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Voters Want Immigration Guardrails, Not Another Reconciliation Blank Check

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As Republicans prepare to pour even more tax dollars into Trump's mass deportation agenda instead of addressing the real problems facing American communities, voters remain supportive of the Democratic effort to place basic guardrails on immigration enforcement.

Polling commissioned by Third Way and UnidosUS with Impact Research, and BSP Research shows an electorate that has soured on Trump's approach and strongly supports reasonable reforms. The phone and text-to-web survey of 1,000 likely voters, with an 850-person oversample of Latino voters, shows voters support still support immigration enforcement as a principle—but only when it is targeted, lawful, and not chaotic. And while trust in Democrats on immigration has improved, Republicans still retain an advantage on the issue overall, driven by a lingering perception that Democrats are either unable or unwilling to enforce immigration laws.

Republicans may still hold the advantage on immigration overall, but the DHS reconciliation fight gives Democrats a chance to expose the weakness in that advantage. Republicans are again trying to shovel more taxpayer dollars into a mass deportation agenda with no guardrails—the same blank-check approach that helped fuel chaos in American streets and sour voters on Trump's enforcement agenda. Democrats should meet that with clarity and force: not opposition to enforcement, but insistence on enforcement that is lawful, targeted, disciplined, and accountable. If Republicans want to fund more chaos, Democrats should forcefully stand for control.

Democrats Should Stay on Offense on Immigration

Voters are rejecting chaos masquerading as immigration enforcement. Trump's handling of immigration—once one of his strongest political issues—has weakened significantly, with his job approval on the issue now down to 44%. The recent enforcement actions involving ICE officers and Border Patrol agents in Minneapolis and other cities have broken through in a major way: 97% of voters, including 89% of Hispanic voters, say they have heard at least something about these events. And when asked who deserved the most blame for the unrest, majorities pointed to the Trump administration and to ICE and Border Patrol agents themselves. It is no surprise, then, that when voters are asked specifically about Trump's use of federal agents such as ICE in American cities, only 41% approve.

That backlash has translated into strong support for real guardrails on immigration enforcement. Requiring body cameras has 94% support. Expanded training and certification requirements for immigration officers have 86% support. Requiring ICE to verify that someone is not a US citizen before detaining them draws 84%, and requiring

probable cause before detention draws 80%. These are basic standards Americans expect from any law enforcement agency operating in their communities.

Voters are equally clear about the DHS funding fight. By 11 points, they are more likely to blame Republicans for refusing to reform ICE than Democrats for insisting on reforms first, 53% to 42%. And only 40% say that ICE should be fully funded now, before major reforms are in place. In other words, Republicans are trying to hand ICE and Border Patrol another blank check even as voters are calling for more professionalism, more transparency, and more accountability first.

Democrats should keep pressing for professionalism, transparency, and accountability in immigration enforcement, while Republicans keep fighting to preserve weak oversight and fund more chaos. Republicans already handed DHS \$170 billion through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, and Americans saw the result: disorder in communities across the country and the deaths of US citizens. Instead of learning from that failure, Republicans are once again trying to sidestep the normal appropriations process to avoid even the most basic guardrails on immigration enforcement. Democrats should stay focused on what voters actually want: an immigration enforcement system that is orderly, accountable, and aimed at the real public safety threats.

Talking Points

- Americans are demanding reform, yet Republicans have decided to appeal to the extremes of their party over solutions that benefit all Americans.
- Republicans are trying to repeat the exact process that helped produce this mess: more money, less accountability, and the same promise that this time will somehow be different.
- Republicans are trying to bypass basic guardrails that voters overwhelmingly support and send more money to agencies the public believes need reform first.
- Voters are clearly asking for immigration enforcement that is professional, lawful, and accountable. Republicans are dodging these demands because they do not have a good answer.
- After everything Americans have now seen, the burden is on Republicans to explain why more money with no reforms would mean more safety instead of more abuse.
- Before Congress gives these agencies more money, it should require the basics: know who you are detaining, have probable cause, wear identification, train officers properly, and ensure accountability for wrongdoings. Anything less is indefensible.
- Body cameras, probable cause, better training, citizenship verification before detention, and visible identification are not radical demands. They are common-sense

standards.

- American communities deserve immigration enforcement that protects public safety without trampling civil liberties or sweeping up the wrong people.
- The public is asking for order, professionalism, and restraint. Republicans are offering a blank check. That is the wrong answer to the wrong moment.

Voter Interest is in Accountability and Reform—Not Abolishment

While the guardrails proposed by Democrats have overwhelming support, abolishing ICE does not. Only 27% of voters want to “Abolish ICE,” far fewer than the share who want to reform the agency or fund it without major changes. The public’s message is clear: voters are not asking Washington to abandon immigration enforcement. They are asking Washington to fix it.

That demand for reform extends beyond oversight and transparency to the focus of enforcement itself. Voters do not want indiscriminate sweeps; they want immigration enforcement focused on real threats. In message testing, the strongest argument was one rooted in a targeted, disciplined approach: “Most immigrants work, pay taxes, and contribute to our economy. We should not target people who are following the law, but should reform our immigration enforcement system to focus on people who have been convicted of serious crimes.” That message resonated with 67% of voters and 80% of Latino voters.

This fits a pattern Third Way has seen repeatedly in polling: voters want control, not chaos. They want an immigration system that is capable of enforcing the law, but they also want that enforcement to be measured, fair, and focused where it matters most.

That distinction helps explain why border security remains one of Trump’s strongest issues—his approval there stands at 56%—even as support erodes sharply when voters are confronted with chaos in American communities and federal resistance to basic guardrails. Voters want order and they want it to be targeted, professional, and accountable.

Talking Points

- Americans do not want a choice between immigration enforcement and accountability. They want both.
- Americans want immigration laws enforced—but enforced professionally, lawfully, and with restraint.

- Republicans keep pretending the choice is between abolishing ICE and writing it a blank check. Voters are clearly choosing a third option: reform it first.
 - Serious enforcement is targeted and professional. Reckless enforcement is broad, chaotic, and blind.
 - The public wants an immigration enforcement system that targets real threats, follows clear rules, and earns the trust of the communities it serves.
 - By failing to distinguish between real threats and ordinary working families, the Trump Administration is not serving the national interest. It is serving its Stephen Miller's quotas.
 - Voters are not asking Washington to abolish immigration enforcement. They are asking Washington to stop confusing chaos with strength.
 - ICE and Border Patrol are in significant need of reforms that are rooted in fairness and respect.
 - Americans are looking for a system that is fair, firm, and under control.
 - The choice here is not between enforcement and no enforcement. It is between targeted, lawful enforcement and a model of federal power that has become increasingly chaotic, unaccountable, and corrosive to public trust.
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