



**Latino Policy Coalition**

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To: Interested Parties  
From: Celinda Lake and Joshua Ulibarri  
Date: August 18, 2009  
Re: Latino Attitudes Toward President Obama and the American Economy

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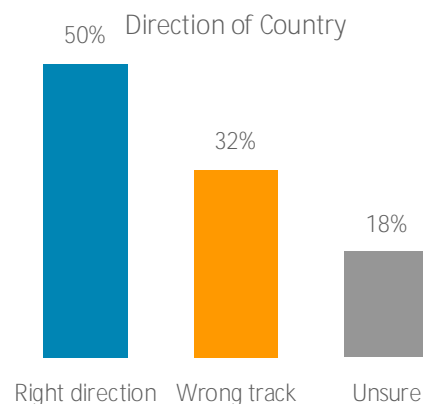
Lake Research Partners, on behalf of the Latino Policy Coalition (LPC), recently concluded another round of survey research among Latino/a registered voters. This was the fifth installment of survey research that began in April 2006. LPC has also funded four rounds of focus groups over the last three years that inform the continuing research. In this case, 1,000 Latino registered voters in 23 states with the highest Latino populations were interviewed from July 23 to 28. The survey focused on health care reform, the Sotomayor nomination, the economy, and attitudes toward the two parties. This memo about President Obama and the economy follows the memos released over the last two weeks Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and health care (please visit the website for all of the data and memos: [www.LatinoPolicyCoalition.org](http://www.LatinoPolicyCoalition.org)).

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The news from this fifth iteration of LPC polling is clear: Latinos believe the country is moving in the right direction and are in a better mood than they were under President Bush, but they see room for improvement. While they have warm personal feelings toward President Obama and believe he has done an excellent or good job as President, they, like most Americans, remain focused on the economy and jobs and believe Obama still has work to do in that regard. The President and Democrats enjoy strong support from Latinos, but they too are weary of an economy that has sagged too long and they are looking for improvement. Still, while Latinos want to see the President deliver on the economy, they strongly prefer his economic leadership to that of the leadership coming from Congressional Republicans, who when asked, underperform even their party identification on key economic indicators.

#### Latinos are Optimistic About Country's Direction

Latinos are much more optimistic today than they were a few short years ago when President Bush was in office. Still, even though they are pleased with the shift in leadership and priorities, they express mixed emotions over the



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country's direction. Half (50%) believe the country is moving in the right direction, while a third (32%) feel things are off on the wrong track. When LPC began polling among Latino registered voters, in April 2006, less than a third of Latinos felt things were moving in the right direction while 59% said wrong track. And in March 2007, when Americans replaced the Republican Congress with a Democratic one, Latinos were still strongly pessimistic about the country's direction, with 57% believing things were off on the wrong track and 30% felt things were moving in the right direction.

#### Personal Support for the President, Amid Continued Economic Concerns

Latinos like President Obama, but they have concerns that the economy is not recovering and they give him mixed job performance ratings on their most important issue. Almost eight in ten Latinos (77% favorable) rate Obama favorably, including half (52%) who rate him very favorable. Only 17% rate him unfavorably. In March 2007, when the President was barely into his Presidential campaign, a third (35%) of Latinos could not rate him, and his favorable ratings stood at 48%. The President's ratings are impressive among Latino independents, as 67% rate him favorably, compared to 93% among Latino Democrats. Latino Republicans (19% of the sample) have yet to come around, and the President's ratings are net-negative among them (34% favorable to 58% unfavorable).

Obama's personal favorable numbers are historic in LPC's opinion research for two reasons. First, in the three years of research NO public official has ever rated as highly as the President does now. Second, and perhaps as impressive, after an aggressive primary and a brutal general election campaign, the President's unfavorable ratings stand at the same 17% today that they did in more than two and a half years ago (also 17% in March, 2007).

The President also performs well on his overall job performance ratings; it is on the economy where he is vulnerable. Overall, 62% of Latinos say Obama has done an excellent (23%) or good job (39%) as President, while just over a third (36%) feel he has done a just fair or poor job. Importantly, independent Latinos split (48% excellent/good to 46% just fair/poor), while Republicans are again net-negative (18% to 80%). Democrats remain impressed (79% excellent/good to 19% just fair/poor). On the economy, however, some doubts creep in. Overall, 52% of voters think the President has done an excellent or good job, while almost half (45%) think he has done a just fair or poor job. In this case, Latino independents do not split; they tilt negative, with half (50%) believing Obama has done a just fair or poor job and only 43% feeling he has done an excellent or just fair job. As expected, Republicans are critical (16% excellent/good to 82% just fair/poor), while Democrats buttress his performance ratings (67% excellent/good to 31% just fair/poor).

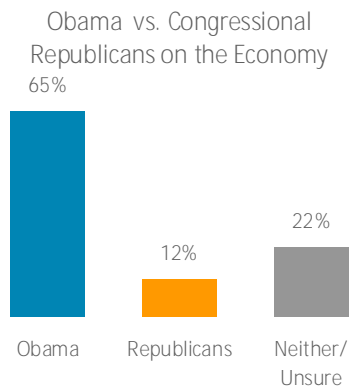
The President's reelect ratings reflect his performance on the economy more than they do his personal favorable ratings. Four in ten (43%) Latinos say they will vote to reelect the President, while 16% say they will vote NOT to reelect him. The other four in ten (42%) say they are undecided or do not know. Women are stronger supporters of the President than are men, (46% reelect women, 39% for men), but remain under majority support. Independents also mirror their economic ratings, with 60% stating they are undecided and only a quarter (24%) expressing a preference for Obama's reelection. Democrats are solidly in support of the President's reelection (59% reelect), while Republican Latinos are the opposite (56% not reelect).

The President's actions on the economy have yet to break through to a majority of Latinos. While the President's administration is barely a half year old, Latino voters are looking for major economic improvements and express some frustration. Four in ten (41%) think Obama's policies have made things better, while an equal number (41%) have said there's been no impact (15% say President has made it worse). Likewise, 59% of Latinos say they have felt no personal impact on the President's economy recovery plan. Thirty-nine percent

have personally felt an impact, including 27% who have felt a positive impact and 12% who have felt a negative impact.

**Despite Some Economic Concerns, Latinos Still Prefer Obama to Republicans**

Despite their current economic concerns and the lack of impact they have felt personally from Obama’s economic policies, Latinos strongly believe Obama is better on the economy than Congressional Republicans.



Sixty-five percent of Latinos believe Obama would do a better job handling economic issues facing families than the Republicans in Congress (only 12%), a net advantage of 53 points. Similarly, 61% of Latino voters believe Obama would handle keeping and creating well-paying jobs better than the Republicans in Congress (13%), a 48 point advantage. In both cases, the share of Latinos who believe the Republicans would perform better (13% and 12%) is lower than the share who self-identify as Republicans (19%). Latinos may be concerned about the economy, but they vastly prefer Obama’s policies to those of Congressional Republicans, especially as it pertains to the economic issues, jobs, and their families.

METHODOLOGY

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 Latino/a registered voters in the 23 states with the highest Latino population density. A quarter of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. These states include: CA, TX, FL, NY, IL, AZ, NJ, NM, CO, GA, NV, NC, WA, MA, VA, PA, CT, MI, OR, MD, IN, OH, and WI. The survey was conducted July 23 through July 28, 2009. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from files of registered voters. The data were weighted slightly by age and education. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1 percentage points.