



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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Illinois Voters Offer Mixed Views on Illegal Immigration.

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Illinois voters would support a state version of the so-called “Dream Act,” under which undocumented immigrants brought here as children could receive in-state tuition, the same as legal residents. They also support paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants already in this country.

But they also support stronger border enforcement and favor requiring law officers to arrest illegal immigrants, according to a new statewide survey by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The survey of 1,000 registered Illinois voters has a three percentage-point margin for error. It was conducted October 11 through October 15, 2011.

“Some states have cracked down hard on illegal immigrants, but Illinois seems a bit more middle-of-the road,” said David Yepsen, the director of the Institute. The survey found:

- Six in ten respondents (60.8 percent) said they would support providing a path to citizenship for undocumented workers who passed background checks, paid fines, and had jobs. Just over a third (35.8 percent) were opposed.
- Illinoisans’ attitudes toward younger immigrants seem to be similarly tolerant. A solid majority (56.6 percent) favored giving citizenship to illegal immigrants who join the military or go to college; just over a third (35.6 percent) were opposed.
- Nearly two-thirds (63.3 percent) favored the “Dream Act” provision that would allow undocumented students who graduated from Illinois high schools to pay in-state tuition. Three in ten (30.7 percent) were opposed.
- But Illinoisans aren’t exactly welcoming illegal immigrants: The vast majority (86.0 percent) favored stronger enforcement of immigration laws and border security, and two-thirds (63.7 percent) favored requiring local law enforcement to arrest illegal immigrants.

“These results are not necessarily contradictory,” said Charles Leonard, an Institute visiting professor and director of the poll. “I think Illinoisans are comfortable with

immigrant populations, whether in the vibrant cultural diversity of Chicago or in the agricultural communities downstate that may rely on immigrant labor. At the same time, though, they favor enforcement of existing laws and want to keep illegal immigration from overtaking the state.”

Voters across most of the state favor the path-to-citizenship proposals, although in the smaller southern Illinois sample, opinion was essentially tied. For example, on the question of whether illegal immigrants currently in the country should gain citizenship after background checks, fines, and proof of employment, large majorities of Chicago residents (66.1 percent) those in the Chicago suburbs (62.9 percent) and those in northern and Central Illinois (60.0 percent) favored the proposal. In southern Illinois support was fairly even (45.0% in favor, 48.0% opposed).

On the other hand, support for the Dream Act stayed above 60 percent across the state: 65.0 percent in the city of Chicago, 62.1 percent in the suburbs, 64.3 percent in northern and central Illinois, and 62.0 percent in southern Illinois.

When sorting Illinois voters by party, Democrats and Independents favored the path-to-citizenship proposals, while Republicans were opposed. When asked whether illegal immigrants brought to the US as children should gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college, 69.2 percent of Democrats favored the proposal, as did just over half (52.1 percent) of Independents. Among Republicans only 42.9 percent were in favor.

On the Dream Act question, though, majorities in each partisan group favored the proposal: 70.8 percent among Democrats, 62.9 percent among Independents, and 55.1 percent among Republicans.

These results, Leonard said, suggest that voters across the state’s political spectrum would support granting in-state tuition to students who were here illegally but who graduated in good standing from Illinois high schools.

“This makes sense on a number of levels,” he said. “The voters seem to be reflecting the old saying that education is the ladder out of poverty and into the tax-paying middle class.”

The 2011 Simon Poll interviewed 1,000 registered voters across Illinois. It has a margin for error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 3 points from the results obtained here. The margin for error will be larger for demographic, geographic and response subgroups.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Issues + Answers Global Media Research of Virginia Beach, VA. Cell phone interviews were included as well as land-line interviews. Issues + Answers reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

Note: The “Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll,” the “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois

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Table:
Support for Immigration Reforms

The subject of immigration has been controversial in some areas. We are interested in what people think about ILLEGAL immigration in the U.S. Do you favor or oppose... [ROTATE]

Providing a way for illegal immigrants currently in the country to gain legal citizenship if they pass background checks, pay fines, and have jobs.

Favor	60.8%
Oppose	35.8%
Other/Don't know	3.4%

Stronger enforcement of immigration laws and border security.

Favor	86.0%
Oppose	11.6%
Other/Don't know	2.4%

Requiring local law enforcement in Illinois to arrest illegal immigrants.

Favor	63.7%
Oppose	29.7%
Other/Don't know	6.6%

Allowing illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college.

Favor	56.6%
Oppose	35.6%
Other/Don't know	7.8%

Charging illegal immigrants who graduate from Illinois high schools the same in-state tuition as state universities charge legal residents of Illinois.

Favor	63.3%
Oppose	30.7%
Other/Don't know	6.0%

