

Arizonans View Education Policy as a Major Issue

By Edward D. Vargas, PhD, MPH, edwardvargas@asu.edu (480) 965-8557

The Center for Latina/os and American Politics Research (CLAPR) at Arizona State University recently commissioned a statewide poll of Arizonans. The poll, administered by the polling firm Latino Decisions, surveyed 775 total respondents, including an oversample of Latina/os (N=411) from September 10-25.

Among the poll's findings are that immigration is most frequently cited as "the most important issue" (37%) facing the state, followed by K-12 Education (28%), and Health Care (18%) among 610 registered voters. In this brief, we will delve deeper into the importance of education in the Arizona political landscape and an innovative survey experiment that intersects education and immigration policy in the state.

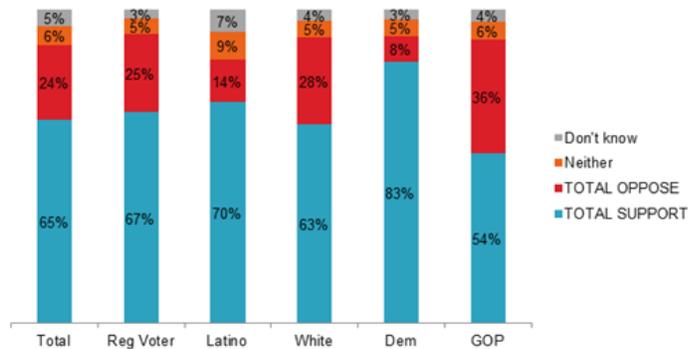
In the recent gubernatorial debates between incumbent Doug Ducey and challenger Democrat David Garcia, education policy was front and center. Particular attention was focused on the Invest in Education Act, a school-funding measure that would raise taxes for people with above average incomes. Through the #RedForEd movement, organizers gathered over 270,000 signatures to put a bill on a ballot that would reform Arizona's educational system. While, the Arizona Supreme Court struck from the ballot from being on the November election, we included a survey-item that asked Arizonians, "As you may have heard, there has been lots of talk about public education reform in Arizona. Do you support or oppose a 3 percent income-tax increase on households who make \$250,000 a year or more to improve public schools in Arizona?"

The results from this question show large support for education reform in the state and evidence that if on the ballot, the Investment in Education Act would have passed. In fact, over 65 percent of registered voters support a tax increase to help improve schools in Arizona.

Education Reform

As you may have heard, there has been lots of talk about public education reform in Arizona. Do you support or oppose a 3 percent income-tax increase on households who make \$250,000 a year or more to improve public schools in Arizona?

LatinoDecisions



Source: CLAPR AZ Poll (N=775; MoE +/-3.5%), September 10-25, 2018

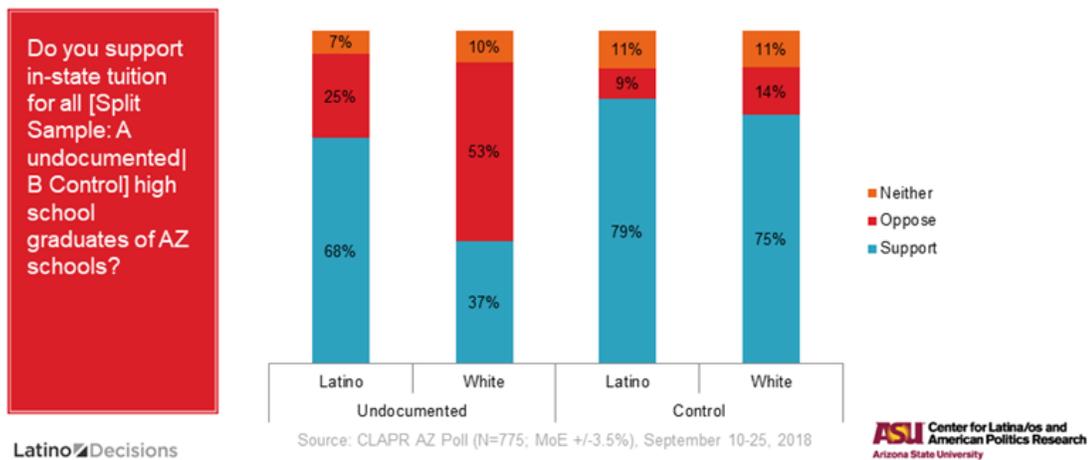
ASU Center for Latina/os and American Politics Research
Arizona State University

Unlike other policy domains, there is not a large divide on education policy, along racial and ethnic lines or political party. When looking at racial/ethnic background we find little difference between Latina/os or Hispanics and non-Latino whites regarding the importance of education as an issue (67% to 70%, respectively). Regarding political party, we find that over half (54%) of self-identified Republicans compared to 83% of self-identified Democrats, support educational reform. This is an important finding as very rarely do we find congruence along party lines in Arizona.

When examining preference on other key demographics, we find universal support for educational reform in the state. For example, over 66% percent of young voters support education reform compared to 63% of voters who are over the age of 60. We also find strong support based by income and for respondents who make more than \$80,000, who many people view as having unfavorable views toward taxes and educational reform.

Turning to the intersections of education and immigration, we used an innovative wording experiment that shows how controversial immigration is in the Grand Canyon state. For this survey-item, we asked respondents “Do you support in-state tuition for all [word experiment] high school graduates of AZ schools?” Half respondents are given the wording experiment “undocumented” as a means to uncover how immigration can trigger policy preferences. We find that on average, non-Latino whites are 38 percentage points less likely to support in-state policy for undocumented immigrants. Among Latina/os or Hispanics we find overwhelming support despite the immigration status of AZ high school graduates.

In-State Tuition for AZ High School Graduates



Overall, these highlight the importance of education and immigration in Arizona. As one of the only polls to ask about education tax reform with language similar to the Invest in Education Act, we argue that if on the ballot, this education bill would have stood a chance among AZ voters. We also highlight the contentious debate around in-state tuition for AZ high school graduates and the role language can play in swaying policy preferences. CLAPR will release additional findings from the AZ Survey in the coming weeks.

On behalf of CLAPR, Latino Decisions interviewed a total of 775 adults (610 registered voters) between September 10 and September 25, 2018. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, according to the respondent's choice. Surveys were completed using a blended sample that included live telephone interviews on landlines and cell phones, and online surveys. The survey carries a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

About CLAPR: The mission of CLAPR is to foster and support thoughtful, innovative research on the political and policy circumstances of the nation's Latina/o-Hispanic population, thereby creating a fuller, deeper understanding of politics and governance in the United States. This mission entails facilitating and disseminating research that emphasizes, but is not limited to, empirical and normative theoretical perspectives, historical context, institutional dimensions, and public policy issues which are especially germane to the Latina/o-Hispanic population while also having broad significance for American society and politics.

Edward D. Vargas, Ph.D., MPA is Senior Analyst at Latino Decisions and an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University.