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To: Interested Parties
From: Pete Brodnitz, BSG
Date: June 2, 2009
Re: Recent Polling on Immigration Reform

While comprehensive immigration reform has some vocal opponents, in our recent national poll, we found that the vast majority of voters (two thirds or more depending on the details) favor comprehensive immigration reform, a position that has not wavered in the face of an economic downturn. There is widespread support for a comprehensive approach to solving the issue of illegal immigration - among all political parties, regions, ages, both genders, and those who are undecided on the 2010 Congressional race. Voters see a relationship between comprehensive immigration reform and the economy and perceive an economic and fiscal benefit to passing reform. In fact, the economic situation has increased the desire for quick action on immigration reform.

Widespread Support for a Comprehensive Approach

Without giving an explanation of what comprehensive reform means or consists of, nearly two thirds of voters (64%) support it. When voters are given the details of comprehensive reform (see appendix for proposal text), **86% support Congress passing comprehensive reform**, with nearly 6 in 10 voters *strongly* supporting it. Only 7% strongly oppose the plan (14% total oppose).

- More than 8 in 10 Democratic, Republican, and Independent voters support Congress passing comprehensive reform, as do 86% of voters who are undecided on the 2010 congressional race. This indicates the potential appeal of comprehensive immigration reform as a bipartisan issue.
- The comprehensive proposal is seen as a balanced approach that is fair to both taxpayers (81% agree) and illegal immigrants (79% agree), and 91% agree that the comprehensive proposal would help taxpayers by making illegal immigrants pay taxes (64% strongly agree).

Broad Support for Components of Comprehensive Reform

Regardless of the specifics of the question, at least two thirds of voters prefer a comprehensive approach to immigration reform.

- After we secure our borders, crack down on employers who illegally hire, and deport illegal immigrants who have committed crimes, nearly 7 in 10 (68%) voters argue that the remaining 12 million illegal immigrants should be required to register, meet conditions, and eventually be allowed to apply for citizenship.
 - 62% of Republicans say that they should be allowed to stay and apply for citizenship.
 - The other 30% of voters are divided between forcing the 12 million illegal immigrants to leave the country (20%) and allowing them to stay temporarily (10%).
- When given the choice between a comprehensive approach and one that secures the border, stops taxpayer benefits, and forces those who entered illegally to leave, 67% prefer comprehensive reform while 31% prefer the approach that forces the 12 million remaining illegal immigrants to leave. More than 6 in 10 voters in all major demographic subgroups prefer the comprehensive approach over increased enforcement only.

Relationship with the Economy

The debate over immigration reform does not exist in a vacuum, and the economy is clearly the top issue facing the country. However, the majority of voters perceive an economic and fiscal benefit to passing comprehensive immigration reform, and belief in the benefits of reform has been increasing.

- By 71% to 26% voters argue that we would be better off if illegal immigrants became legal taxpayers over the notion that we would be better off if people in the U.S. illegally left the country because they are taking away jobs that Americans need.
 - The percentage of voters who say we would be better off if illegal immigrants became legal taxpayers has increased 9% - from 62% to 71% - in the last 6 months.
- In a choice between the idea that the economy is in trouble and should be the President and Congress' focus and the argument that the economic crisis makes it more crucial than ever that we solve our immigration issues, 57% support the idea that the economy makes addressing immigration more urgent and 39% prefer focusing on the economy.
 - Support for the argument that the economic crisis makes it more crucial than ever that we reform immigration has increased from 43% in November 2008 to 57% now.
- When asked which aspect of the issue of illegal immigration concerns them the most, half (49%) cite illegal immigrants using taxpayer services without paying taxes. Smaller segments are most concerned that illegal immigrants broke the law to enter the country (20%), that they take away American jobs and depress wages (17%), and don't speak English (8%).

Congress Should Act Quickly

There is bipartisan support for immigration reform to take place this year. Voters argue that Congress can handle multiple issues at once, and more voters are supportive of Members of Congress who argue that the economy and immigration reform can be addressed simultaneously than Members who say we should deal with the economy first.

- 72% of voters support Congress tackling immigration reform this year and not waiting until later (42% *strongly* support), including two thirds or more of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.
- By 59% to 39%, voters favor the idea that Congress can handle multiple issues at the same time and should tackle immigration reform this year over the notion that Congress has too much on its plate this year with the economy and health care reform and should wait and tackle immigration reform later. 60% of those undecided on the 2010 Congressional ballot and 63% of Independents prefer Congress acting this year since they can handle multiple issues at once, key groups for the re-election chances of incumbent members.
- A Member of Congress who argues that we can address immigration reform and deal with the economy at the same time has a 25% advantage over a Member who contends that before we address immigration reform, we have to deal with the economy so immigration reform may have to wait until next year or longer (75% more favorable/22% less favorable and 62%/34% respectively). Among those undecided in the next congressional election, 84% are more favorable toward a Member of Congress who says we can deal with the economy and immigration at the same time, while 14% are less favorable - net 70% more favorable for action now (42% more net favorable than for a Member who says economy first).

BSG conducted 1000 interviews nationwide with likely voters May 9-12, 2009. The margin of error is ±3.1%. Some of Mr. Brodnitz's recent clients include Governor and DNC Chairman Tim Kaine (VA), Senator Jeff Merkley (OR), Senator Jim Webb (VA), and Representatives Mary Jo Kilroy (OH), Tom Perriello (VA), Lincoln Davis (TN), and Tim Walz (MN). Mr. Brodnitz, who conducted this survey, was named "Pollster of the Year" by the American Association of Political Consultants in 2007 for his work for Kaine, Webb and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. It is a bi-partisan award given to one pollster every two years.

Appendix: Specific Results

“Comprehensive Immigration” Reform (No Description)

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose Congress passing comprehensive immigration reform?														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Difference	+43	+40	+40	+46	+48	+41	+41	+44	+45	+40	+50	+43	+39	+46
Total Support	64	58	64	64	67	62	63	64	66	61	65	66	61	65
Strongly support	31	33	32	29	29	31	32	25	33	43	31	30	28	34
Somewhat support	33	25	31	35	38	31	31	39	33	18	35	36	33	30
Total Oppose	21	18	24	18	19	21	22	20	21	21	15	23	22	19
Somewhat oppose	10	8	12	9	10	11	10	12	8	8	9	10	12	8
Strongly oppose	10	10	12	9	9	10	12	8	13	14	6	13	10	11
Don't know	16	24	13	18	14	17	15	16	14	18	20	11	16	16

Comprehensive Immigration Reform – with Details

One version of immigration reform that people have discussed would take a comprehensive approach. It would secure the border, crack down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and require illegal immigrants to register for legal immigration status, pay back taxes, and learn English in order to be eligible for U.S. citizenship. Would you ... Congress passing this proposal?														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Difference	+72	+73	+74	+69	+70	+69	+78	+74	+69	+72	+83	+71	+73	+63
Total Support	86	86	87	84	85	84	89	87	84	85	91	85	86	81
Strongly support	58	55	58	57	57	52	65	57	58	58	56	58	61	52
Somewhat support	28	31	29	27	27	32	24	30	26	27	35	27	25	29
Total Oppose	14	13	13	15	15	15	11	13	15	13	8	14	13	18
Somewhat oppose	6	5	7	6	10	4	4	7	5	5	3	6	6	9
Strongly oppose	7	7	6	9	5	11	6	6	10	8	5	8	7	9
Don't know	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	1

Congress Act Now, Don't Wait

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose Congress tackling immigration reform this year and not waiting until later?														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Difference	+45	+41	+49	+42	+36	+48	+53	+41	+48	+52	+34	+41	+57	+40
Total Support	72	69	74	70	67	73	76	70	73	75	65	70	78	69
Strongly support	42	42	48	37	39	41	48	36	45	56	33	40	51	39
Somewhat support	29	27	26	32	28	32	28	34	28	19	32	30	27	31
Total Oppose	27	28	25	28	31	25	23	29	25	23	31	29	21	29
Somewhat oppose	16	19	14	17	17	15	14	18	14	12	20	16	13	16
Strongly oppose	11	9	11	11	13	11	9	11	11	11	11	13	9	13
Don't know	2	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	1	1	2

Comprehensive Reform vs. Enforcement Only/Force to Leave

Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements about the issue of immigration reform. Of the two, please tell me which statement is closer to your own views. Which is closer to your view? Is that much closer or somewhat closer?

A: We need a comprehensive approach that secures the border, cracks down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and requires all illegal immigrants to register with the government and meet requirements to become legal, including working, paying taxes and learning English.

B 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.

	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Difference	+36	+25	+29	+42	+47	+33	+26	+43	+31	+23	+58	+36	+27	+34
Total Statement A	67	62	64	70	73	66	62	71	64	61	79	67	63	66
Much closer	39	32	36	42	48	34	34	40	39	35	45	37	35	42
Somewhat closer	29	29	28	29	25	32	28	31	26	27	34	29	28	24
Total Statement B	31	37	35	28	26	33	36	28	33	38	21	31	36	32
Much closer	21	23	22	21	17	21	26	20	22	25	11	23	25	22
Somewhat closer	10	13	13	7	8	11	10	8	12	13	10	8	11	10
Don't know	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	0	2	1	2

What to Do with 12 Million who Remain

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 illegal immigrants **who will remain in the country**:

	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
They must leave the country.	20	23	22	19	12	22	28	18	21	23	15	21	22	21
They should be legally allowed to stay on a temporary basis but not allowed to become U.S. citizens.	10	9	11	9	11	11	8	10	8	13	7	11	12	8
They should be required to register , meet certain conditions, and eventually be allowed to apply for citizenship.	68	65	66	70	75	66	62	70	68	62	74	67	65	71
Don't know	2	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	4	1	1	1

* In a November 2008 poll, the wording of the 3rd answer choice was slightly different (They should be required to register to become legal, undergo background checks, pay taxes, and go to the back of the line for U.S. citizenship), but despite the different wording, the results were similar, with 67% preferring it. This reinforces the notion that voters are supportive of a path to citizenship, and their support doesn't depend on specific wording.

Degree of Problem - Illegal Immigration

In your view, is illegal immigration a very serious problem facing this country, a somewhat serious problem, a little serious, or not at all a serious problem?															
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region				Nov '08
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W	
Difference	+62	+69	+56	+68	+38	+68	+84	+53	+66	+82	+58	+67	+64	+54	+57
Total Serious Problem	81	84	78	84	69	84	92	76	83	91	79	83	82	77	78
Very serious	46	45	46	46	33	46	61	37	52	62	41	45	50	44	43
Somewhat serious	35	39	32	38	36	38	31	40	31	29	39	38	32	33	35
Total Not Serious Problem	19	15	22	16	31	16	8	23	17	9	21	16	18	23	21
A little serious	12	11	14	11	19	9	8	14	12	8	15	10	11	16	13
Not at all serious	6	5	8	5	11	6	1	9	4	1	6	6	7	6	8
Don't know	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Illegal Immigration – Biggest Concern

Which of the following is most concerning about illegal immigration?															
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region				
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W	
Illegal immigrants take jobs away from Americans and depress wages.	17	15	17	17	22	15	14	20	13	15	16	18	19	14	
Illegal immigrants use taxpayer services and don't pay taxes .	49	47	45	51	43	51	53	51	51	39	55	44	50	46	
Illegal immigrants don't speak English and don't assimilate into our culture.	8	7	9	7	10	7	7	7	8	10	5	8	9	8	
Illegal immigrants broke the law by entering the country illegally.	20	21	20	20	15	22	23	17	21	28	19	20	20	21	
Don't know	6	10	8	5	9	6	4	6	7	7	6	10	2	10	

Comprehensive Immigration Reform - Effects

One version of immigration reform that people have discussed would take a comprehensive approach. It would secure the border, crack down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and require illegal immigrants to register for legal immigration status, pay back taxes, and learn English in order to be eligible for U.S. citizenship. Do you agree or disagree that this proposal...? Is that strongly or somewhat?

	Strngly Agree	Agree/ Disagree	% Strongly Agree												
			Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
				M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Would help taxpayers by making illegal immigrants pay taxes.	64	91/8	63	62	66	64	61	69	64	65	66	61	63	72	57
Would be fair to taxpayers .	49	81/17	47	47	51	47	48	52	48	52	46	45	50	52	46
Would reduce illegal hiring and exploitation.	47	80/17	46	48	47	45	47	51	45	52	48	45	49	53	39
Would be fair to illegal immigrants .	45	79/17	42	44	47	41	45	51	43	48	47	43	45	51	39
Would take away American jobs .	18	38/61	17	20	17	20	16	19	15	19	26	11	19	24	15
Amounts to amnesty for illegal immigrants.	17	48/45	14	17	17	14	21	16	17	17	18	13	16	17	22

Member of Congress – Economy and Immigration: Simultaneous vs. Economy First

Would you be much more favorable, somewhat more favorable, somewhat less favorable, much less favorable toward a Member of Congress who said that...				
	We can address immigration reform and deal with the economy at the same time , so reform of illegal immigration should be addressed this year?		Before we address immigration reform we have to deal with the economy , so reform of illegal immigration may have to wait until next year or longer?	
	All	Cong Undec	All	Cong Undec
Difference	+53	+70	+28	+28
Total More Favorable	75	84	62	61
Much more favorable	37	33	31	29
Somewhat more favorable	38	51	32	32
Total Less Favorable	22	14	34	33
Somewhat less favorable	13	8	15	12
Much less favorable	8	6	19	21
No difference	2	2	1	2
Don't know	1	0	2	3

Congress and Immigration Reform – Wait vs. Take On This Year

Which is closer to your view of Congress:														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
With the economy and health care reform already on Congress' plate for this year, they should wait and tackle immigration reform later.	39	38	37	41	48	35	34	44	37	30	43	43	35	38
Congress can handle multiple issues at the same time. They should tackle immigration reform this year .	59	60	62	57	51	63	65	56	61	66	55	54	65	60
Don't know	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	4	2	3	0	1

Immigration in this Economy

Which is closer to how you think about the issue of immigration and this economy?															
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region				Nov '08
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W	
We would be better off if people who are in the United States illegally left the country because they are taking away jobs that Americans need.	26	26	27	25	20	29	30	22	28	35	16	30	29	25	21
We would be better off if people who are in the United States illegally became legal taxpayers so they pay their fair share.	71	69	69	73	79	68	65	76	68	62	80	68	69	70	62
Both	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	12
Neither	2	3	2	1	0	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4
Don't know	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	2

Economic Situation – Makes Reform More Crucial vs. Focus on Economy

Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements. Of the two, please tell me which statement is closer to your own views. [Read and rotate statements] Which is closer to your view? Is that much closer or somewhat closer?

A: The economic crisis we are currently in makes it more crucial than ever that we solve our immigration problems. We must pass a comprehensive approach that secures the border, cracks down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and requires all illegal immigrants to register with the government, undergo background checks, and pay back taxes to earn legal immigration status. They would have to meet additional conditions in order to become citizens including learning English and continuing to work and pay taxes. If we do this, we will ensure that all Americans get higher wages and move 12 million illegal immigrants out of the shadows and onto the tax rolls.

B: With the economic situation in this country so bad right now, this just isn't the time to worry about fixing immigration. The world economy is in turmoil, and the President and Congress need to focus on getting things back on track before more Americans lose their jobs or their homes.

	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region				Nov '08
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W	
Difference	+18	+15	+23	+13	+1	+24	+31	+19	+18	+17	+24	+18	+24	+3	-2
Total Statement A: Economy Makes Reform More Crucial	57	55	60	54	49	59	63	58	57	54	61	57	60	49	43
Much closer	35	31	40	30	34	30	40	35	35	33	34	34	39	29	14
Somewhat closer	22	24	20	24	15	28	23	22	22	21	27	23	21	19	30
Total Statement B: Focus on Economy	39	40	37	41	48	35	32	39	39	37	37	39	36	46	45
Much closer	21	19	20	22	26	19	18	20	23	21	20	24	20	21	34
Somewhat closer	18	22	16	19	22	16	14	19	17	16	17	15	16	25	11
Don't know	4	5	4	5	2	6	5	3	4	9	2	5	5	6	3

**Language has changed slightly since previous poll*

Economic Conditions in U.S.

How would you describe economic conditions in this country right now?														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Difference	-90	-95	-90	-92	-90	-92	-91	-90	-92	-90	-96	-90	-90	-89
Total Exc/Good	5	2	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	2	5	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Good	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	5	2	4	5	5
Total Fair/Poor	95	97	95	96	95	96	95	95	96	95	98	95	95	94
Fair	33	36	34	32	37	31	30	33	31	35	37	31	32	34
Poor	62	62	62	63	58	65	65	62	65	60	61	65	63	61
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

American Wages

If you take into account the cost of living, are American wages on average :														
	All	Cong Undec	Gender		Party ID			Age			Region			
			M	F	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-49	50-64	65+	NE	MW	S	W
Increasing	8	5	7	9	7	8	9	7	7	10	8	7	7	9
Decreasing	53	60	52	53	56	50	52	53	56	48	52	53	54	52
Staying the same	36	29	39	33	34	38	37	39	34	32	36	36	36	36
Don't know	3	5	2	5	3	4	3	2	3	10	4	4	3	3