



**To: Interested Parties**

**From: Sergio Bendixen, Obama for America Hispanic Pollster  
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**Re: Republicans Seal Their Fate with Hispanic Voters in 2012**

According to recent polls, the two leading contenders for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich, may very well have already sealed the political fate of their party with the Hispanic electorate – the fastest growing voting bloc in the country. Their extreme rhetoric on immigration during the televised debates has rejected our history as a nation of immigrants and alienated millions of Hispanic voters nationally. Many Hispanics see Romney’s strong opposition to the DREAM Act and to any type of comprehensive immigration reform as more of a demagogic appeal to Tea Party voters than an attempt to formulate a responsible policy.

Newt Gingrich’s characterization of Spanish as “the language of living in a ghetto” is offensive at face value to Hispanics and neutralizes any credit he may have received for supporting legal status for “undocumented *abuelitas*.” Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, warned his party in a recent Washington Post op-ed that Hispanic voters have “drifted away” from the Republican Party in large part because of the insensitive rhetoric of its presidential candidates. But Hispanics’ opposition to the Republican candidates is much broader than their rejection of their immigration rhetoric and positions. On the issues most important to Hispanic voters, Republicans are on the wrong side.

### **THE LATEST POLLS DEMONSTRATE REPUBLICANS WEAK STANDING WITH HISPANICS**

The latest national Univision/Latino Decisions poll of Hispanic voters clearly indicates the weak position Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich are in with Hispanic voters, and how much of an advantage Barack Obama will have over them in the general election. According to the survey, the President has a 72 percent favorability rating among all Hispanic voters and a 25% unfavorability rating. Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich are both deep underwater, at 28/41 and 24/44, respectively.

When it comes to the November election, President Obama may receive the highest percentage of the Hispanic vote ever – higher than the 73 percent that Bill Clinton got in his 1996 reelection. The Univision/Latino Decisions poll has him defeating Newt

Gingrich 70% to 22% and Mitt Romney 67% to 25% — by larger margins than the 67% to 31% the President received in 2008 over McCain, who ultimately lost the election. Even a strong primary performance by Romney in Florida, a state with the highest proportion of conservative Hispanic voters, should not be taken as a sign of growing Republican strength in the state. Romney currently leads Gingrich 35-20 in Florida among Hispanic voters, according to the Univision/Latino Decisions Poll. But in the 2008 primary, McCain won the Florida Cuban vote 54-9 over Romney, and 53-21 over Romney with non-Cuban Hispanic voters. Although Romney seems likely to achieve a much more impressive primary victory this time around, McCain still ultimately lost to Obama 57-42 among Hispanic voters in Florida.

And a Republican-leaning group poll [Resurgent Republic, 1/26/12] last week showed the President easily beating a generic Republican in Florida and seen favorably by the majority of Hispanic voters in the state. If those numbers hold among Hispanic voters, President Obama would have a much greater chance of carrying Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

### **ON THE ISSUES HISPANICS PREFER THE PRESIDENT OVER THE REPUBLICANS**

It is also clear from polling that the positions the Republican candidates have taken on the issues most important to the Hispanic community are directly at odds with Hispanic voters. The speeches and policy statements of both Romney and Gingrich on issues like the economy, the creation of jobs, health care, public education, housing, programs for seniors, and immigration are deeply unpopular with most Hispanics.

Hispanic voters identified the economy as by far the most important issue in determining their vote in 2012, and 61% of Hispanic voters trust the President to improve the economy more, while just 24% trust Republicans more [Univision/Latino Decisions, 1/25/12]. The GOP presidential contenders have made it clear from Iowa to Florida that they support the failed economic policies of previous Republican administrations – the middle class bearing the brunt of lower taxes for millionaires. Hispanic voters strongly oppose that point-of-view--just 31% prefer lowering taxes. Although there is no doubt that Hispanics, like everyone else, have been hit hard by the economic downturn our country has experienced only 18% blame President Obama for current economic conditions, compared to 66% who blame former President Bush.

Hispanics strongly support the Affordable Care Act that will give every American access to quality health care at an affordable cost and insure 9 million Hispanics that currently have no health insurance; Romney and Gingrich have promised to repeal the new health care law – a position held by just 28% of Hispanic voters according to the Univision/Latino Decisions poll.

Hispanics strongly support our public schools and Pell Grants for the millions of Hispanic students that cannot afford to pay for a university education; Governor Romney

opposes smaller class sizes and his budget plans would require cutting Pell Grants, as well as all other spending outside of defense and Social Security, by 24 percent. The Hispanic community knows nearly one in two Hispanic seniors count on Social Security as their sole source of income; Romney supports a budget plan that would enact deep cuts to Social Security benefits and Gingrich supports dangerous privatization schemes that would endanger the future financial stability of Social Security. Hispanics were strongly impacted by the housing foreclosure crisis; the Republican candidate – especially Romney – who has said: “Don’t try to stop the foreclosure process. Let it run its course and hit the bottom” – appear to support abandoning those that are losing their homes through no fault of their own.

And on the issue of immigration, an issue that Governor Romney has led the charge in demagoguing, the damage that both Gingrich and Romney have caused by pandering to the extreme right of their party, may be irreversible. Both Gingrich and Romney oppose an earned path to citizenship, which 71% of Hispanics favor. On the DREAM Act, which Romney has promised to veto and called a “handout,” the latest Univision poll not only indicates that 85% of Hispanics support it, but also that the majority of Hispanics are less likely to support a candidate who does not.

Given the President’s current strong standing in the polls nationally with Hispanic voters, and the extreme positions and rhetoric of Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich, this upcoming election could seal Republican’s fate with Hispanics not only in 2012, but for generations to come.

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