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POLL: VOTERS LIKE IMMIGRATION PLAN, SKEPTICAL LONG-TERM

By Sara Murray
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Americans are largely supportive of a Senate plan to overhaul immigration laws, but they're skeptical it will fix a broken system forever, a new poll released by pro-immigration-overhaul groups finds.

Some 74% of registered voters surveyed said they supported a Senate immigration plan to increase border security, create new visa programs and offer a path to citizenship to immigrants who've passed background checks and paid fines. The results were part of a survey of 800 voters that will be publicly released Thursday.

While many of the voters surveyed looked favorably upon the Senate's immigration plan, 73% said they didn't believe it would fix the system once and for all.

GOP-polling firm Winston Group conducted the survey for Americans for Tax Reform, the National Immigration Forum Action Fund and the Partnership for a New American Economy. It comes as conservative groups like ATR are growing more vocal in their support for immigration overhaul efforts. The poll shows many rank-and-file Republicans may back them up.

Of the Republicans surveyed, 9 in 10 supported the border security measures in the Senate bill. Some 89% said they supported mandatory E-verify, the system that checks workers' legal status. And 85% said they supported a path to citizenship that requires immigrants to pay taxes and fines, learn English and wait to get citizenship until everyone waiting legally gets in.

The least popular measure among Republicans was the Senate proposal to tie legal immigration to economic conditions, increasing the number of visas available when employers can't fill jobs and decreasing visas during high unemployment. Still, 62% of Republicans said they approved of it.

The survey also showed the majority of voters polled, 58%, said immigration helps the economy. The number was slightly higher among Republicans, with 61% saying it helps the economy.

But there were indications that those who oppose immigration have some potentially potent arguments. Some 59% said they felt less supportive of the Senate plan when they heard that "opponents of the bill say it was written in secret and is being rushed through Congress so no one can read it." That criticism has been a favorite of GOP lawmakers seeking to kill the bill.