



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

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2008 Election Results Lesson Learned: Conservative and GOP Leadership Calling for New Strategy on Hispanic Voters

Colin Powell said in an interview with [CNN](#) in December, *"I think the party has to take a hard look at itself. There is nothing wrong with being conservative. There is nothing wrong with having socially conservative views — I don't object to that. But if the party wants to have a future in this country, it has to face some realities. In another 20 years, the majority in this country will be the minority."*

Senator John McCain as reported by [The Hill](#) was at an all-day, private GOP meeting at the Library of Congress in January where he told colleagues their poor image among Hispanics, which he attributed to bitter intra-party squabbles over immigration reform, dealt his campaign a devastating blow. A Republican senator who attended the meeting said that McCain emphasized the importance of healing the rift with Hispanics by talking about immigration reform in a "positive" way.

Senator Lindsay Graham said in an interview with NBC News in January *"So when people look at Lindsey Graham and other Republicans, I hope they will see a partner, finding common ground on the big-ticket items like Social Security, immigration reform, budget reform, where no one party can do this by themselves. If the Republican Party would genuinely reach across the aisle, define common ground on the big issues that face our nation, all boats rise."*

Senator John Ensign reported on an all-day, private GOP meeting at the Library of Congress in January with John McCain in [The Hill](#) noting *"Republicans hashed out the need to reverse their slide in support among Hispanics. 'It was discussed big time. We have to reach out to Hispanics. We need to go on Hispanic media much more.'"*

Karl Rove said in [Newsweek](#) in November *"An anti-Hispanic attitude is suicidal. As the party of Lincoln, Republicans have a moral obligation to make our case to Hispanics, blacks and Asian-Americans who share our values. Whether we see gains in 2010 depends on it."*

Senator Mel Martinez on [Meet the Press](#) in November said *"The very divisive rhetoric of the immigration debate set a very bad tone for our brand as Republicans... there were voices within our party, frankly, which if they continue with that kind of rhetoric, anti-Hispanic rhetoric, that so much of it was heard, we're going to be relegated to minority status."*

Jim Nicholson former Republican National Committee Chair and Veterans Affairs Secretary, speaking out to GOP members in January according to [Politico](#) said *"We have to better inform and motivate and align with the Hispanic voters. That's one of the key issues that the party and its leaders need to convene and, you know, have a very open, transparent discussion about developing a party position on. The Hispanic voters...in this country are center-right, more conservative, more family- and work-oriented people. We have to overcome some of the predilections that they have about Republicans so that we get more of their votes."*

[The Wall Street Journal's](#) editorial board wrote in December *"Immigration wasn't a dominant issue this fall, and other factors contributed more to the GOP defeat. But the political reality is that Republicans who thought that channeling Lou Dobbs would save their seats will soon be ex-Members. Meanwhile, exit polls showed that the Republican share of the Hispanic vote fell to 31% this year from more than 40% in 2004. The demographic reality is that the GOP can't win national elections while losing such a large share of the fastest-growing ethnic minority in the country."*

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