

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group, Hart Research & BSPR on behalf of FWD.us and America’s Voice
Date: March 3rd, 2021
Re: **NEW SURVEY- Voters nationwide support citizenship proposals facing Congress**

Three leading Democratic polling firms (Global Strategy Group, Garin-Hart-Yang, and BSP Research) recently partnered with FWD.us and America’s Voice to conduct research around proposed legislation to provide a pathway to citizenship for certain groups of undocumented immigrants. What we found is an electorate hungry for action on immigration and very high levels of support for the major citizenship proposals facing Congress.

After three consecutive election cycles of failed Republican anti-immigrant attacks – the MS-13 hits against the Democrat in the Virginia Governor’s race in 2017, the caravan attack against Democrats in the 2018 midterm, and the attacks against Biden for supporting “amnesty” in 2020 – the electorate is poised to reward lawmakers who support reasonable solutions to fix our nation’s immigration laws, starting with a pathway to citizenship. What follows is key findings from an online survey conducted in late February among 1,200 voters nationwide who participated in the 2020 presidential election.

Key Findings:

Citizenship for the undocumented is a consensus issue – not a divisive one – as the major citizenship proposals facing Congress are all very popular, with substantial support across partisan lines. Voters far prefer the approach of providing a pathway to citizenship to undocumented immigrants over an approach of deporting them (by a 79% to 21% margin). Even base Republicans prefer citizenship over deportation by a 61% to 39% margin.

- Specific proposals to provide citizenship all earn similarly massive support, including with Democrats, swing voters, Latinos, and African Americans. Notably, substantial numbers of Republicans also support each proposal as seen in the table below.
- Voters also strongly prefer extending work permits for people in the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program over subjecting them to deportation (by a 67% to 15% margin).

Proposal	National	Base Democrats	Swing Voters	Base Republicans	Latino	African American
DREAM Act	72 / 19 <small>Support Oppose</small>	91 / 4	72 / 16	50 / 39	85 / 10	77 / 7
Citizenship for undocumented farmworkers	71 / 22 <small>Support Oppose</small>	92 / 4	73 / 20	46 / 44	86 / 10	79 / 10
Citizenship for undocumented essential workers	66 / 25 <small>Support Oppose</small>	89 / 5	71 / 18	39 / 50	84 / 12	84 / 5

Voters want action on immigration to fix what they see as a broken system in need of major reform. The risk of inaction is high, especially with the Democratic Base and Latino voters. Blame for inaction will be shared across partisan lines. Three-quarters of voters (75%) believe the country’s current immigration system is not working well, a view that is shared equally by base Democrats (71%), swing voters (76%), and base Republicans (79%). Given this finding, voter reaction to inaction on immigration should be considered:

- **Voters will be upset over inaction, especially the voters Democrats need to show up in the midterm elections.** Nearly two-thirds (63%) of voters say they would be upset if immigration

reform does not pass and undocumented immigrants remain vulnerable to deportation, while just 37% say they would be happy with that outcome. Notably, 76% of Latinos say they would be upset, including 40% who say they would be *very* upset by this outcome. The Democratic base would also be upset over inaction (86% upset; 42% *very* upset).

- **Republicans will not receive all or even most of the blame should the efforts to pass citizenship bills fail.** When asked who they would blame if immigration reform does NOT pass, 38% say Republicans, 22% say Biden and the Democrats, but the plurality say both parties equally. This means that three in five voters (62%) would blame Biden and the Democrats in some capacity if these efforts fail. And while swing voters are especially likely to blame both sides (54% would blame both sides, 18% would blame Biden and Democrats, 27% would blame Republicans), over a third of base Democrats (38%) would place at least some blame on Democrats for that outcome.
- **A majority of voters say they would be less likely to vote for a Senator who votes AGAINST citizenship bills.** A majority of all voters (55%), and a strong majority of Latinos (63%) say they would be less likely to vote for a Senator who votes against citizenship bills, while just 28% of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a Senator who does that. Only 17% of voters say this issue would not make a difference in their vote.

As you communicate on citizenship proposals, our advice is to highlight the individuals impacted and tell their stories about who would benefit. In addition, we recommend continuing to invoke the “keeping families together” framework that has worked well as an umbrella theme for Democrats on immigration in recent years. Key strategic findings include:

- **Amplify the stories and situations of those affected.** Support is massive for providing citizenship for many different groups, but some of the more sympathetic groups include healthcare workers, farm and ranch workers, and school employees and teachers. Within the essential worker groups, after health care workers, the top groups include PPE factory workers and sanitation workers.
- **Reminding voters of the criteria for citizenship also boosts support and adds to the public’s comfort with granting citizenship.** Some of the more popular criteria for citizenship inclusion are being regularly employed and paying taxes, having a spouse or child who has served in the military, living in America for many years, and being in danger upon a return to their home country.
 - While voters across partisan lines find the idea of employment and paying taxes to be important, there is additional nuance to these findings by partisanship, with Democrats tending to be more sympathetic to what might happen to immigrants (that they would be in danger as they came here seeking freedom from oppression) while Republicans tend to be more sympathetic to the idea of immigrants’ contributions in the U.S. (being employed, having family serving in military, being independent and not reliant on government).
- **Adapting family separation messaging to the debate over citizenship is our most resonant message.** Voters strongly support Biden’s action to end family separation policy at the border, and in testing a variety of messages in support of citizenship, the item below tests best:
“It is cruel and wrong to deport people who have family roots in the United States, and work, pay taxes, and contribute to our communities. We must stop separating families and allow hardworking immigrants to gain legal status and a pathway to citizenship so that we keep families together.”
- **In general, it is better to focus on all of the aforementioned sympathetic details of those affected than to make economic arguments, including arguments about wages or demand for labor.** As we have seen in the past, talking about immigrants doing jobs Americans won’t do is not a helpful frame, and other economic arguments are less effective than what is recommended above.

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Global Strategy Group, Garin-Hart-Yang, and BSP Research conducted an online survey of 1,200 voters who participated in the 2020 election between February 20-26, 2021. The survey had a confidence interval of +/- 2.8%. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the population of the electorate are properly represented. For the target definitions described in this memo, Base Democrats are defined as Biden voters who always/mostly vote for Democrats, Base Republicans as Trump voters who always/mostly vote for Republicans, and Swing Voters as the remaining voters in the middle of the electorate who do not fall into either group.