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## **AILA's 2006 Election Analysis (Updated 11/09/06)**

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Mid-term election races are typically suffused with a blend of local and national issues and concerns. As a result, analyzing the election outcomes through the lens of a single issue often presents difficulties. To some degree, however, this year represents an exception with regard to a central AILA issue: immigration reform. A number of House, Senate (and Governor) immigration hard-liners tried to make illegal immigration a wedge electoral issue. The election results highlight how badly their gambit fared.

The rigid, impractical position on undocumented immigration set forth by hard-liners failed both generally (as it faded down the list of top national voter issues) and specifically (as high profile candidates who tried to leverage their hard-line approach into a wedge issue lost a majority of races). We take heart from the following specific election results:

### **House Races:**

J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ), one of the most vocal "seal the border, repel the hordes" hard-liners lost his re-election bid (46-51%) in Arizona (5th), a district he won by 21% two years ago!

Minuteman Randy Graf (R) lost his bid to replace Jim Kolbe in Arizona's 8th District by an overwhelming margin (42-54%). He ran on his hard-line views against Democratic opponent Gabrielle Giffords, who supports comprehensive reform along the lines of the Senate-passed comprehensive bill. The national elections gave truth to Graf's recent observation along the lines of: "If this issue doesn't play well in this district, it won't play well anywhere in the country."

John Hostettler (R-IN) also lost resoundingly, taking only 39% of the vote in Indiana's 8th District. Hostettler was one of the most high-profile hard-liners in the House. He has been the Chairman of the House Immigration Subcommittee and led a number of the summer hearings.

Bruce Braley (D) defeated Mike Whalen (R) in an open seat in Iowa's 1st District. Whalen ran on a hard-line, pro-H.R. 4437 platform and accused his opponent of supporting amnesty.

In Colorado's 7th District, Ed Perlmutter (D) beat Rick O'Donnell (54-42%) for Representative Beauprez's open seat, despite O'Donnell's attacks on Perlmutter as a supporter of amnesty.

Melissa Hart (R-PA), a member of the House Immigration Subcommittee, who had been a staunch supporter of H.R. 4437 and a committed opponent of comprehensive reform, also lost her reelection bid.

## Key Senate Races:

Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) lost by a huge margin (41-59%). Santorum had pounded his opponent, Democratic challenger Bob Casey, on Casey's support for comprehensive immigration reform in debates and with inflammatory advertisements.

Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) prevailed (53-45%) over his challenger, Tom Kean, who strongly opposed comprehensive immigration reform. Senator Menendez has the distinction of being the only Member of Congress to both vote against H.R. 4437 and for S. 2611!

Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) easily fought back (60-38%) a challenger, Katherine Harris, who unsuccessfully attempted to leverage Nelson's support for comprehensive reform into a wedge issue.

Senator Carper (D-DE) resoundingly defeated (70-29%) single-issue restrictionist candidate, Jan Ting. Carper supported a comprehensive solution and voted in favor of S. 2611 while Ting, a former INS official, rejected it as "amnesty."

## Governor's Races:

In Arizona, Democrat Janet Napolitano handily beat (63-35%) her Republican challenger Len Munsil. Napolitano has been in the vanguard of governors supporting a realistic, comprehensive solution to our immigration problems.

In Colorado, Democrat Bill Ritter defeated (56-41%) hard-liner Republican Bob Beauprez, who had vacated his U.S. House seat for a run at the governor's mansion. As a Member of the House, Beauprez voted against AILA's position on virtually every issue and attempted to leverage his hard-line stance on immigration into a winning electoral strategy in his gubernatorial bid.

## Overall Picture:

The final results in the House look like this: Democrats took control by a 230-205 margin, winning 12 more seats than they needed to gain control. The final Senate results are not in yet. Democrats gained at least 5 Senate seats, with the results of the Virginia Senate election still outstanding. On Wednesday, November 8, the Associated Press called the Virginia election for Democrat Jim Webb, by a margin of 7,236 votes, and Webb claimed victory over Republican incumbent George Allen. Allen has not yet conceded the election, however, and may insist upon a recount, given the election's razor-thin margins. If Webb wins the Virginia seat as expected, Democrats will control the Senate by a 51-49 margin (including two independents who will caucus with them). In the unlikely event that Allen overtakes Webb in a recount, the Senate will be split 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats, but Republicans will maintain their majority, since Vice President Cheney, as President of the Senate, casts the tie-breaking vote.

While these results will mean positive changes in leadership in the House (and possibly the Senate) on immigration issues, they by no means signify that it will be easy to obtain positive

and comprehensive immigration reform through the Congress in the coming two years. We lost two Republican moderates in the Senate who had strongly supported comprehensive immigration reform--Senators DeWine (OH) and Chafee (RI) - and 60 votes will be needed to pass any controversial legislation. In the House, many of the victors are conservative Democrats, and the looming 2008 presidential election will mean that both parties will be "tacking" strongly to the center. Please see Fareed Zakaria's article in the November 13 issue of Newsweek (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15566722/site/newsweek/from/ET/>) for a good analysis of the prospects for immigration reform in the new Congress.

We hope that both parties will take seriously the fact that immigration restrictionists lost badly yesterday. We will also be looking at some of the close races to determine the strength of the Latino vote.

We will be working very hard to try to get some meaningful H and EB relief next week during the potentially short "lame duck" session. It is not yet clear whether Congress will actually try to pass any appropriations bills or whether they will merely pass a "continuing resolution" and leave the legislating until 2007. We will keep you posted.

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