

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin and Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates
DATE: November 21, 2014
RE: Executive Action on Immigration

On behalf of Americans United for Change, Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey on the topic of President Obama's executive action on immigration. The survey was conducted among 800 likely 2016 voters from November 19 to 20, 2014, and has a margin of error of ±3.5 percentage points. This memo reviews the survey's key findings.

Key Findings

- Voters respond favorably by an overwhelming 39-point margin to executive action by President Obama that would focus immigration enforcement efforts on threats to national security and public safety while allowing some illegal immigrants to stay and work in the United States (67% favorable, 28% unfavorable). Support is broad, incorporating a majority of voters in every region of the country, among both men and women, and in states won by both Barack Obama (67% favorable) and Mitt Romney (65% favorable). Younger voters under age 35 express particularly strong support (72%), but more than 60% feel favorable in every age cohort.

Executive action receives support from 91% of Democrats and 67% of political independents. While a narrow 51% majority of Republicans oppose executive action (41% favor), this is driven mainly by a 34-point margin of opposition among Tea Party Republicans (30% favor, 64% oppose). Among non-Tea Party Republicans opinion is more divided, with 47% in favor and 45% opposed.

- Description of executive action: *The action would direct immigration enforcement officials to focus on threats to national security and public safety, and not on deporting otherwise law-abiding immigrants. Immigrants who are parents of children who are legal US residents could qualify to stay and work temporarily in the United States, without being deported, if they have lived in the United States for at least five years, pay taxes, and pass a criminal background check.*
- Many individual elements of the executive action are very popular with voters:
 - Allow undocumented immigrants who are parents of children or young adults living legally in the United States to stay in the United States without being deported (66% favorable, 28% unfavorable);
 - Expand the DACA program that provides temporary legal status and work permits to undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children (63% favorable, 27% unfavorable);
 - Provide temporary work permits to qualifying immigrants (76% favorable, 21% unfavorable);

- Shift more security resources to the Mexican border (79% favorable, 16% unfavorable).
- Republican leaders are challenging President Obama's legal authority to take this executive action aggressively. The survey results show that Democrats have the better of this debate, with voters agreeing by a 10-point margin (51% to 41%) that the president does have legal authority to act. Independents agree that the president is acting lawfully by an 18-point margin (54% to 36%). This is the debate respondents heard:
 - Democrats say the only way to fix our broken immigration system once and for all is for Congress to pass bipartisan legislation. But in the meantime, the president has the legal authority to set enforcement priorities to deport drug dealers and smugglers instead of immigrants who have lived and worked here for years and are contributing to America. (51% agree)*
 - Republicans say that the president has no legal right to start rewriting the nation's immigration laws—only Congress has the constitutional authority to do that. A president can't just decide to stop enforcing the laws he doesn't like, and legalizing millions of illegal immigrants is an abuse of presidential power. (41% agree)*
- Voters strongly reject aggressive strategies being considered by Republicans to block executive action, including a government shutdown and impeachment. By a 48-point margin (72% oppose, 24% favor) voters oppose a strategy of Republicans shutting down the government until the president agrees to end his executive action. While Tea party Republicans favor a shutdown strategy by 61% to 36%, Republicans who do not identify with the Tea Party oppose a shutdown by 62% to 32%. And by a 31-point margin, voters oppose impeaching the president and removing him from office in response to this executive action (63% oppose, 32% favor).
- After hearing a detailed description of the provisions of the executive action, and a balanced debate over the policy, voters support it by an even larger 69% to 27% majority. Voters also say, after learning about executive action and hearing the debate, that they have more confidence in President Obama (44%) than in Republicans in Congress (35%) to deal with immigration (independents trust Obama by an even larger, 21-point margin, 47% to 26%).