

# UC Berkeley

## IGS Poll

### Title

Release #2017-02: Californians hold divided and partisan views about sanctuary cities; This contrasts with bipartisan support for providing undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship and opposition to building the U.S.-Mexico wall.

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***Californians hold divided and partisan views about sanctuary cities;  
This contrasts with bipartisan support for providing undocumented immigrants  
a pathway to citizenship and opposition to building the U.S.-Mexico wall.***

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A new statewide survey conducted by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at UC Berkeley explored a number of issues relating to illegal immigrants and their impact on the state. The *Berkeley IGS Poll* shows that California voters hold divided and highly partisan views about the state's sanctuary cities and their relationship to federal immigration authorities. On the other hand, there is bipartisan support for providing undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship and opposition to the President's proposal to build the U.S.-Mexico wall.

**Divided and highly partisan views about sanctuary cities**

- California voters hold divided and highly partisan views toward the state's sanctuary cities and their relationship with federal immigration authorities. The poll finds that to some extent, opinions are influenced by how the issue is framed. For example, voters support by five-to-four margin (56% to 44%) local communities declaring themselves sanctuary cities and instructing local police and government employees not to automatically turn immigrants over to federal immigration officers when they are found to be in the country illegally.
- However, when the issue is framed in terms of allowing cities and counties the right to ignore requests from federal authorities to detain illegal immigrants who have been arrested and are about to be released, voters are opposed 53% to 47%.
- Voter opinions toward sanctuary city policies in both settings are highly partisan, with large majorities of Democrats supportive, but with even larger majorities of Republicans opposed.

- In addition, the poll finds that about one in five voters who initially favor sanctuary city policies say they would be less supportive if the federal government significantly reduces federal funding to these cities, as has been proposed by the President.

#### **Voter perceptions about the security of the U.S. border also colored by partisanship**

- Californians also divide sharply along partisan lines when asked about the security of U.S. borders. Overall, voters are evenly divided when asked whether U.S. borders are secure or not, with about half (49%) believing they are secure and about half (51%) saying they are not. However, among Republican voters three in four (76%) believe U.S. borders are not secure, while among Democrats most (61%) contend that they are.

#### **Opposition to the President's proposal to build a U.S.-Mexico wall**

- By a three-to-two margin (59% to 41%) Californians oppose President Trump's proposal to build a wall along nearly all of the U.S.-Mexico border as a way to reduce the number of people trying to enter the country illegally from Mexico. Large majorities of Democrats and No Party Preference voters are opposed, while Republicans are strongly supportive.

#### **Strong, bipartisan support for providing illegal immigrants with a pathway to citizenship**

- The current poll finds broad support in California (82%) for providing illegal immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay and apply for citizenship if they have a job, have not committed a serious crime, have learned English and paid back taxes. Unlike other immigration-related issues, support for providing such immigrants with a pathway to citizenship is bipartisan, with even a majority of Republicans favoring this approach.

#### **Fewer describe the problem of illegal immigration in California as "very serious" than did so 10 years ago**

- Despite the increasing political rhetoric about the illegal immigration issue nationally, when Californians are asked to assess the seriousness of the problem in the state, fewer now describe it as a very serious problem (36%) than felt this way ten years ago (49%). Republican voters are much more likely than other Californians to view the problem as very serious.

### **Opinions of sanctuary cities are divided and depend in part on how the issue is framed**

Voters in this survey were divided into two random subsamples, with those in each subsample read somewhat descriptions of communities that have implemented sanctuary city policies and how these policies affect their relationship with federal immigration authorities. The results indicate that opinions are divided, highly partisan, and vary to some extent depending on how the issue is framed.

For example, Californians are supportive (56% to 44%) when asked whether they favor or oppose local communities declaring themselves sanctuary cities and instructing local police and government employees not to automatically turn immigrants over to federal immigration officers when they learn they are in the country illegally. However, voters oppose by a 53% to 47% margin cities and counties from being allowed to ignore requests from federal authorities to detain undocumented immigrants who have been arrested and are about to be released.

Opinions in both settings are highly partisan, with greater than seven in ten Democrats supporting sanctuary city policies, and even larger majorities of Republicans opposed. No Party Preference voters appear most affected by the differing descriptions of the policy, with a majority voicing support for cities instructing their local police and government employees not to automatically turn such persons over to federal immigration officers when they learn they are in the country illegally. However, No Party Preference voters are opposed when asked whether local jurisdictions should be allowed to ignore federal detention requests of immigrants who have been arrested and are about to be released.

**Table 1 (Description #1)**  
**Do you favor or oppose communities in California declaring themselves sanctuary cities and instructing local police and government employees not to automatically turn undocumented immigrants over to federal authorities for possible deportation to their home country?**

	Total registered voters %	Party Registration		
		Democrats %	Republicans %	No party preference/ other %
<b>Favor</b>	<b><u>56</u></b>	<b><u>74</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>60</u></b>
Strongly	32	47	10	30
Somewhat	24	27	10	30
<b>Oppose</b>	<b><u>44</u></b>	<b><u>26</u></b>	<b><u>80</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>
Somewhat	12	11	10	16
Strongly	32	15	70	24

<b>Table 2 (Description #2)</b>				
<b>Should cities and counties in the state be able to ignore requests from federal authorities to detain undocumented immigrants who have been arrested and are about to be released?</b>				
	<b>Total registered voters %</b>	<b>Party Registration</b>		
		<b>Democrats %</b>	<b>Republicans %</b>	<b>No party preference/ other %</b>
Yes, should be able to ignore such requests	47	71	14	39
No, should <u>not</u> be able to ignore such requests	53	29	86	61

### **Impact on voter opinions of possible reductions in federal funding to sanctuary cities**

The survey also assessed the potential impact that significant reductions in federal funding to sanctuary cities might have on voter opinions. The results indicate that about one in five voters who initially favor sanctuary cities policies say they would become less supportive if the federal government were to significantly reduce federal funding to these cities or to communities that ignore federal detention requests.

<b>Table 3</b>		
<b>Impact on voter opinions of a significant reduction in federal funding to sanctuary cities or to those that ignore federal requests to detain undocumented immigrants</b>		
	<u>Among voters initially supportive of sanctuary cities</u>	
	<u>When read description #1</u> %	<u>When read description #2</u> %
<u>A significant reduction in federal funding . . .</u>		
Makes me less inclined to support them	19	21
Would have no effect on my opinion	81	79

### **Views about the security of U.S. borders are divided and highly partisan**

California voters are divided when asked about the security of U.S borders in preventing people from entering the country illegally. The survey finds that 49% of voters believe U.S. borders are either very or somewhat secure, while 51% think they are not too to not at all secure.

The perceived security of the nation's borders is directly tied to a voter's party affiliation. Greater than six in ten Democrats (61%) say they believe U.S. borders are secure, while just 39% say they are not. On the other hand, Republicans take an opposite view, with 76% maintaining that our borders are not secure and just 24% saying they are. The views of No Party Preference voters are about evenly divided on the issue.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>How secure do California voters believe U.S. borders are in preventing people from entering the country illegally</b>				
	<b>Total registered voters %</b>	<b>Party Registration</b>		
		<b>Democrats %</b>	<b>Republicans %</b>	<b>No party preference/ other %</b>
<b>Secure</b>	<b><u>49</u></b>	<b><u>61</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>	<b><u>52</u></b>
Very secure	12	17	4	10
Somewhat secure	37	44	20	42
<b>Not secure</b>	<b><u>51</u></b>	<b><u>39</u></b>	<b><u>76</u></b>	<b><u>48</u></b>
Not too secure	25	25	23	25
Not at all secure	26	14	53	23

### **Californians oppose President Trump's proposal to build a U.S.-Mexico wall**

By a nearly three-to-two margin (59% to 41%) California voters oppose President Donald Trump's proposal to build a wall along nearly all of the U.S.-Mexico border as a way to reduce the number of people trying to enter the country illegally from Mexico.

Opinions toward building the wall are strongly held on both sides of the political aisle. For example, Democrats overwhelmingly oppose the idea 81% to 19%, and nearly all of those opposed (73%) say they oppose the idea strongly. Conversely, Republicans overwhelmingly support the idea of building the wall (86% to 14%), and nearly two in three (63%) support the President's proposal strongly. No Party Preference voters hold opinions closer to those of the state's Democrats, opposing the building of the wall by a 63% to 37% margin, with nearly half (46%) strongly opposed.

<b>Table 5</b> <b>California voter opinion about building a wall along nearly all of the U.S.-Mexico border to reduce the number of people entering the U.S. illegally</b>				
	Total registered voters %	Party Registration		
		Democrats %	Republicans %	No party preference/other %
<b>Favor</b>	<b><u>41</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>	<b><u>86</u></b>	<b><u>37</u></b>
Strongly	24	8	63	16
Somewhat	17	11	23	21
<b>Oppose</b>	<b><u>59</u></b>	<b><u>81</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	<b><u>63</u></b>
Somewhat	11	8	7	17
Strongly	48	73	7	46

**Continuing strong support for providing illegal immigrants with a path to citizenship**

California voters have long favored providing illegal immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay and apply for citizenship if they have a job, have not committed a serious crime, have learned English and paid back taxes. In the current survey 82% hold to this view, while 18% are opposed. In three similar statewide surveys conducted between July 2006 and February 2013 between 80% and 90% of voters also supported this approach.

Support for offering a pathway to citizenship to illegal immigrants crosses party lines, with 91% of Democrats, 68% of Republicans and 80% of No Party Preference voters favoring the policy under these conditions.

<b>Table 6</b> <b>Trend of California voter opinion about creating a program that would allow illegal immigrants to stay and apply for citizenship under certain conditions</b>			
	Favor %	Oppose %	No opinion %
<b>March 2017**</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>*</b>
February 2013	90	8	2
March 2007	83	14	3
July 2006	80	16	4
<b>Party registration (March 2017)</b>			
Democrat	91	9	*
Republican	68	32	*
No party preference/other	80	20	*

\* less than ½ of 1%.

\*\* Applicable to illegal immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a number of years, have a job, have not committed a serious crime, have learned English, and paid back taxes.

(Past measures based on surveys of California registered voters conducted by The Field Poll as reported in Release #2439, published February 22, 2013 by Field Research Corporation.)

### **Fewer now describe illegal immigration as a “very serious” problem in California**

Despite the increasing political rhetoric about the illegal immigration issue nationally, when Californians are asked to assess the seriousness of the problem in the state, fewer now describe illegal immigration as a very serious problem than did so in the past. In the current survey, about one third voters (36%) see the problem as very serious, while 40% describe the problem as not too or not at all serious. Ten years ago, about half of the state’s voters (49%) felt the problem was very serious and far fewer (22%) considered it not serious.

Republicans are much more inclined than other voters to consider the problem very serious, with 76% currently describing it in these terms. This compares to just 17% of Democrats and 30% of No Party Preference voters who now consider the problem very serious.

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**Table 7**  
**Trend of voter perceptions of the seriousness of illegal immigration in California**

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	<b>Very Serious %</b>	<b>Somewhat Serious %</b>	<b>Not too / not at all Serious %</b>	<b>No opinion %</b>
<b>March 2017</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>*</b>
March 2007	49	28	22	1
July 2006	53	30	16	1
<b>Party registration (March 2017)</b>				
Democrat	17	25	58	*
Republican	76	20	4	*
No party preference/other	30	26	44	*

\* less than ½ of 1%.

*(Past measures based on surveys of California registered voters conducted by The Field Poll as reported in Release #2229, published April 10, 2007 by Field Research Corporation.)*

## About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a survey of 1,000 California registered voters conducted by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at UC, Berkeley. The *Berkeley IGS Poll* was administered online by YouGov March 13-20, 2017 in English and Spanish. According to YouGov, results from the overall sample have a margin of error of +/-3.6%. To cover a broad range of issues, some of the results in this release are based on random subsamples of 500 registered voters each.

YouGov completed the survey by inviting California registered voters who are included among its online panel of over 1.5 million Americans to participate in the poll. Panelists were recruited using a variety of methods, including telephone-to-web and mail-to-web recruitment, partner-sponsored solicitations, web-based advertising and email campaigns, as well as through telephone and mail surveys. Eligible voters were chosen to participate in the poll using a proprietary sampling technology frame that establishes interlocking demographic and regional targets, so that the characteristics of those polled approximate the profile of the state's overall registered voter population. After survey administration, YouGov also applied statistical weights to demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

IGS was responsible for the development and translation into Spanish of all questions included in the survey. The results in this report are based on answers given by California voters to the following questions:

How serious a problem do you think illegal immigration is in California today?\*

How secure do you feel U.S. borders are in preventing people from entering the country illegally?\*

President Trump has proposed building a wall along nearly all of U.S.-Mexico border as a way to reduce the number of people trying to enter the U.S. illegally from Mexico? Do you favor or oppose building the proposed U.S.-Mexico wall?

Do you support or oppose a program that would allow illegal immigrants who have been living in the U.S. for a number of years an opportunity to stay and apply for citizenship if they have a job, have not committed a serious crime, learn English and pay back taxes?

Under California law, local jurisdictions like cities and counties, can ignore requests from federal authorities to detain illegal or undocumented immigrants who have been arrested and are about to be released. Do you believe that local authorities should be able to ignore a federal request to hold an illegal immigrant who has been detained?\*

President Trump has threatened to significantly reduce federal funding to communities that limit their cooperation with federal authorities in detaining illegal or undocumented immigrants. If President Trump were able to follow through on this, would this make you less inclined or have no effect on your opinion about whether local communities in California should be doing this?\*

Some communities in California have declared themselves “sanctuary cities” for undocumented immigrants living in the country illegally. This means that when local police or government employees learn that someone is here illegally, they do not automatically turn over that person to federal immigration enforcement officers for possible deportation to their home country. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose communities in California declaring themselves as sanctuary cities for illegal or undocumented immigrants?\*

President Trump has threatened to significantly reduce federal funding to communities that declare themselves “sanctuary cities.” If President Trump were able to follow through on this, would this make you less inclined or have no effect on your opinion about whether communities in California should become sanctuary cities?\*

*\* questions asked of first random subsample of 500 registered voters*

*\*\* questions asked of second random subsample of 500 registered voters*

#### **About the Institute of Governmental Studies**

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California (UC) system’s flagship Berkeley campus, it is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state.