

Poll: Rising U.S. Support for Social Issues, Such as Gay Marriage

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Republicans may not be able to rely on social issues as they try to rebound against a popular president and increasingly dominant Democratic Party, as a new Washington Post-ABC News poll shows rising support for same-sex marriage, legalized marijuana and a process by which undocumented immigrants could become legal residents.

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None of these issues has become an early priority for President Obama, who has marshalled his political capital on the economic stimulus package and revamping foreign policy instead. He does not support legalizing marijuana, and has said he favors civil unions giving gay couples the same legal rights as married couples, though not marriage.

Obama supports a path to citizenship for some illegal immigrants, but in last night's press conference, the president emphasized the need to secure the border ahead of comprehensive immigration reform and avoided putting a specific timetable on passing such a law.

Support for each of these issues has reached a new high in Post-ABC polling, but none has the widespread backing necessary to avoid a political battle. By keeping his focus elsewhere, Obama may be avoiding a repeat of former president Bill Clinton's failed efforts to end the ban on gays in the military.

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