

# New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



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## PRESS RELEASE

### **New Mexico Voters Support Common-Sense Approach to Driver's Licenses**

LOS LUNAS, NM—Friday, December 09, 2011—IMMEDIATE RELEASE—There have been continued discussions throughout New Mexico about driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. While Governor Susana Martinez' administration has unsuccessfully attempted to revoke these driver's licenses, recent polling shows that the majority of New Mexicans prefer a common-sense approach to driver's license that would help keep all of us safe by making sure all drivers in New Mexico are insured and licensed.

This fall, a survey conducted by Lake Research Partners showed that 64% of New Mexico voters support a compromise proposal that would subject undocumented immigrants to additional requirements for driver's licenses but allow them to get driver's licenses. The poll also found that only 10% of all voters statewide cite driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants as their most important issue.

Instead of trying to divide our community, our representatives in Santa Fe should focus on job creation and improving the quality of life for our citizens. Keeping all drivers in New Mexico licensed, regardless of immigration status, ensures that all of us are safer on the road. Contact Allen Sanchez, Executive Director, New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops, 505.319.3334.--  
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To: Friends and Allies

From: Lake Research Partners

Re: Overwhelming Support for Compromise Legislation on Drivers' Licenses

Date: September 22, 2011

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**Despite Governor Martinez's push to deny driver's licenses to all undocumented immigrants who reside in New Mexico, a recent statewide survey shows overwhelming support for legislation that would instead subject undocumented immigrants to additional requirements in order to attain a driver's license.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the data suggests that the Governor's insistent focus on this issue is at odds with the electorate.**

**Nearly two-thirds of voters (64%) support a compromise proposal that would continue to license undocumented immigrants, but subject them to additional requirements before obtaining their licenses,** including strengthened identity and residency requirements, re-verification of documents and more frequent renewals, a fingerprint database for law enforcement, and additional felonies for fraud. These measures provide more protections for New Mexicans than denying licenses. Support for this measure is rooted in intensity, as a 52% majority supports it strongly. Just 26% of voters oppose this proposal. Another 10% are undecided.

**Voters' support for this proposal is unusually broad, crossing partisan, regional, and ethnic divides.** Fully 57% of Democrats, 70% of Republicans, and 65% of independents are in favor. There is also striking consensus regardless of ethnicity, as 65% of Anglos and 60% of Hispanic voters support the legislation that would allow immigrants to get driver's licenses but with additional requirements. Support holds up strongly across region as well, with 63% of voters in the Metro North, 71% of voters in the Non-Metro North, and 60% of voters in the South in favor of the proposal.

Finally, the survey sheds light on the disparity between the Governor's priorities and voters' own. **Support for the compromise legislation notwithstanding, voters regard a host of issues as more important to them than driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.** Asked what issue is most important to them and their families, a solid majority of voters cites economic concerns, including jobs, the economy, and wages (26%), rising health care costs (10%), taxes (9%), education and the rising cost of college tuitions (8%), and cuts to key services, like education and health care (8%). **Only 10% of all voters statewide cite driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants as their most important issue.** Less than 1% of Hispanic Voters statewide said driver's license for undocumented immigrants was

their most important issue. Put another way, 61% of voters cite a range of economic issues as more important than driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. All told, this strongly suggests that the Governor's agenda is wildly out of sync with the issue agenda of New Mexico's electorate.

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 405 likely voters in New Mexico. The survey was conducted September 15-19, 2011. The margin of error for this poll is +/- 4.9%.

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**Bottom Line: Voters' issue agenda is dominated by economic concerns, not drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants. When faced with the prospect of legislation that would subject undocumented immigrants to additional requirements for driver's licenses, rather than a blanket denial of licenses to all undocumented immigrants in the state, voters across the state—Anglo and Hispanic alike and of every partisan stripe—are strongly supportive.**