most of the GOP field has refused to define what “secure the border” actually means, so Perry was at least clearer in saying that he wants the border shut down entirely. However, closing the border (even if it were possible) would make commerce between Mexico and Texas impossible—and thus destroy the Texas economy.
- **Perry’s extreme policies won him the endorsement of notorious Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio—whom he defended when Arpaio was stripped of most of his federal immigration-enforcement duties for civil rights violations.** While Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio had been courted by several GOP candidates (including Mitt Romney, whom he had endorsed in 2008) throughout the campaign, on November 29th he chose to [bestow his endorsement](#) and anti-immigrant credibility on Rick Perry. “He’s been fighting this battle as the governor,” Arpaio told an audience in New Hampshire, where he came to campaign for Perry. “He doesn’t just talk about it, he does something about it.” Arpaio’s endorsement failed to generate buzz or support for Perry, but Arpaio soon found himself in national headlines again for something else: a [December report](#) issued by the Department of Justice concluding that Arpaio had “engage[d] in a pattern or practice of unconstitutional policing” and “a chronic culture of disregard for basic legal and constitutional obligations.” As a result of the DOJ investigation, the Department of Homeland Security [announced](#) that it would no longer allow Arpaio to conduct federal immigration enforcement operations under the 287(g) program, and that his ability to send fingerprints to immigration agents under Secure Communities would be “limited” to serious offenders. Perry [defended Arpaio](#), saying, “I would suggest to you that these people are out after Sheriff Joe. He is tough.”

MITT ROMNEY

Examining Mitt Romney's immigration stance during the 2012 campaign, it's hard to believe that this is the same man who once said any Republican who opposed President Bush's proposal for comprehensive immigration reform "made a big mistake." But while the endorsement of Joe Arpaio during the 2008 campaign wasn't enough to protect Romney from charges of weakness on immigration, his anti-immigrant cred throughout the 2012 campaign has been impeccable. Romney has made immigration the centerpiece of his attack on two different rivals for the nomination, only to discover that immigration is not the potent wedge issue he seemed to believe.

As the presumptive Republican frontrunner, Romney's current stance on immigration—including his pledge to veto the DREAM Act if passed--will cost him with 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 “attrition through enforcement” agenda, a passive form of mass deportation.** 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...** 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 danged 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. Romney has also used Babeu in [robocalls](#) in Iowa to attack Rick Perry; in the robocalls, Babeu calls Perry "part of the illegal immigration problem."
- **...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).

- **When finally cornered on the question of what to do with undocumented immigrants currently here, Romney's campaign revealed that he completely believes in the theory of "attrition through enforcement."** At the November 23rd debate, Romney [attacked](#) Gingrich's proposal to grant very limited relief to a small number of undocumented immigrants as "amnesty" and a "magnet" for further undocumented immigration: "To say that we're going to say to the people who have come here illegally that now you're all going to get to stay or some large number are going to get to stay and become permanent residents of the United States, that will only encourage more people to do the same thing." When asked what he *would* do about those immigrants, however, he only said he would not allow them to stay legally. When cornered by a reporter after the debate, a Romney spokesperson finally clarified that the candidate believes immigrants will leave on their own once all "magnets" are turned off: "If you cut off their employment, if they can't get work, if they can't get benefits like in state tuition, they will leave." This is a clear allusion to the theory of "[attrition through enforcement](#)" developed by Mark Krikorian and being put into practice in Arizona and Alabama.
- **In December, Romney moved from support for passive mass deportation ("attrition through enforcement") to active mass deportation.** In early December, rumors circulated that Romney was developing a "secret" immigration plan with pro-reform Republicans like Jeb Bush. At the December 10th [debate](#), however, Romney explicitly endorsed mass deportation: "My own view is those 11-- 11 million people should register the fact that they're here in the country. They should be given some transition period of time to allow them to-- settle their affairs and then return home."
- **Days before the Iowa caucus, Romney made it absolutely clear that he would veto the DREAM Act if it were passed during his presidency.** At an [event](#) in Iowa in December, Romney [was asked](#) what he would do as President if Congress passed the DREAM Act. Romney repeated the question for the crowd: "The question is, if I were elected and Congress were to pass the DREAM Act, would I veto it? And the answer is yes."

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. Santorum's strategy on immigration during the campaign has been to try to outdo his opponents in the callousness of his casual statements about immigrants. Whether confusing "illegal voters" with "Latino voters" or assuming that all undocumented immigrants come from Mexico, Santorum's comments have said plenty about how he, and many Republicans, see the nation's fastest-growing voter bloc. In the final days before the Iowa

caucuses, Santorum made yet another attempt to appeal to the far right on immigration by [calling](#) himself “a Steve King guy on immigration.”

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.)
- **Santorum defended mass deportation because Mexico is “a great country, a nice country.”** Explaining during a [December Fox News appearance](#) how he could justify his support for mass deportation as a pro-family conservative, Santorum said, “You know, the family can go back. We’re not sending them to Siberia. We’re not sending them to any kind of difficult country. We’re sending them to Mexico, which is a great country, a nice country.” Assuming that all undocumented immigrants come from Mexico is just another example of Santorum’s clumsy, uninformed handling of this issue.
- **Santorum found a new way to conflate “immigrant” with “criminal,” claiming that “You can’t be here for 20 years and commit only one illegal act...because everything you’re doing while you’re here is against the law.”** At a [town hall in Iowa in December](#), Santorum attempted to attack Newt Gingrich’s stance that longtime residents of the United States who had followed the law and paid taxes since coming to the country should be eligible for legal status. Santorum claimed, “You can’t be here for 20 years and commit only one illegal act...because everything you’re doing while you’re here is against the law.” While crossing the border illegally is a criminal offense, living in the country without papers is only a civil offense. However, Santorum is in good company in trying to erase the distinction; extreme anti-immigrant state laws like Alabama’s and Arizona’s have also tried to make being in the state without papers a crime. Conflating immigrants with criminals is one of the oldest tricks in the book, but it’s not proven to be a particularly effective one.
- **Santorum calls himself “a Steve King guy on immigration.”** In the final run-up to the Iowa caucuses, Santorum allied himself with the extreme right on immigration, naming Rep. Steve King – one of the most extreme Members of Congress on immigration issues – as a role model on immigration matters. According to the *Washington Post*, Santorum [said](#) at a January 1st event in Iowa, “I’m a Steve King guy on immigration” and, after the crowd applauded said, “I don’t even have to say what that means.”

CONCLUSION

Clearly, when it comes to both rhetoric and policy on immigration, Republican candidates have moved a long way from the days of Ronald Reagan.

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, and they are tired of seeing their family members and friends demonized in campaign commercials. 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.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Polling round-up](#), updated December 2011
- [Polling of Iowa caucusgoers](#)
- [Latino Decisions tracking poll](#)

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