AMERICAN ROOTS IN THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE:
Immigrants and Children of Immigrants Comprise
Nearly One Quarter of the U.S. Population

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released data on the Latino population of the United States that underscores the extent to which the immigrant experience is embedded in the social (and political) fabric of the United States in three important ways:

1. Nearly one out of every four people in the United States in 2008 was either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant. Two-thirds of Latinos, and one-in-ten non-Latino whites, were immigrants or children of immigrants.

2. Immigrants who are naturalized U.S. citizens (and entitled to vote) accounted for 5 percent of the total U.S. population in 2008.

3. Two-in-five immigrants came to this country before 1990 and therefore have deep U.S. roots. More than one-third of Latino immigrants came to the United States prior to 1990.

The political significance of these statistics should be apparent. Latinos comprise the fastest-growing group of voters in the United States. The number of naturalized U.S. citizens is increasing rapidly. And the electoral clout of “New American” voters who share a direct, personal connection to the immigrant experience—that is, naturalized citizens and the U.S.-born children of immigrants—is on the rise. Successful politicians will pay close attention to these demographic trends.

Immigrants and the children of immigrants account for:

- **23.4 percent** (or 69.8 million) of all people in the United States.
  - There were 37.3 million immigrants, and 32.5 million children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.

- **67.9 percent** (or 31.2 million) of all Latinos.
  - There were 17.8 million Latino immigrants, and 13.4 million Latino children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.

- **10.4 percent** (or 20.6 million) of all non-Latino whites.
  - There were 7.9 million non-Latino white immigrants, and 12.7 million non-Latino white children of immigrants, in the United States in 2008.
Naturalized U.S. citizens account for:

- 5 percent (or 15.1 million) of all people in the United States.
- 10.5 percent (or 4.9 million) of all Latinos.
- 2.3 percent (or 4.5 million) of all non-Latino whites.
Immigrants who came to the United States before 1990 account for:

- 41.1 percent (or 15.3 million) of all immigrants.
- 37.4 percent (or 6.7 million) of all Latino immigrants.
- 50.9 percent (or 4 million) of all non-Latino white immigrants.

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Endnotes

2 The tables released by the Census Bureau on September 30 do not contain data on Asian Americans or Asian immigrants.