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CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS' CLEAR CHOICE ON
IMMIGRATION:

**STAND WITH
PRO-REFORM
MAJORITIES**

OR

**CAVE TO
ANTI-
IMMIGRANT
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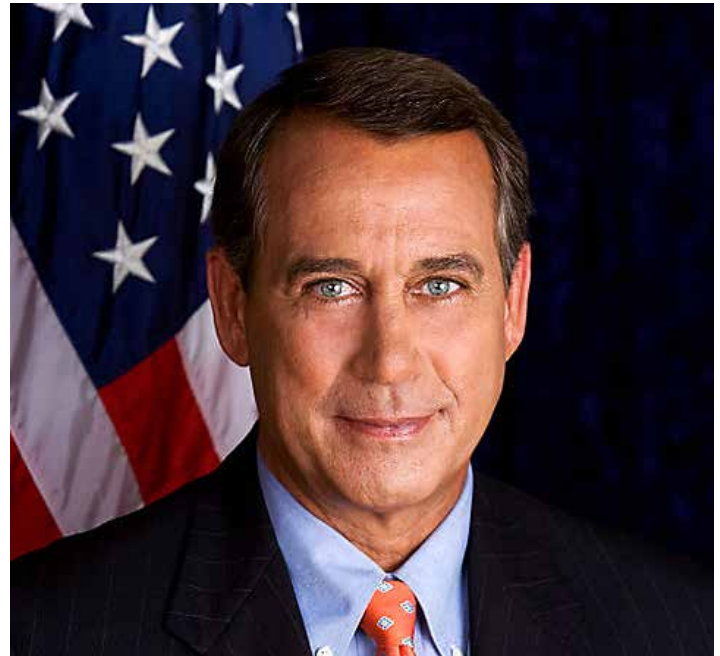
People For the American Way's 2010 report, [\(P\)reviewing the Right-Wing Playbook on Immigration Reform](#), documented strategies used by right-wing activists and their political allies to [block](#) efforts to pass comprehensive immigration reform in 2007.

These strategies – and attempts to [undermine](#) constitutional guarantees of citizenship for children of immigrants – were also adopted by Republican members of Congress. In 2007, the Center for New Community said the Immigration Reform Caucus in the House of Representatives had “drawn even well-intentioned immigration reform proposals down into an abyss of nativism and xenophobia.” Then-House Minority Leader John Boehner called the 2007 Senate compromise legislation a “piece of shit bill.” In 2009, during the confirmation hearings for Sonia Sotomayor, Pat Buchanan [argued](#) that Republicans should stop worrying about Latinos and focus on winning elections by maximizing their share of the white vote.

The voices of right-wing nativism, divisiveness, and extremism are still with us in 2013 even as the world has changed around them. Republican members of Congress face a defining question: will they stand with the majority of Americans, and majority of Republicans, who support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for undocumented people living in the United States? Or will they stand with the extremists who are trying to block the new bipartisan momentum for reform?

THE 2012 REALITY CHECK

While some GOP strategists have been warning for years that the Republican Party should not continue to alienate America's fastest-growing demographic group, they had been largely shouted down by anti-immigrant hard-liners and Tea Party activists and the politicians they helped elect. During the 2012 Republican presidential primary, eventual GOP nominee Mitt Romney lashed himself to the anti-immigrant Tea Party base with his hard-line rhetoric and calls for “self-deportation” – so much so that even some conservative evangelical leaders denounced his proposals as immoral and un-American.



JOHN BOEHNER CALLED THE 2007 SENATE COMPROMISE LEGISLATION A “PIECE OF SHIT BILL.”

Photo credit: boehner.house.gov

But the 2012 general election gave Republicans a hard dose of reality. Latino voters supported President Obama by an overwhelming 71-27 percent [margin](#), and by even higher margins in some battleground states like Colorado. Supermajorities of Asian Americans also voted for Obama as did an overwhelming number of African Americans. Republican leaders began to view the immigration issue in a new light, accepting the evidence that most Latinos will not be open to voting for Republican candidates as long as the Party is widely seen as hostile to the rights and interests of immigrants.

The fact that most Republicans now support comprehensive reform should strengthen congressional Republicans' resolve to stand up to the admittedly very vocal opponents of reform. Recent [polling](#) by the Public Religion Research Institute and Brookings Institution documents that a majority of Republicans and a majority of white working-class Americans agree that immigration

reform should provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants now in the country. That polling also confirms the challenge facing reform-minded Republican leaders, something columnist E.J. Dionne calls a “coalition management problem.” Support for a path to citizenship drops to 44 percent among the “Teavangelicals” – white evangelicals who are also Tea Party members – a vocal part of the Republican base. In fact, Tea Party supporters are the only group expressing majority support for the kind of “self-deportation” strategy that was promoted by failed GOP candidate Mitt Romney.

REFORM PUSH MEETS RIGHT-WING BACKLASH

The White House and a bipartisan group of senators have released similar but not identical outlines for comprehensive reform. And a number of Republicans are [promoting](#) comprehensive immigration reform. For example, Sen. Lindsey Graham told a Rotary Club audience, “When it comes to immigration reform, now is the time ... I’ve never seen a better political environment ... I’m not doing immigration reform to solve the Republican Party’s political problem. I’m trying to save our nation from, I think, a shortage of labor and a catastrophic broken system.” Sen. Rand Paul has told [Politico](#), “I’m in favor of telling the 11 million people who are here, if you’re willing to work, we’re willing to find a way to normalize your presence here...” Of course, there are still a lot of questions about what specific policies will be found acceptable, such as a path to citizenship, which former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush opposed in his new book, but said, just as his book was being released, that he would now support.

Among the key senators is Marco Rubio, who was elected to the Senate as a Tea Party Republican in an election in which he [blurred](#) his position on Arizona’s anti-immigrant law. Some GOP strategists believe he could be the party’s Latino Ronald Reagan, someone

who could redeem the party’s reputation among Latinos. Rubio hopes to burnish his presidential prospects by shepherding reform to a bipartisan passage, but he has to sell his supporters on reforms that some of them denounced not so long ago. Rubio is [working](#) to [convince conservatives](#) that the kind of package he is backing is different from the 2007 reform law that they blocked. But many of the GOP’s hard-liners are not yet convinced and appear to be doubling down on their opposition to comprehensive reform.

Kansas Secretary of State [Kris Kobach](#), a longtime right-wing activist on immigration issues and an author of Arizona’s SB 1070, [denounced](#) Sen. John McCain and other senators pushing reform, saying “Those leaders, like John McCain, are not leaders of the Republican Party.” Kobach has filed a [lawsuit](#) against the Obama administration’s policy of suspending deportation of some students who were brought to the U.S. as children. Peter Brimelow, editor of the VDARE website that publishes white nationalist authors, has praised Kobach’s hard line on immigration and in 2012 [urged](#) Mitt Romney to make Kobach his running mate.

[Sen. Jeff Sessions](#) of Alabama, who led opposition to reforms in 2007, is back. He is among those who claim



JEFF SESSIONS IS AMONG THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT THE REAL PROBLEM IS THAT THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT BEEN ENFORCING CURRENT IMMIGRATION LAW (EVEN THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN RECORD NUMBERS OF DEPORTATIONS DURING THIS ADMINISTRATION).

Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama by Gage Skidmore

that the real problem is that the Obama administration has not been enforcing current immigration law (even though there have been record numbers of deportations during this administration).

We would be in a much better position to achieve immigration reform if the Obama Administration had spent that last four years enforcing federal law rather than dismantling it...Yet, without consulting the law officers who have the duty to enforce the law, another group of senators, meeting in secret—just like the last time comprehensive reform failed—have set forth an outline with no legislative language...Amnesty will not help balance our budget. In fact, a large-scale amnesty is likely to add trillions of dollars to the debt over time, accelerate Medicare's and Social Security's slide into insolvency, and put enormous strain on our public assistance programs. We know already that the administration refuses to enforce existing law restricting immigrant welfare use, and in fact promotes expanded welfare use to immigrants—including food stamps, public housing, and Medicaid.

Former South Carolina senator [Jim DeMint](#), a founding father of the Tea Party movement and the new president of the Heritage Foundation, says "Democrats are much more interested in new voters and union members than they are in fixing the system and honoring our heritage of immigration. I don't think we can help our naturalized American citizens by tearing down those things that create the opportunity in our country, and border sovereignty, rule of law, those things create the freedom and opportunity that immigrants come here for."

PUNDITS NOT PLEASED

Ann Coulter, in a post-election column headlined "[America Nears el Tipping Pointo](#)," described Latino immigrants as dependency-seeking lowlifes:

That's a lot of government dependents coming down the pike. No amount of "reaching out" to the Hispanic community, effective "messaging" or Reagan's "optimism" is going to turn Mexico's underclass into Republicans...Romney was the first Republican presidential candidate in a long time not conspiring with the elites to make America a dumping ground for the world's welfare cases.

Right-wing pundit Michelle Malkin quickly [denounced](#) the proposal from the Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Eight," saying, "And don't believe the hype from Rubio supporters that this warmed-over shamnesty proposal — another recipe for more illegal immigration, a bigger welfare state, and undermined sovereignty — is some-



CLAIMS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM MEANS "COMPLETE AMNESTY OF ALL ILLEGALS SO THEY CAN IMMEDIATELY SIGN UP FOR WELFARE PROGRAMS AND COMMENCE THE PATH TOWARDS BECOMING A PERMANENT DEMOCRAT VOTING BLOC..."
— DANIEL HOROWITZ REDSTATE.COM

Red State

Photo credit: WBYZ 94.5 FM

how new, improved and more enlightened."

[Rush Limbaugh](#) gave Rubio a polite hearing, but vowed to defeat reform proposals that he portrayed as an Obama plot to create a permanent underclass of Democratic voters:

He wants the unsettledness and the chaos and the argument to go on for two more years 'cause it allows him to beat up Republicans and lie about them and continue to call 'em anti-Hispanic, insensitive, anti-immigrant and all that.

...

So let there be no mistake what this is about from the Democrat side. They need a permanent underclass. They need voters. They need money to

fund Social Security. They need all kinds of things. And, as the economy improves (if it ever does), and people do raise their economic circumstances, you need people to fill in at the lower end. That's what this is about for them. Make no mistake.

"AMNESTY!"

In the past, anti-reform groups successfully rallied opposition by labeling as "amnesty" any policy short of mass deportation.

Daniel Horowitz, writing on [Red State](#), portrayed immigration reform as the Democratic Party's effort to buy immigrant votes through welfare benefits:

Perforce, when they speak of "comprehensive immigration reform" they are referring to the following: complete amnesty of all illegals so they can immediately sign up for welfare programs and commence the path towards becoming a permanent Democrat voting bloc; an even larger increase in legal immigration from the third world and from countries that represent a security risk; more welfare recipients now – enforcement later (or never). This is the brutally honest reality of the liberal immigration policy desideratum. Any Republican who plunges into this debate while disregarding this reality is willfully ignoring the statements and actions of Democrats over the past several decades....

[Dan Stein](#), who heads the anti-immigration Federation for American Immigration Reform, called it a "ludicrous idea" that Republicans could win over Latino voters by supporting reform proposals. "All this will do is ensure their political annihilation. Republicans don't have a Hispanic voter problem—they have trouble convincing people that aren't hospitable to low taxes and high entrepreneurship what is in it for them to be Republican."

"AMNESTY!"



"ROMNEY WAS THE FIRST REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN A LONG TIME NOT CONSPIRING WITH THE ELITES TO MAKE AMERICA A DUMPING GROUND FOR THE WORLD'S WELFARE CASES."

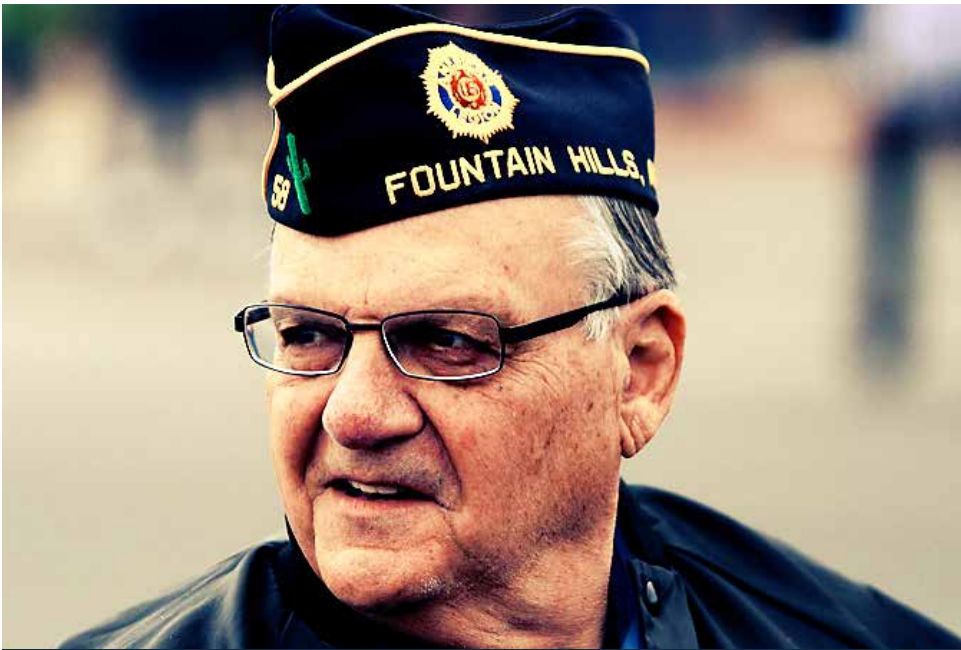
—ANN COULTER, POST-ELECTION COLUMN

Ann Coulter by Gage Skidmore

crying "amnesty" will clearly be a favored tactic of those interested in derailing the new bipartisan push for immigration reform. Texas Rep. [Lamar Smith](#) and Rep. Pete [King](#) denounced the recent Senate proposal as "amnesty" that will encourage more illegal immigration. Ohio Rep. Steve Chabot [said](#) the Senate proposal "looks a whole lot like amnesty." The [Drudge Report](#) linked to a story about Obama's proposal with the banner headline, "COMING: AMNESTY FOR 11 MILLION." On National Review's blog, anti-immigration activist Mark Krikorian [called](#) President Obama's recent remarks his "stock amnesty speech." NumbersUSA – part of a collection of anti-immigration groups with ties to white supremacists – also denounced the plan as "amnesty" and vowed to mobilize opposition.

In March, Conn Carroll, the senior editorial writer for the conservative Washington Examiner, [slammed](#) both Marco Rubio and Rand Paul in a column titled "Rand Paul's amnesty plan is worse than Rubio's." Carroll calls a path to citizenship "a clear ongoing violation of the rule of law."

The conservative Hispanic Leadership Network is trying to help Republicans deal with the issue in a [memo](#) promoting "tonally sensitive" language. But the problem it's facing is more than tone. The Hispanic Leadership Network asserts that "amnesty" means "pardon without any penalty." But anti-reform politicians have long used the term more aggressively and may have a hard time getting supporters to apply it with nuance.



JOE ARPAIO, A RIGHT-WING FOLK HERO AND TO MANY THE FACE OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT, TOLD FOX BUSINESS NEWS THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE ESTIMATED 11 MILLION UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE IN THE U.S., BUT SAID THAT
IN ARIZONA
THEY'VE BEEN
"LOCKING THEM UP."

Arizona Sheriff, Joe Arpaio by Gage Skidmore

Some conservatives are trying to give "amnesty" a different political meaning by [portraying](#) the existing status quo – and President Obama's executive order protecting some student DREAMers – as "de facto amnesty."

DENIGRATING IMMIGRATION ADVOCATES

Conservatives have long tried to tarnish the moral authority of civil rights and other progressive organizations. In a post-election [column](#), P.J. Media's J. Christian Adams wrote:

There is only one way to obtain the support of Hispanics and other minorities eventually. Conservatives must first confront and destroy the credibility of the racial interest groups that serve as the gatekeepers to these communities. Once-relevant and noble groups like the NAACP, and others less noble such as LULAC and MALDEF, must be

exposed as the frauds that they have become in 2012. Their finances and racist agenda must be revealed and lampooned. Their racial extortion of corporate America must be confronted. The entire political operation of these groups must be vivisected by some of the brightest investigative and journalistic conservative minds.

TOXIC TEA

While the Tea Party had not yet appeared on the scene as an organized part of the right-wing movement during the 2007 push for immigration reform, polling has demonstrated that Tea Party members are [more strongly opposed](#) to common elements of immigration reform than Republicans generally. Sen. Ted Cruz, a Cuban-American whose defeat of the state's lieutenant governor relied on a Tea Party insurgency against establishment Republicans, was quick to [express "deep concerns"](#) about providing a path to citizenship. Sheriff Joe Arpaio, a right-wing folk hero and to many the face of anti-immigrant sentiment, [told](#) Fox Business News that he didn't know exactly what should be done with the estimated 11 million undocumented people in the U.S., but said that in Arizona

they've been "locking them up."

Tea Party Nation's [Judson Phillips](#), who says there are more undocumented immigrants than the often-cited 11 million estimate, told CNN, "Illegal immigration has already put massive and unaffordable burdens on the welfare state, and with 20 million or more applying for Amnesty, this will simply accelerate this process." Phillips [tweeted](#) that a path to citizenship would make the GOP a "permanent minority" and that John McCain is a "complete freaking idiot" for thinking passage of reform will help the GOP win Hispanic votes. In 2011, Tea Party Nation sent its activists an email [arguing](#) that immigration and a low fertility rate for white Americans mean that the "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) population in America is headed for extinction and with it our economy, well-being and survival as a uniquely America culture." That same year, another Tea Party Nation columnist [lamented](#) the country's "invasion" by immigrants from "non-European nations."

A columnist for the John Birch Society's [The New American](#) argues that "the Democratic Party is also universally recognized as the party of so-called 'affirmative action,' of endless privileges and benefits for racial minorities," and that "as long as there remains a Democrat Party that non-whites can call home, there will be nothing that Republicans can do to keep them from flocking to it."

But let's play along here for a moment. If Republicans want to expand their "outreach" efforts, maybe in addition to amnesty, they should consider doing some of the following:

First, they should voluntarily relinquish some of their seats in Congress and hand them over to the Hispanics, blacks, and Asians of their choosing.

Second, they should become the most unapologetic apologists for socialism, affirmative action, Spanish as our first language, and the end of a "war on drugs" that has left a disproportionately large number of young black and Hispanic males incarcerated or dead.

Third, they must forswear all talk of a "War on Terror" or "Islamism" or whatever they want to call it, for whatever name they assign to the belligerents upon whom they would have the U.S. military set its sights, those belligerents are non-white. How can Republicans expect to win elections if they are seen by non-whites as the white party that wishes to go to war with non-whites?

DEFYING THE DEMAGOGUES

Comprehensive immigration reform of the kind outlined by President Obama would go a long way to fixing our broken immigration system, strengthening national security and the rule of law, keeping families together and respecting the dignity of every person, and living up to our heritage as a nation of immigrants. There is new bipartisan momentum for immigration reform, and



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—JUDSON PHILLIPS, TEA PARTY NATION

Photo credit: google.com/ unknown photographer

some Republicans are working to reposition the party in the minds of Latino voters. But in order to make that possible, Republican officials will have to demonstrate that they are willing to face down the divisive extremists that many of them once cheered on.

PASSAGE OF EFFECTIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM REQUIRES REPUBLICANS TO ACT RESPONSIBLY AND REJECT THE PARTY'S FAR-RIGHT FLANK



***What to do with 11 million undocumented people in the United States? In Arizona, they've been "locking them up."
—Joe Arpaio***



***Claims comprehensive immigration reform means "Complete amnesty of all illegals so they can immediately sign up for welfare programs and commence the path towards becoming a permanent Democrat voting bloc..."
—Daniel Horowitz, redstate.com***



***"Romney was the first Republican presidential candidate in a long time not conspiring with the elites to make America a dumping ground for the world's welfare cases."
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***A path to citizenship would make the GOP a "permanent minority" and John McCain is a "complete freaking idiot" for thinking passage of reform will help the GOP win Hispanic votes.
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