



RESURGENT REPUBLIC

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Ed Gillespie, Whit Ayres, and Leslie Sanchez
DATE: September 16, 2011
RE: Opportunities and Challenges for Republicans Among Hispanic Voters

In conjunction with the Hispanic Leadership Network, Resurgent Republic conducted 1200 interviews with Hispanic voters in three states – Florida, Colorado, and New Mexico – during September 6-10, 2011, with full results available at www.resurgentrepublic.com. The surveys point to a number of opportunities for Republicans with Hispanics in these critical swing states, but significant challenges remain for Republicans in courting Hispanic voters.

To remain competitive, Republicans do not need to win a majority of Hispanics nationwide, or within these states. George W. Bush won 44 percent of Hispanics nationally in 2004, while John McCain slipped to 31 percent in 2008 (including 42 percent in Florida, 38 percent in Colorado, and 30 percent in New Mexico). Anywhere the pro-Republican number stands at 40 percent or greater in these surveys represents progress for Republicans. The same is true for Republican candidates statewide. In addition, the rise of Hispanic Independents is evident in this survey (40 percent in Florida; 34 percent in Colorado; and 24 percent in New Mexico). If Republicans are able to outperform their 2008 standing among these voters, it will be due to increased support among Hispanic swing voters.

Opportunities

1. Compared to 2008 President Obama is underperforming among Hispanic voters, particularly in Florida and New Mexico.

- In 2008, President Obama beat John McCain in Florida by 57 to 42 percent among Hispanics, but currently Obama is below 50 percent on two key presidential measures in the Sunshine State. He leads a generic Republican candidate by only 46 to 36 percent, and less than a majority of Florida Hispanic voters think Obama deserves reelection – 48 percent. In New Mexico, Obama won Hispanic voters by 69 to 30 percent in 2008, but now leads by 58 to 28 percent, with 56 percent saying he deserves reelection. In Colorado, Obama won by 61 to 38 percent among Hispanics in 2008, and now leads 59 to 27 percent, with 58 percent saying he deserves reelection.

2. President Obama's support has softened among a number of key Hispanic subgroups, particularly Hispanic Independents in Florida and Colorado.

- In Florida, where Hispanic voters overall approve of his job performance by 50 to 45 percent, Hispanic Independents approve by just 49 to 45 percent, college graduates split at 48 percent approve/48 percent disapprove (although those with post-graduate degrees approve by 53 to 43 percent), seniors age 65 and older disapprove by 52 to 44 percent, and middle-income Hispanics (those earning \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year) disapprove by 51 to 44 percent.
- In Colorado, where Hispanic voters overall approve of his job performance by 59 to 39 percent, men approve by just 52 to 47 percent (versus 64 to 32 percent among women), and Independents disapprove by 49 to 48 percent. College graduates and voters with post-college degrees approve by 52 to 40 percent and 54 to 44 percent, respectively, and seniors age 65 and older approve by 59 to 41 percent.
- In New Mexico, where Hispanic voters overall approve of his job performance by 65 to 32 percent, men approve by 57 to 39 percent (versus 71 to 26 percent among women), and Independents approve by 55 to 36 percent.

3. Hispanic voters in these three states think President Obama has not delivered on the promises he made to Hispanics during the 2008 campaign, and say he has been a weaker leader than they expected. They split on the impact of his policies.

- Hispanic voters in each of the three states say that he has not delivered on the promises he made to Hispanic voters during the 2008 campaign – 56 to 27 percent in Florida (including 58 to 25 percent among Independents), 50 to 35 percent in Colorado (including 61 to 25 percent among Independents), and 46 to 37 percent in New Mexico (including 56 to 22 percent among Independents). In addition, less than half of Democrats in each state believe Obama has delivered on his campaign promises – 47 percent in Florida, 48 percent in Colorado, and 49 percent in New Mexico.
- Majorities of Hispanics, including wide margins among Independents, say that Obama has turned out to be a weaker leader than they thought he would be – 57 to 34 percent in Florida (60 to 29 percent among Independents), 54 to 40 percent in Colorado (67 to 27 percent among Independents), and 54 to 39 percent in New Mexico (63 to 26 percent among Independents).

Consistent with national findings, intensity favors the negative on this question, with more Hispanic voters saying he has been "much weaker" than "much stronger" – 29 to 14 percent in Florida, 27 to 17 percent in Colorado, and 21 to 17 percent in New Mexico.

- Florida Hispanics are divided on the impact of President Obama's policies, with 37 percent saying they have made things better for most Hispanic Americans, and 37 percent saying they have made things worse (Independents split at 34 percent for each response). While Colorado Hispanic voters say his policies have made

things better by 50 to 32 percent, Independents say they have made things worse by 43 to 38 percent. Similarly, New Mexico voters say his policies have made things better by 48 to 31 percent, but Independents say they have made things worse by 46 to 26 percent.

4. Hispanic voters in Florida trust Republicans more than Democrats on national security, government spending, and the deficit.

- Florida Hispanics trust Republicans over Democrats on national security by 44 to 34 percent. On government spending and the deficit, they trust Republicans more by 43 to 36 percent.

5. Like voters all over the country, Hispanic voters are strongly dissatisfied with the direction of the country, and do not see a positive change in the situation for Hispanics since 2009.

- Hispanics in Florida say the country is off on the wrong track by 65 to 24 percent, compared to 63 to 27 percent in Colorado, and 60 to 28 percent in New Mexico. These margins are significantly wider than what we found in our March 2010 national survey of Hispanics where only 50 percent said wrong track and 40 percent believed the country was headed in the right direction.

As with all voters nationwide, the economy and jobs dominate the issue landscape – 72 percent in Florida, 69 percent in Colorado, and 60 percent in New Mexico say that these issues are most important.

- Hispanic voters do not see positive changes since 2009. In Florida, 44 percent say the situation for Hispanics is about the same, 37 percent say it is worse, and only 10 percent say it is better. In Colorado, 48 percent say it is the same, 35 percent say worse, and 12 percent say better. And in New Mexico, 47 percent say it is the same, 30 percent say worse, and 16 percent say better. In our March 2010 national survey, 61 percent said the situation for Hispanics is about the same, 20 percent worse, and 15 percent better.

6. Overwhelming majorities of Hispanics in all three states support voter ID laws, a requirement promoted by Republicans and resisted by Democrats.

- When asked if they support or oppose "laws that would require registered voters to present photo identification, such as a driver's license, in order to cast their vote," support is overwhelming: 88 percent in Florida, 71 percent in Colorado, and 73 percent in New Mexico.

Given the strong dissatisfaction Hispanics register in these three swing states with the direction of the country and the strength of the President's leadership, it will be difficult in 2012 for President Obama to rack up the margins among Hispanic voters that he achieved in 2008.

Challenges

Despite the clear opportunities for Republicans among Hispanic voters in these three states, significant challenges remain:

1. Republican positions on immigration reform continue to be at odds with the overwhelming majority of Hispanic voters.

- **Majorities of Hispanic voters support immigration reform legislation that includes earned legalization for undocumented immigrants who are already here.** When asked which immigration reform legislation they prefer among three options, *“A bill that includes border security, a temporary-worker program, and earned legalization for undocumented immigrants who are already here, because any solution to the immigration problem must deal with all of the problems with our immigration system”* is the top choice in each state – 55 percent in Florida, 53 percent in Colorado, and 50 percent in New Mexico.

The second choice is *“A bill that includes border security and a temporary-worker program, because we have to address the need for immigrant workers if we are ever going to get control of the border”* – 20 percent in Florida, 23 percent in Colorado, and 24 percent in New Mexico.

The third choice is *“A bill that concentrates on border security but does not include a temporary-worker program or earned legalization for undocumented immigrants who are already here, because we have to secure the border first”* – with just 19 percent in Florida, 15 percent in Colorado, and 17 percent in New Mexico.

- **Large majorities of Hispanics in each state support earned legalization for undocumented immigrants with no criminal background who meet strict guidelines like registration, paying a fine, and learning English.** Florida Hispanics support earned legalization with these conditions by 67 to 27 percent, compared to 65 to 30 percent in Colorado, and 58 to 33 percent in New Mexico.
- **By large margins, Hispanics in each state support a version of the Dream Act – allowing the children of undocumented immigrants to attain legal residency if they complete college or serve in the military.** Florida Hispanics support this policy by 67 to 28 percent, compared to 63 to 30 percent in Colorado, and 59 to 33 percent in New Mexico.
- **Florida Hispanics say that the federal government should focus on the economy right now, but those in Colorado and New Mexico say that now is a good time to pass immigration reform.** Florida Hispanics say now is not a good time to pass immigration reform by a slim 48 to 45 percent margin, while those in Colorado and New Mexico say it is a good time by margins of 50 to 43 percent and 51 to 40 percent, respectively.
- **Republicans in Congress take the lion’s share of the blame for the government’s failure to pass immigration reform over the last few years, especially in Colorado and New Mexico.** In Florida, 38 percent blame

congressional Republicans, while 31 percent blame congressional Democrats or President Obama. In Colorado, 48 percent blame Republicans and 27 percent blame Obama or the Democrats. And in New Mexico, 46 percent blame Republicans, and 23 percent blame Obama or the Democrats.

2. "Conservative" is the dominant ideology among Hispanic voters, but these voters are not conservative across-the-board.

- In Florida, 45 percent of Hispanics say they are conservative, 24 percent moderate, and 27 percent liberal. In Colorado the distribution is 40 percent conservative, 25 percent moderate, and 29 percent liberal. In New Mexico it is 45 percent conservative, 24 percent moderate, and 24 percent liberal.
- In Florida, conservatives prefer a Republican on the generic congressional ballot by 58 to 22 percent. But in Colorado and New Mexico, they prefer a Democrat by margins of 39 to 37 percent and 41 to 40 percent, respectively.
- In Florida, conservative Hispanics prefer a generic Republican to President Obama by a 61 to 26 percent margin. But conservative Hispanics in Colorado prefer the Republican by just 46 to 40 percent, and those in New Mexico by just 45 to 41 percent.
- Conservative Hispanics in Florida and Colorado believe the best way to increase job opportunities for Hispanics is to "rein in government spending, lower taxes, and reduce excessive regulations," compared to "increase government investments in job training, education, and infrastructure" (52 to 42 percent in Florida, 51 to 42 percent in Colorado). In New Mexico, conservative Hispanics actually split evenly on this question: 46 percent for more government spending/44 percent for less spending.

3. Democrats continue to hold advantages in party identification, as well as trust on most issues.

- **Democrats have a party ID advantage among Hispanics in these states.** In Florida, Democrats have a narrow 30 to 26 percent advantage over Republicans, compared to wide margins of 51 to 14 percent in Colorado, and 57 to 18 percent in New Mexico.
- **Hispanics in these states are more likely to trust Democrats than Republicans on most policy issues.** In Colorado and New Mexico, Hispanic voters trust Democrats more than Republicans on the economy, education, government spending, health care, immigration, national security, and taxes, typically by margins of 20 to 30 points. The margins in favor of Democrats tend to be somewhat slimmer in Florida, although Democrats still have advantages on every issue except government spending and national security.

4. Barack Obama remains popular among Hispanic voters.

- President Obama has solidly positive name ID in each state, with a 55 to 37 favorable-unfavorable rating in Florida, a 61 to 34 percent rating in Colorado, and a 64 to 31 percent rating in New Mexico.
- Hispanic voters approve of the job he is doing as President – by a narrow 50 to 45 percent margin in Florida, but by wide margins of 59 to 39 percent and 65 to 32 percent in Colorado and New Mexico, respectively. His ratings are somewhat weaker on the economy – Hispanics in Florida *disapprove* of his job by 52 to 42 percent, but those in Colorado and New Mexico approve by 56 to 41 percent and 56 to 40 percent, respectively.

Conclusion

Hispanics are America's largest and fastest-growing minority group, constituting 16.3 percent of the American population in 2010 compared to 12.6 percent for African-Americans and 4.8 percent for Asians. Hispanics now outnumber non-Hispanic whites in the population (although not yet among voters) in New Mexico, and are close to surpassing non-Hispanic whites in the populations of California and Texas. To remain competitive in the future in national elections and in states with significant Hispanic populations, including the three crucial swing states we have polled here, Republicans must increase their share of the Hispanic vote over that they have received in recent elections.

Methodology

These surveys of 400 respondents per state were conducted September 6-10, 2011. Respondents were selected randomly from a listed sample of Hispanic registered voters in each state. All respondents confirmed that they are registered to vote in the county in which they live, and are of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent. Each respondent also had a choice to take the survey in English or Spanish. Quotas were set for county, age, and gender based on state registration. All calls were conducted by live interviewers.

The margin of error for responses with an even split – 50 percent for one response and 50 percent for another response – are ± 4.90 percent for the full sample. The margin of error is smaller when one response receives a higher level of support. For example, the margin of error is ± 4.24 percent when 75 percent of respondents choose one response and 25 percent choose another response.