

*Fairbank,
Maslin,
Maullin,
Metz &
Associates*

FM3

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Richard Maullin & Laura Covarrubias
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

RE: Recent Survey of San Diego County Voters Regarding Immigration Issues

DATE: October 4, 2017

CONTEXT

A recently completed public opinion survey¹ of San Diego County California registered voters likely to vote in the November 2018 elections shows mostly favorable opinions regarding undocumented immigrants and immigrants more generally. A majority of voters – 60 percent -- say “...immigration helps San Diego County more than it hurts it” and rejects the converse -- that immigration hurts San Diego County more than it helps – 58 percent.

Referring to undocumented immigrants only, about half of all voters believe undocumented immigrants have a negative impact on wages, salaries and benefits in San Diego County and a negative impact on maintaining sound public health services, and meeting the demand for police services. Nevertheless, half of County voters say undocumented immigrants have a positive impact on the strength of the local economy – only a third disagree – and nearly two-thirds say undocumented immigrants have a positive impact on the diversity of local culture. San Diego voters acknowledge undocumented immigrants are very hard-working, do work that most Americans would not do and have strong family and religious values.

¹ FM3 conducted a survey of 898 randomly selected San Diego County voters likely to vote in the Fall 2018 election. The survey interviews were conducted from September 26th through October 1st. Two-hundred sixty-nine respondents replied by telephone, either landline or mobile. The balance of the interviews was conducted on-line. The interview by telephone took 21 minutes to complete. The margin of error for this study is plus or minus four percent.

12100 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 350
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Phone: (310) 828-1183
Fax: (310) 453-6562

1999 Harrison Street Suite 2020
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: (510) 451-9521
Fax: (510) 451-0384

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

County voters are perplexed by proposals to simply deport the roughly 11 to 12 million undocumented immigrants resident in the United States. On the one hand, 47 percent of voters agree “it doesn’t matter whether undocumented immigrants work hard, come from poverty or generally behave themselves. By being in the United States illegally, they are breaking our laws and ought to be shipped back to where they came from.” While on the other hand, 68 percent agree “It’s impractical to talk about sending back these immigrants to their home countries.”

San Diego County voters favor a Congressional solution to the immigration conundrum. By a margin of 69 percent in favor and 27 percent opposed, voters favor legislation allowing “the more than 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States today to earn legal status by paying fines and back taxes, proving good moral character and learning English.”

Voters find action on favorably resolving the status of the “Dreamers” to be especially compelling. When asked if they had heard anything recently about the Dreamers, 96 percent said they had, including 77 percent who said they had heard “a lot.”

Survey respondents were given two statements about Congressional action, as well as background information on President Trump’s asking Congress to act on Dreamer legislation:

- (1) “Congress should not vote for a law protecting Dreamers unless it also includes more border security.”
- (2) “Dreamers should not be used as bargaining chips and Congress should pass a bill to protect Dreamers first.”

Respondents were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the second statement. Sixty-six percent agreed and 31 percent disagreed.

More than 8 in 10 voters (83 percent) favor allowing undocumented immigrants to gain permanent legal status if they were brought to the United States as children, received a United States high school degree and have had no trouble with the law.

BORDER WALL AND OTHER MEASURES

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) oppose building a 21 billion-dollar wall the entire length of the border with Mexico, and the same number opposes tripling the number of ICE agents looking for undocumented immigrants at homes inside the United States. Expanding the United States Border Patrol from 20 to 25 thousand members, while gaining majority support, is nearly a draw.

HOMELAND SECURITY

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has powers that free it from the constraints that govern other police organizations. Four of these powers were tested for public approval in this survey. The power to enter homes and make arrests without a search warrant or probable cause and only the agency's approval – gained only 20 percent support. The most popular authority – allowing DHS to board and search any form of transportation without a warrant – received only 31 percent approval. The power to enter any private property within 25 miles of the United States-Mexico border without a search warrant and the authority to stop and interrogate anyone in the United States without reasonable suspicion gained approval of 24 percent each. Eighty-three percent wants DHS to be governed by the same rules that apply to other law enforcement agencies.