

# National Survey of Latino Protestants: Immigration and the 2008 Election

October 16, 2008

National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference  
The Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership  
Faith in Public Life  
America's Voice Education Fund  
Gaston Espinosa, Ph.D., Claremont McKenna College



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**EMBARGOED until October 16, 2008 at 1:00 PM EDT**

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### **National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference**

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) is committed to serving the 16 million Hispanic born-again Christians in the United States and Puerto Rico across generational, country of origin, and denominational lines on issues that pertain to the family, immigration, economic mobility, education, political empowerment, social justice, and societal transformation. The NHCLC serves and facilitates a representative voice for a growing number of the 18,000 Hispanic churches and 75 denominations in addition to faith-based organizations, institutes, networks, congregations, and active laity.

For more information, visit [www.nhclc.org](http://www.nhclc.org).

### **Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership**

The Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership (JMCHL) is a unit of urban training, strategic networking, and applied research of Vanguard University of Southern California. In addition, the JMCHL serves as the research and development arm of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. The purpose is to link scholarship and faith together with experience and participation in service for the development of the church and the betterment of society in Southern California.

For more information, visit [www.vanguard.edu/jmchl/](http://www.vanguard.edu/jmchl/).

### **Faith in Public Life**

Faith in Public Life is a communications and organizing resource center that works to transform the values debate in America by increasing the strength, effectiveness and visibility of faith leaders dedicated to justice, compassion, and the common good.

For more information, visit [www.faithinpubliclife.org](http://www.faithinpubliclife.org).

### **America's Voice Education Fund**

America's Voice is the newly-founded communications campaign working to win common-sense immigration reform. America's Voice conducts cutting edge public opinion research, undertakes public education and provides comprehensive media analysis on the current state of the immigration debate. Our goal is to build the public support and political power necessary to enact comprehensive immigration reform that restores the rule of law and includes earned citizenship for the estimated 12 million immigrants working and living in the U.S. without proper legal status.

For more information, visit [www.americavoiceline.org](http://www.americavoiceline.org).

### **Dr. Gaston Espinosa, Ph.D., Claremont McKenna College**

Gastón Espinosa is associate professor of American religions, politics, and society at Claremont McKenna College and Claremont Graduate University. He is a graduate of Princeton Seminary, Harvard University, and the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he earned his Ph.D. He served as project manager and director of research of the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life research project (1999-2002). Espinosa currently serves as President of La Comunidad of Hispanics Scholars of Religion at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).

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The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, in partnership with the Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership, Faith in Public Life, America's Voice Education Fund, and Dr. Gastón Espinosa, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Claremont McKenna College and Claremont Graduate University sponsored a national survey of Latino Protestant registered voters to assess their views on immigration and the 2008 election. This growing voting bloc provided crucial support for George W. Bush in 2004 and was widely viewed as a key emerging constituency for the Republican Party in elections to come.

This survey finds that Latino Protestants have shifted their support to the Democratic presidential candidate by a wide margin in 2008 and immigration is a key factor in influencing their vote. However, Latino Protestants are as likely to associate negative rhetoric on immigration with both parties as they are with only Republicans – indicating that Democrats have not distinguished themselves as champions for immigration reform.

The Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership Study of Latino Religions and Politics Protestant Registered Voter Survey (LRAP) was conducted from October 1<sup>st</sup> thru October 7<sup>th</sup> under the supervision of SDR consulting.

The random sample of Hispanics throughout the United States was a dual frame sample of Hispanic Surname Random Listed sample and Hispanic Surname Registered Voter sample. Results are based on live telephone interviews nationwide with 500 U.S. Hispanic registered voters who identified themselves as either Protestant or other Christian. These voters were all screened to confirm that they were 18 years of age or older, Hispanic, a registered voter, a citizen and declared that their religious preference was either a Protestant religion or other Christian.

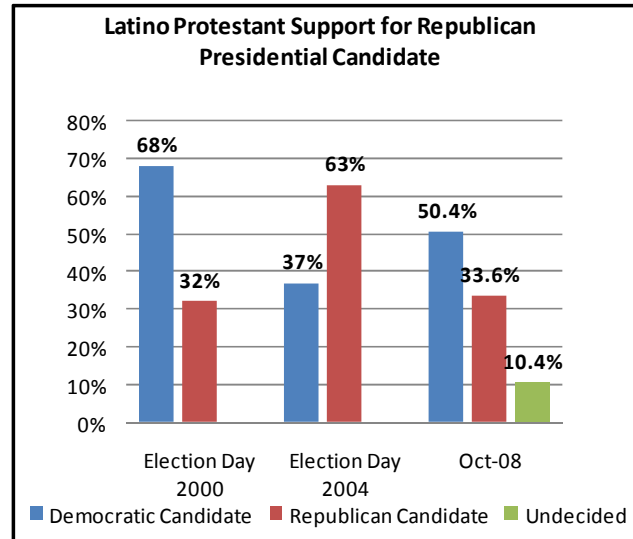
Because Hispanic Protestants are a smaller percentage of the overall Hispanic electorate, about 25%, they were over sampled from a universe of 1,104 Hispanic Protestants and Catholics to reach 500 completed interviews. The margin of error for the 500 Hispanic Protestant interviews is +/- 4.4 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. More than 80 percent of Hispanic Protestants self-identified as born-again and/or attended an Evangelical denomination. An analysis of the entire universe will be released in 2009 by Gaston Espinosa, PhD.

## Key Findings:

### Latino Protestant Support for the Republican Ticket Nearly Cut in Half

- Latino Protestant registered voters favor Democrat Barack Obama over Republican John McCain by a 17-point margin (50.4 percent to 33.6 percent with 10.4 percent still undecided). This margin of support for Obama is slightly lower than his lead among the Latino population overall.

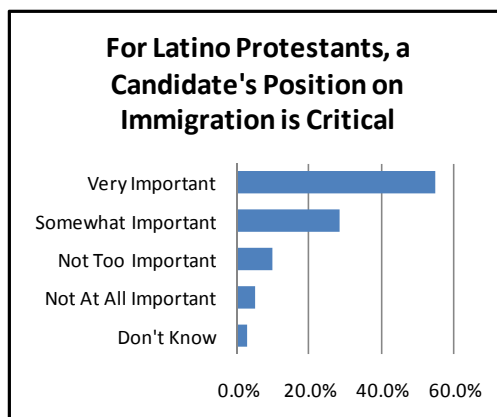
This is a dramatic shift from 2004 when George W. Bush soundly won the Latino Protestant vote. According to 2004<sup>i</sup> post-election survey data, Bush won 63 percent of these voters, up from 32 percent in 2000.<sup>ii</sup>



### Latino Protestants view immigration as a faith issue.

- 76.8 percent say their religious beliefs are important in influencing their views on immigration (54.6 percent say very important). Only 19 percent say their religious beliefs are not important in influencing their views on the issue.

### A candidate's position on immigration is a key factor for Latino Protestants in determining their vote and more trust Democrats to deliver.



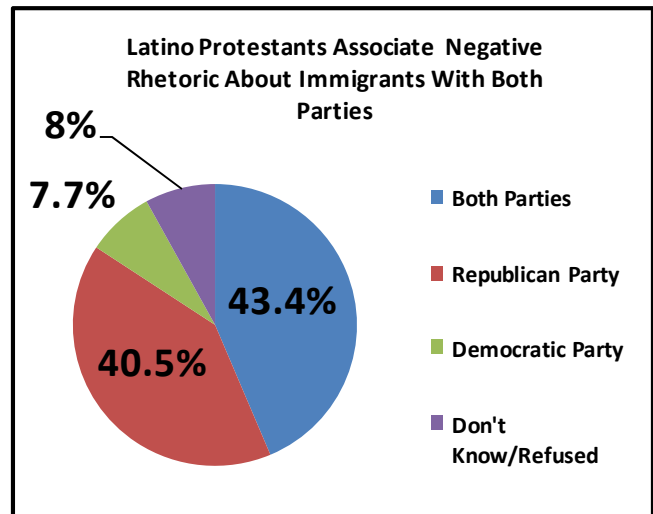
- 82.8 percent say a candidate's position on immigration is important in determining their vote this year (54.6 percent say very important).
- Democrats receive more than twice the amount of trust to pass immigration reform that reflects the values of Latino Protestants (42 percent, compared to 20.2 percent for Republicans).
- 89.2 percent say immigration is important (65.6 percent very important) for the next Congress, 7.6 percent view it as a low priority or not a priority.

## Immigration reform is a voting priority issue for Latino Protestants on par with abortion and far more important than gay marriage.

- Immigration Reform - 70.8 percent extremely or very important (23.6 percent extremely important)
- Abortion - 74.8 percent extremely or very important (34.8 percent extremely important)
- Gay Marriage - 55.8 percent extremely or very important (28.4 percent extremely important)

## Latino Protestants associate negative rhetoric about immigrants with “both parties.”

- 62.2 percent say they have heard public officials speak negatively about immigrants.
- 43.4 percent of those who have heard public officials speak negatively about immigrants associate this rhetoric with both parties.
- 40.5 percent associate it with only Republicans while only 7.7 percent associate it with only Democrats.



## Latino Protestants favor the Democratic candidate when considering Democratic and Republican plans for immigration reform

- 65.2% support the Democratic candidate’s plan for immigration reform (22.8% support the Republican candidate)
- 57.6% support “Candidate A” when given the same candidate positions without a party name associated with the position (30.8% favor “Candidate B”)
- However, fully 30.8% of Latino Protestants say they would leave their political party if the party does not find a more positive way to address immigration reform and welcome immigrants (42.8% say they would not leave their party). This further indicates the volatility of this group of voters.

## **Survey Questions:**

**Q1. Apart from occasional weddings, baptism or funerals, how often do you attend church or religious services?**

	n=500
Once a week or more	60.8%
Almost every week	9%
Once or twice a month	11.4%
A few times a year	10%
Once a year or less	4%
Never	4.2%
Don't know/Refused	.8%

**Q2. Do you generally consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent or something else?**

	n=500
Democrat	49.8%
Republican	23%
Independent	18.2%
Something else	4.2%
Don't Know/Refused	4.8%

**Q3. Now, thinking about the upcoming 2008 presidential election, who are you planning to vote for?**

	n=500
John McCain/Sarah Palin	33.6%
Barack Obama/Joe Biden	50.4%
Undecided	10.4%
Other Candidate	2.2%
Don't Know/Refused	3.4%

**Q4. Thinking about the issue of immigration, how important are your religious beliefs in influencing your views?**

n=500

Very important	54.6%
Somewhat important	22.2%
Not too important	8.8%
Not at all important	10.2%
Don't know/Refused	4%

**Q5. Who do you trust the most to pass immigration reform legislation that reflects your point of view on this issue?**

n=500

The Democrats in Congress	42%
The Republicans in Congress	20.2%
Both Equally	9.8%
Neither	15.8%
Don't know/Refused	12%

**Q6. In your view, what priority should immigration reform be for Congress to get done?**

n=500

Very important	65.6%
Somewhat important	23.6%
Not too important	4.8%
Not at all important	2.8%
Don't know	3.2%

**Q7. When considering who you will vote for, how important is a candidate's position on immigration to you?**

n=500

Very important	54.6%
Somewhat important	28.2%
Not too important	9.6%
Not at all important	5%
Don't know	2.6%

**Q8. Has the public debate about immigration reform over the past year made you...?**

	n=500
More likely to vote this year	39.2%
Less likely to vote this year	8.2%
Equally likely to vote this year as in years past	47.6%
Don't know/Refused	5%

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**Q9. Have you heard public officials speak negatively about immigrants in our society?**

	n=500
Yes	62.2%
No	35.8%

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**Q10. When you think about public officials that speak negatively about immigrants in our society, do you think they come...?**

	n=500
More from the Republican Party	40.5%
More from the Democratic Party	7.7%
The same from both parties	43.4%
Don't know/Refused	8%

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**Q11a. Now you will hear the immigration positions of two candidates for Congress. Please tell me which is closer to your view. (With Party ID)**

The Democratic candidate says we need to pass immigration reform that secures the border and requires illegal immigrants who currently live in the country to register and meet certain criteria to become legal because mass deportation is not realistic, and doing nothing is not an option.<sup>iii</sup>

The Republican candidate says we need to pass immigration reform that gets much tougher on the borders, but opposes allowing people who are now in the country illegally to become citizens because that would be giving amnesty to people who broke the laws of this country.<sup>iv</sup>

n=250

The Democratic Candidate	65.2%
The Republican Candidate	22.8%
Don't Know	12%

**Q11b. Now you will hear the immigration positions of two candidates for Congress. Please tell me which is closer to your view. (No Party ID)**

Candidate A says we need to pass immigration reform that secures the border and requires illegal immigrants who currently live in the country to register and meet certain criteria to become legal because mass deportation is not realistic, and doing nothing is not an option.<sup>v</sup>

Candidate B says we need to pass immigration reform that gets much tougher on the borders, but opposes allowing people who are now in the country illegally to become citizens because that would be giving amnesty to people who broke the laws of this country.<sup>vi</sup>

n=250

Candidate A	57.6%
Candidate B	30.8%
Don't Know	12%

**Q12. How important is immigration reform in helping you decide who to vote for in the 2008 election?**

	n=500
Extremely important	23.6%
Very important	47.2%
Somewhat important	20.2%
Not too important	7.8%
Don't Know/Refused	1.2%

**Q13. How important is abortion in helping you decide who to vote for in the 2008 election?**

	n=500
Extremely important	34.8%
Very important	40%
Somewhat important	13.8%
Not too important	8.6%
Don't Know/Refused	2.6%

**Q14. How important is gay marriage in helping you decide who to vote for in the 2008 election?**

	n=500
Extremely important	28.4%
Very important	27.4%
Somewhat important	13.8%
Not too important	27.6%
Don't Know/Refused	2.8%

**Q15. Would you be willing to leave your political party if your party does not find a more positive way to address immigration reform and welcome immigrants?**

	n=500
Yes	30.8%
No	42.4%
Perhaps	14.8%
I don't have a party	5.6%
Don't know / refused	6.4%

**Gender**

	n=500
Male	49.4%
Female	50.6%

## **Survey Manager Rick Hunter**

Rick Hunter has been involved in Hispanic public opinion research since 1987 throughout the United States and Latin America. He has worked with many major Hispanic research firms and corporations throughout the United States. These include Bendixen & Associates, NALEO, Unvision, Telemundo, Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, Radio Unica to name just a few.

Rick joined SDR Consulting, Inc. in June of 1995. He worked previously in Washington, D.C. for over 8 years with Bendixen & Associates serving as Vice-President the last 4 years. In addition to providing survey research fielding, management and consulting services, Rick is one of the leading providers of sampling services and consulting services to major and midsized corporations, marketing research firms and field houses throughout the United States.

Rick holds a Bachelor of Science degree with Honors from Jacksonville University in Political Science and History. He has worked in the fields of public opinion research, exit polling, market research, sampling services, sampling design, media time buying and political consulting for the past 23 years.

Rick has supervised the completion of well over 200,000 surveys during his career. He has consulted major corporations on the public's opinion of them and other issues using public opinion research. He has researched the Hispanic community and Hispanic voters for over 20 years. He has also been an executive political news director during election night coverage for two national Hispanic television networks – Unvision and Telemundo (working in conjunction at different times with ABC, CBS and CNN). He is one of a handful of sample professionals to set-up, manage and project elections through exit polls in national and local elections for Television stations and networks.

Rick Hunter is currently Vice-President of SDR Consulting and President of SDR Sampling Services.

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<sup>i</sup> Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, 2004, University of Akron

<sup>ii</sup> Third National Survey of Religion and Politics, 2000, University of Akron

<sup>iii</sup> Composite position statement based on the official 2008 Democratic Party platform.

<sup>iv</sup> Composite position statement based on the official 2008 Republican Party platform.

<sup>v</sup> Composite position statement based on the official 2008 Democratic Party platform.

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