



DEMOCRACY CORPS

CARVILLE ♦ GREENBERG

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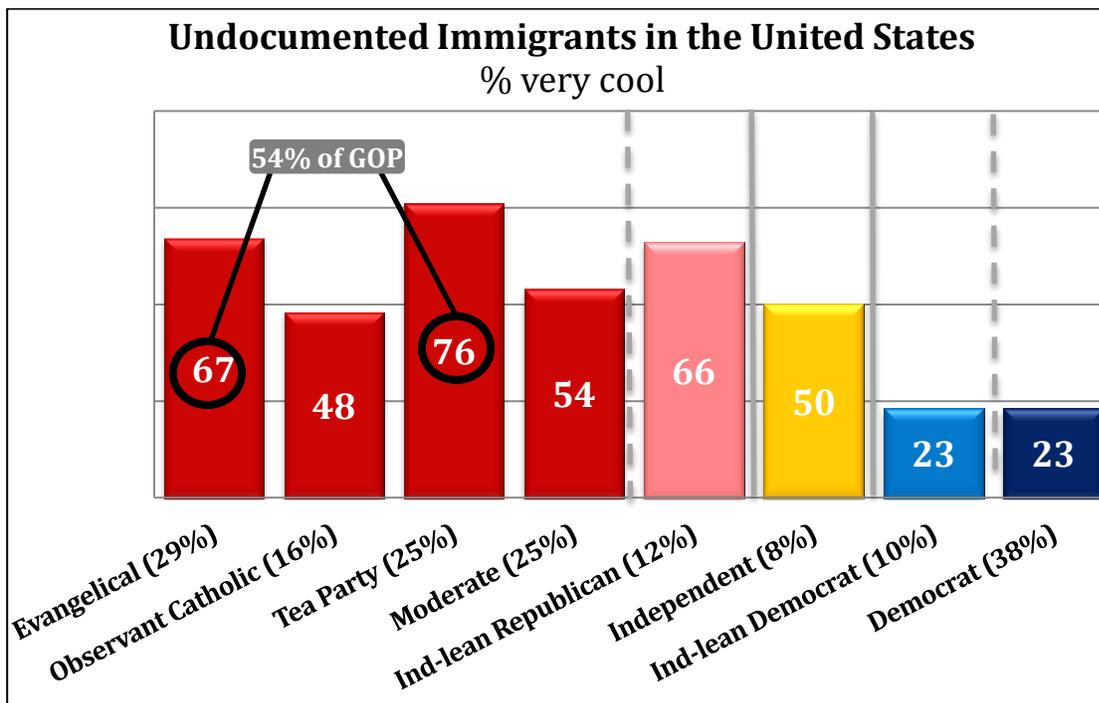
To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg and James Carville

Why the GOP Really Hates the Immigration Executive Order

When President Obama took steps to legalize the status of 5 million undocumented immigrants, he brought out the real Republican Party, not the reasonable one Republican leaders put forward momentarily after the election. There is a reason the Republican Party has stopped immigration reform and is now suing the president. The Republican Party is the anti-immigrant party, as reflected in the strong views expressed by the party's base about undocumented immigrants. Tea Party and Evangelical Republican base voters drive the intense majority opinion among the GOP on this issue, as Democracy Corps polling shows.

Three-quarters of the Tea Party and two-thirds of the Evangelical Republicans give a very cool response to "undocumented immigrants in the United States." Together, these blocs constitute the intense majority at the heart of the GOP (54 percent of Republican identifiers) and they are about as hostile to undocumented immigrants as to Obamacare. Both issues draw on a fear that Democrats are using government to build dependency and political support.¹





In focus groups, the Evangelical Republicans speak in graphic terms of being invaded and the failure to speak English drives them crazy.ⁱⁱ

Don't come here and make me speak your language. Don't fly your flag. You're on American soil. You're American. (Evangelical man, Roanoke)

You come to our country, you need to learn our language. (Evangelical man, Roanoke)

Why should I put—press 1 if I want to speak in English? You know, everything – every politically correct machine out there says, “Press 1 for English. Press 2 for Spanish.” (Evangelical man, Roanoke)

It is worth noting that the Moderates and Observant Catholics are less intense in their reaction to undocumented immigrants – only 54 percent of Moderates and 48 percent of Observant Catholics respond very coolly to the undocumented.

Likewise just one half of Independents and one quarter of Democrats give such a cool response to the undocumented.

In order to understand Tea Party and Evangelical Republicans' response to undocumented immigrants and President Obama's executive action on immigration, you must get inside the mind of the base they dominate. There is a fundamental belief among the GOP that they face uphill election battles against a Democratic Party that seeks to win a lasting majority by expanding government to increase dependency. It begins with food stamps and unemployment benefits, extends to the Affordable Care Act and expands further if you legalize undocumented immigrants.

For the Republican base, those policies are not just about Democratic political ideology or economic philosophy – they are part of an electoral strategy designed to stack the deck against the GOP.

The government's giving in to a minority, to push an agenda, as far as getting the votes for the next time. (Evangelical man, Roanoke)

Obama got elected because he kept saying, 'I'll keep giving you unemployment forever.' That's why he got elected. Now you can live in this country without a green card. Come on, we'll give you insurance, we'll give you money. That's why he got elected. (Tea Party woman, Roanoke)

That's why they want all the illegal aliens legalized. (Evangelical men, Roanoke)

The more threatened the Republican base feels, the more ardently the Tea Party and Evangelical majority of the GOP will fight back.



Democracy Corps' Republican Party Project tracks attitudes on immigration and other issues and how they play out within the key blocs in the Republican base. Hostility to undocumented immigrants and immigration reform are big hurdles at the heart of the Republican Party.



ⁱ Based on 6,054 interviews conducted for Democracy Corps, July 2013 – November, 2014.

ⁱⁱ This is based on findings from the first phase of research for Democracy Corps' Republican Party Project. We conducted six focus groups among Republican partisans – divided into Evangelicals, Tea Party adherents, and Moderates – between July 30th and August 1st, 2013. All participants indicated that they voted only or mostly for Republican candidates and were screened on a battery of ideological and political indicators. The groups were conducted in Raleigh, North Carolina (Moderate and Tea Party), Roanoke, Virginia (Tea Party and Evangelical), and Colorado Springs, Colorado (Moderate and Evangelical.)