



PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

SURVEY ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

**New York's 25th
Congressional District**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2019

SUPPORTED BY



Methodology

NEW YORK-25

Sample Size: 995 Residents of NY's 25th Congressional District

Field Dates: September 19 – November 18, 2019

Fielded By: Program for Public Consultation

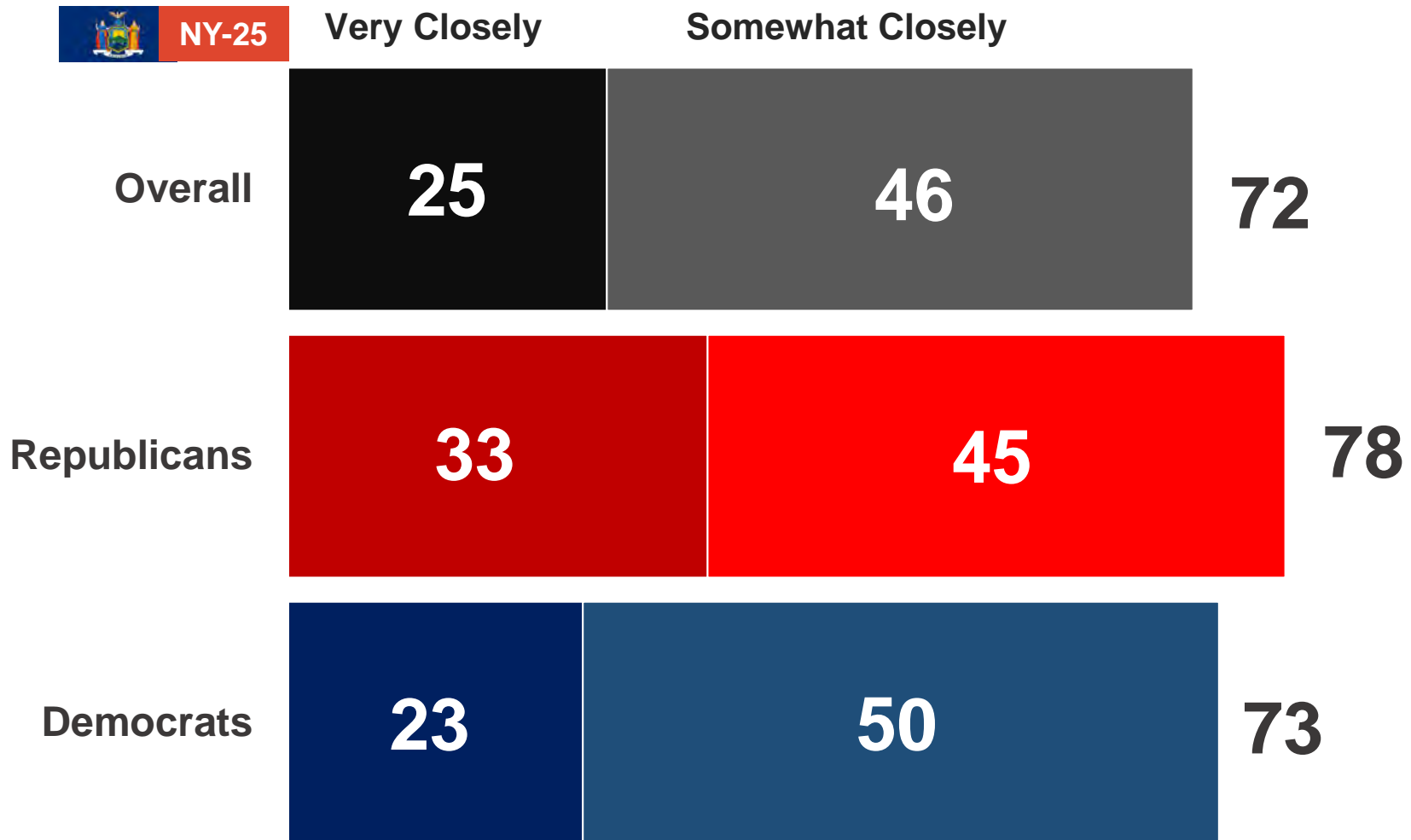
NATIONAL

Sample Size: 2,228 Registered Voters Nationwide (March 2018)
2,407 Registered Voters Nationwide (October 2018)

Field Dates: February 21 – March 12, 2018 (National Survey #1)
October 1-16, 2018 (National Survey #2)

Fielded By: Nielsen Scarborough

First, how closely do you follow news about immigration?



**RESOLVING THE FATE OF
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS
WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE U.S.
FOR SOME TIME**

DACA Program

**(Immigrants brought here
illegally as children)**

DACA Program

In 2012, DACA was established to provide legal protection to 1.8 million undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US illegally as children, known as “Dreamers.”

In 2017 DACA was ended so that within 2 years they are subject to deportation.

DACA

Proposal: Create a new legal status for the 1.8 million DACA-eligible immigrants allowing them to live and work in the United States.

After 10-12 years, they could apply for citizenship, provided they:

- graduate from high school
- pass criminal background checks and do not commit any crimes
- maintain full employment, serve in the military or pursue a higher education or professional degree

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Dreamers not at fault for being here.

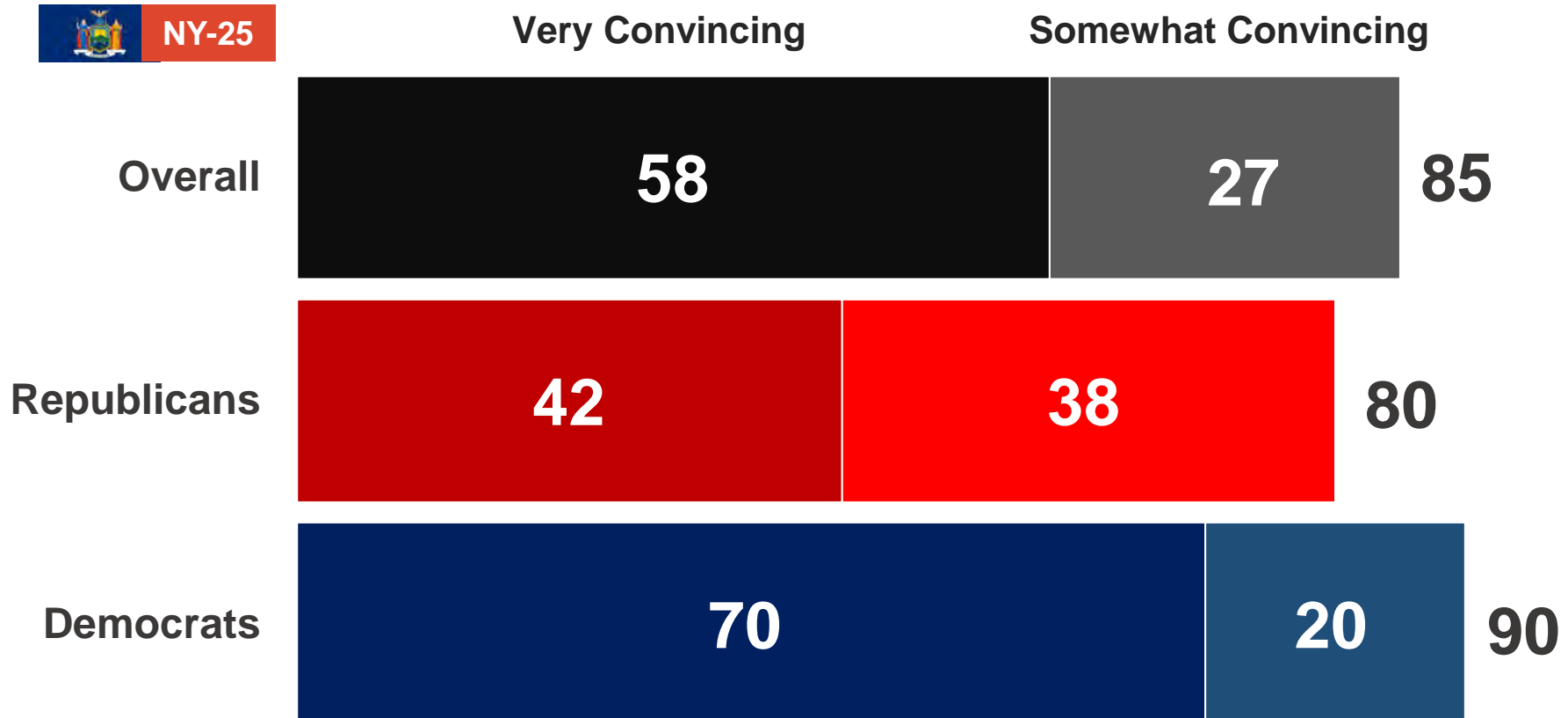
**Unjust to force them to go
to foreign country.**

200k have children here.

Most 'Dreamers' were brought to this country as children by their families. And while the families did break the law, the children had no say in the matter and did not actively make that decision to illegally enter the country. It would be unjust to punish people for crimes they did not choose to commit. And considering many have been here their entire lives, it would be cruel to send them to a foreign land to start their lives over. This is not to mention that about 200,000 of them have US-born children who would have to either uproot their lives as well or be left living with relatives.

Immigration Reform - Nov. 2019

DACA: Argument in Favor



ARGUMENT AGAINST

**Parents broke the law and
proposal lets them stay.
Rewards illegal behavior.
Gives them amnesty.**

It may not be these young people's fault that their parents brought them here, but the law was still broken and in the end, this proposal would give these law-breaking parents' children citizenship. This rewards illegal behavior and encourages more illegal immigration. We always talk about punishing lawbreakers, but in the end we keep letting them get away with it which encourages others. This is just more amnesty. In the 1980s we gave amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants. We were told that this would be followed with a real crackdown on new illegal immigrants, but it only encouraged more to come in. This proposed program is more of the same.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

QACA: Argument Against



NY-25

Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

24

31

55

Republicans

38

38

76

Democrats

14

22

36

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

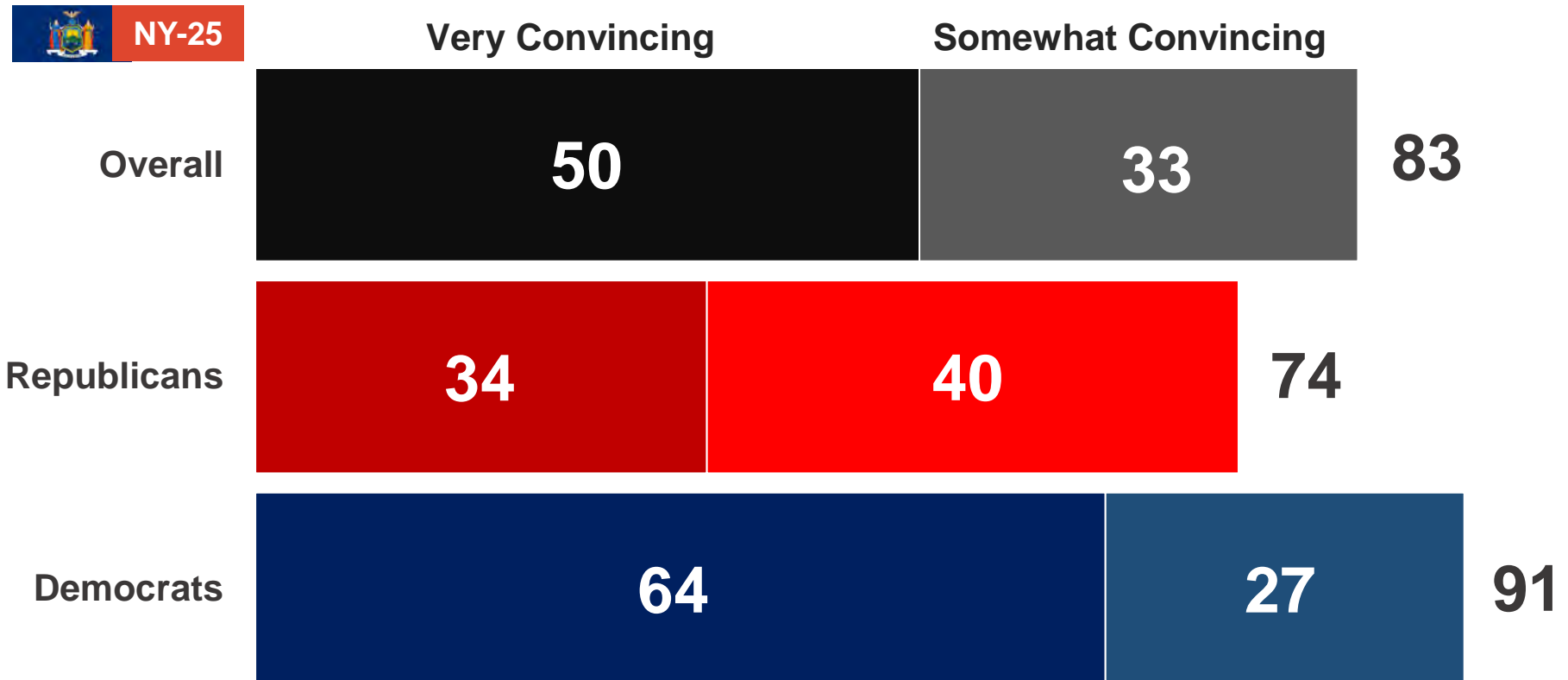
**Deporting nearly 2 million young people
would harm the economy.**

**Logistics of deportation would
cost up to \$10 billion.**

The idea of deporting nearly two million young people who are integrated into US society makes no sense from an economic perspective. They have been educated here, at some cost to taxpayers and have a lot to offer the US economy. "Dreamers" are already estimated to pay as much as \$2 billion annually in taxes, and this will only increase as they age – getting higher-paying jobs and spending more. Deporting them will hurt businesses that rely on them for employment and consumption. Just the logistics of deporting nearly two million young people cost up to \$10 billion, twice the current budget of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. It would be a waste of resources and a major lost opportunity if we deport the Dreamers.

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DACA: Argument in Favor



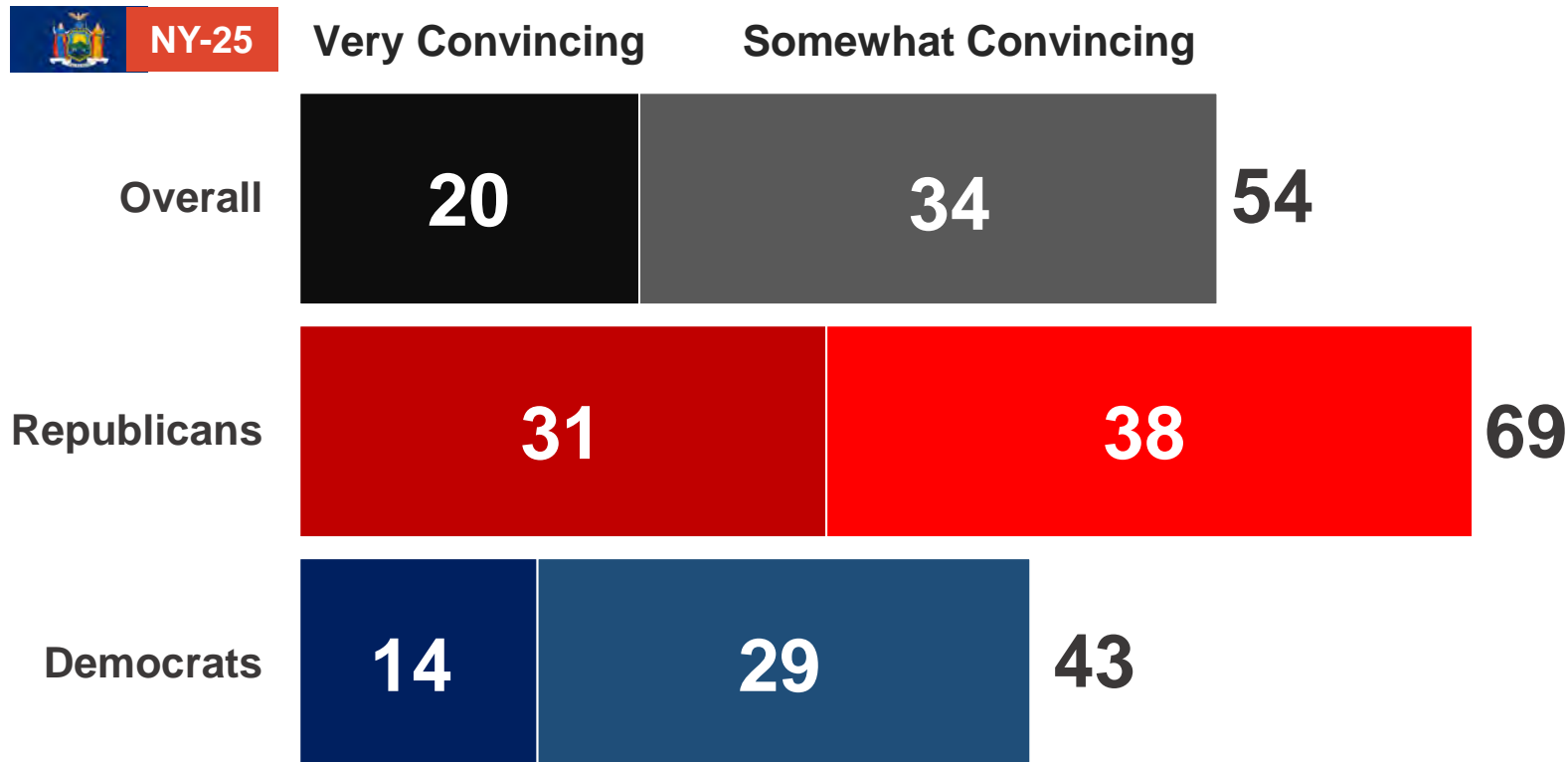
ARGUMENT AGAINST

Letting them stay might be good for corporations, but not young American citizens competing for the same jobs.

This plan will make it easier for immigrants who came here illegally as children to compete with young American citizens. This might be good for corporations who want to have an oversupply of workers so they can pay them less and offer little to no benefits, but it is bad for young Americans who are already having a hard time. Just recently, the unemployment rate for 18-29 year olds reached a whopping 11% and many more are underemployed. A recent study found that on average they earn 20% less than their baby boomer parents did at the same age and have more student debt. This is no time to introduce a new surge of young people into the legal job market.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

DACA: Argument Against



DACA

Proposal: Create a new legal status for the 1.8 million DACA-eligible immigrants allowing them to live and work in the United States.

After 10-12 years, they could apply for citizenship, provided they:

- graduate from high school
- pass criminal background checks and do not commit any crimes
- maintain full employment, serve in the military or pursue a higher education or professional degree

DACA

Final Recommendation

Provide legal status to immigrants who came here as children illegally, and in 10-12 years, make them eligible to apply for citizenship

Make them subject to deportation within 2 years



Overall

81

18

Republicans

71

27

Democrats

91

9



US

Overall

80

17

Republicans

69

27

Democrats

92

6

Undocumented Immigrants

Undocumented Immigrants

Currently, there are about **10.5 million immigrants without legal status**. About two thirds of such adult immigrants have been here more than 10 years.

Proposal:

A **new long-term visa** for undocumented immigrants who have:

- been in the US for some years
- not committed any serious crimes
- have paid a penalty and any taxes they may owe

Allows them:

- to **live and work legally** in the US
- eventually **apply for citizenship**, but must go to the back of the line

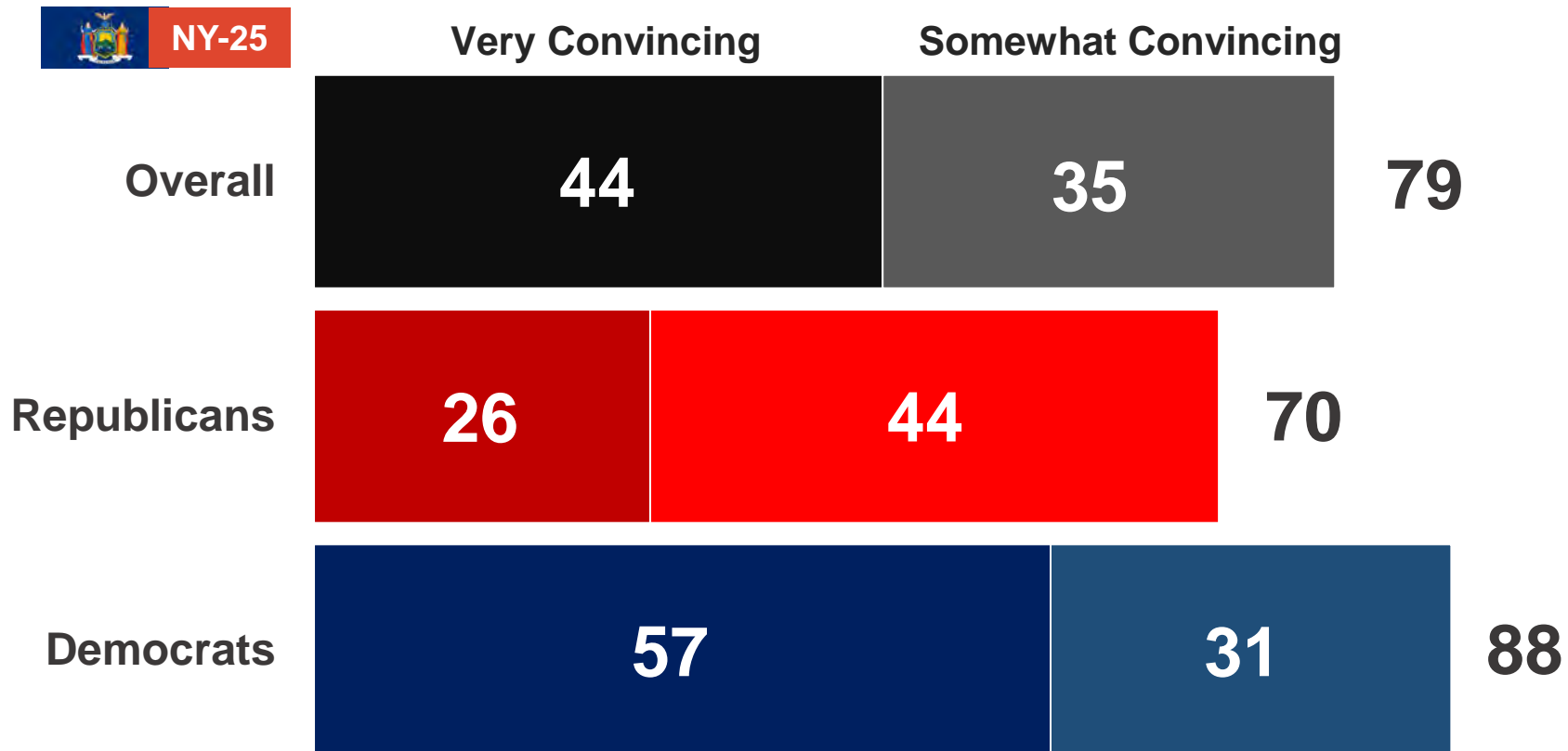
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

**Not feasible to deport 10 million people.
They are making valuable contributions and
deporting them would damage economy.
Proposal is orderly, realistic, humane.**

We need to face the fact that it is simply not feasible to deport over 10 million people living and working here, most of them for more than a decade. These people have integrated into American society and are making valuable contributions to the economy and the society. If we were to try to deport them all it would undermine numerous industries and have very negative effects on the economy. If we give these immigrants legal status they would no longer need to live in the shadows and their children would not live in fear that their parents will be suddenly taken away. It would also benefit American workers, because they would be competing with immigrants on a level playing field, rather than competing with people who can be easily exploited and underpaid by employers. This proposal is a way to deal with immigrants in an orderly, realistic and humane fashion.

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Path to Citizenship: Argument in Favor



ARGUMENT AGAINST

They are here illegally.

Would be giving them amnesty.

Will encourage more to come.

Not fair to those who followed the rules.

Must defend borders.

We need to remember that these undocumented people are here illegally. If we let them stay that would be giving them amnesty. This will undermine the rule of law. It is simply surrendering in the battle to defend our borders and a country with undefended borders is not a real country. Furthermore, legalizing millions of illegal immigrants will only make the problem worse. It will encourage more immigrants to come here illegally. In the 1980's when we granted amnesty illegal immigrants kept on coming. Giving illegal immigrants a free pass, just because they have been here a few years, is not fair to those who are abiding by our laws and going through the proper channels. We should not let people, who knowingly broke our laws, live here and try to become citizens.

Americans on Immigration Reform — Nov. 2019

Fight to Citizenship Argument Against



NY-25

Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

26

29

55

Republicans

45

32

77

Democrats

12

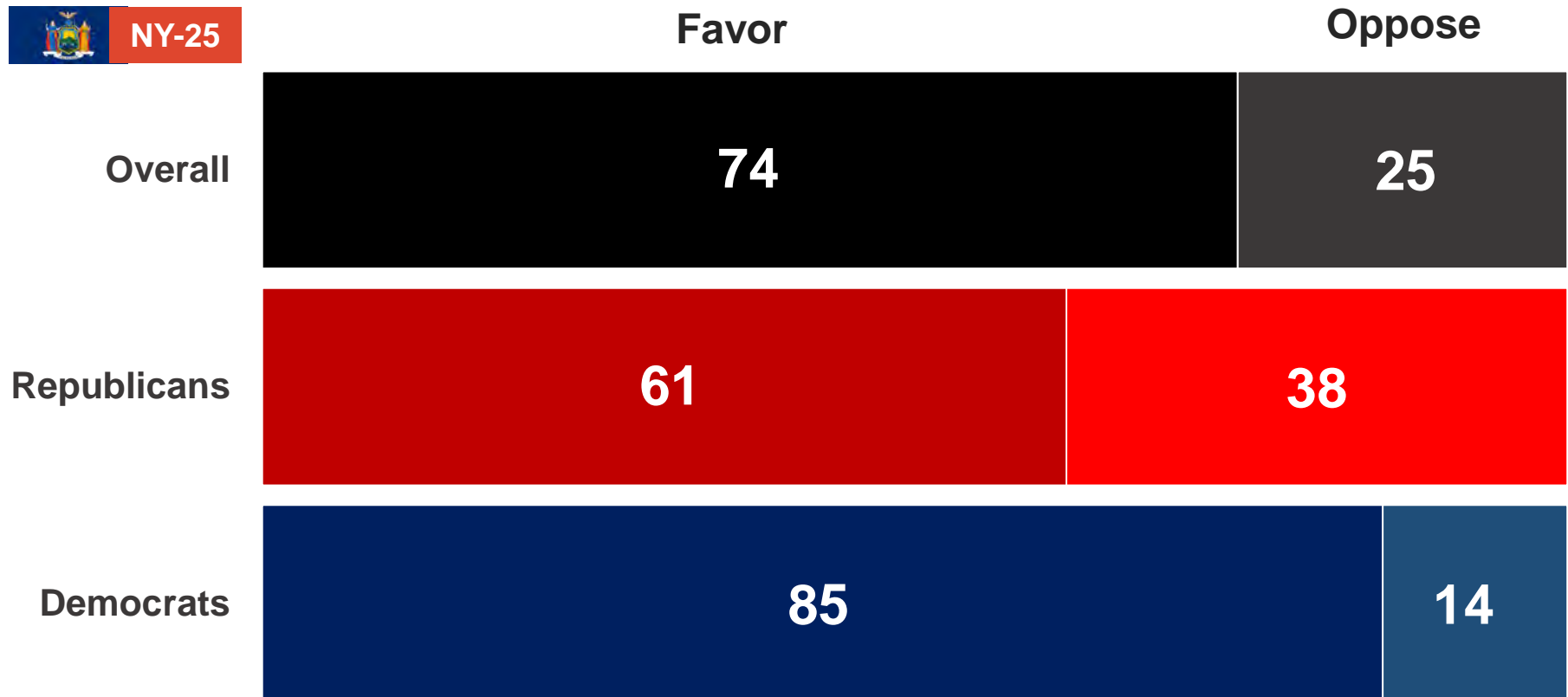
25

37

New Visa for Undocumented Immigrants

Final Recommendation

Proposal: A new long-term visa for undocumented immigrants who have been in the US for some years. Allows them to **live and work legally** in the US, and eventually **apply for citizenship**.



DETERRING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Making E-Verify Mandatory

E-Verify

Proposal:

Require employers to verify that the people they hire have the legal right to work in the US by going to the government's E-Verify website.

Employers who fail to do so and are found to be employing undocumented immigrants will be fined.

Repeated violation can result in jail time, revocation of business license.

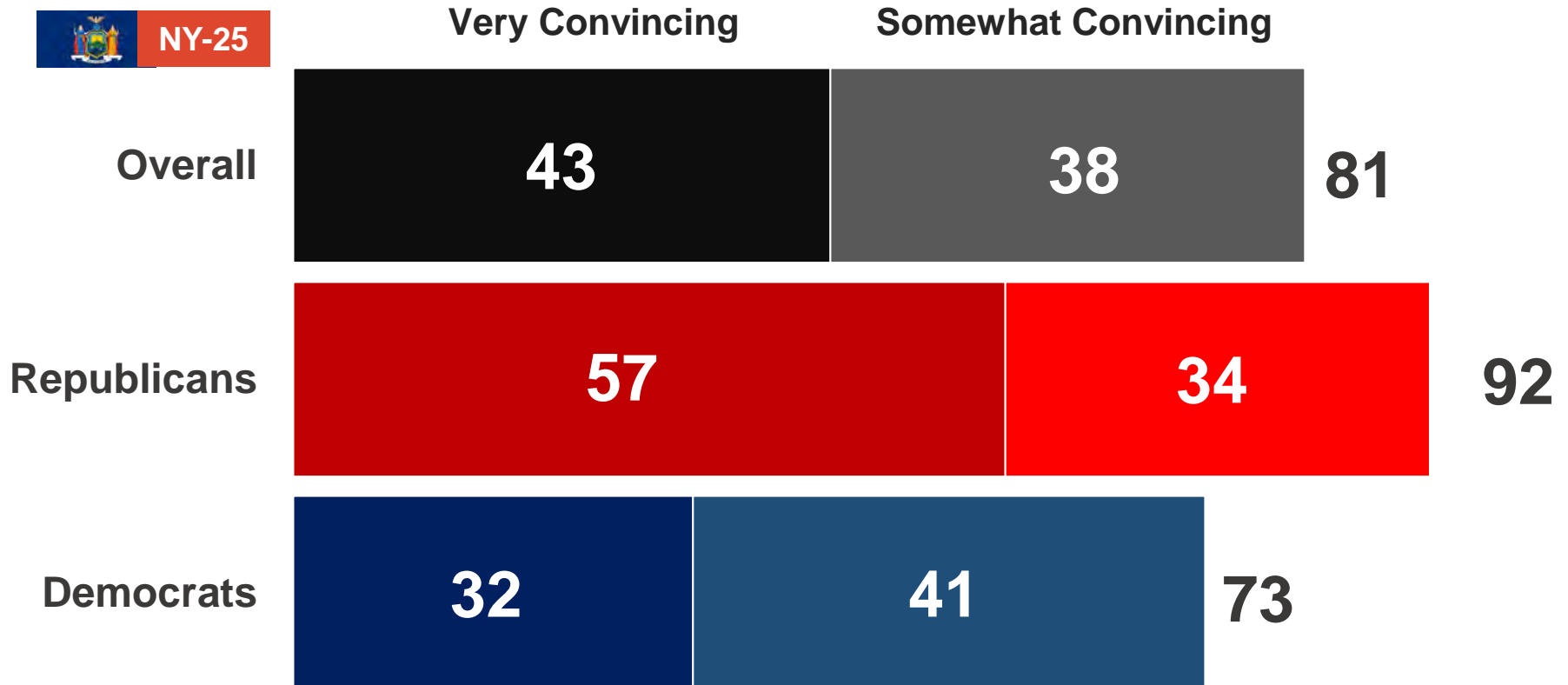
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

**Illegal immigration is driven by
people looking for jobs.
Employers turn a blind eye
so as to pay low wages.
Honest employers are at a disadvantage.**

The primary reason that people immigrate to the US illegally is because they are looking for a job. The reason that the US is such a job magnet is that so many employers do not bother to check whether the people they employ are legal—often turning a blind eye because they want to pay the lower wages that illegal immigrants will accept. Honest employers who do check to make sure their employees are legal are put at a disadvantage. This clearly needs to stop. All US employers should be required to verify that their employees are legal.

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Competition for Jobs: Argument in Favor of Reduction



ARGUMENT AGAINST

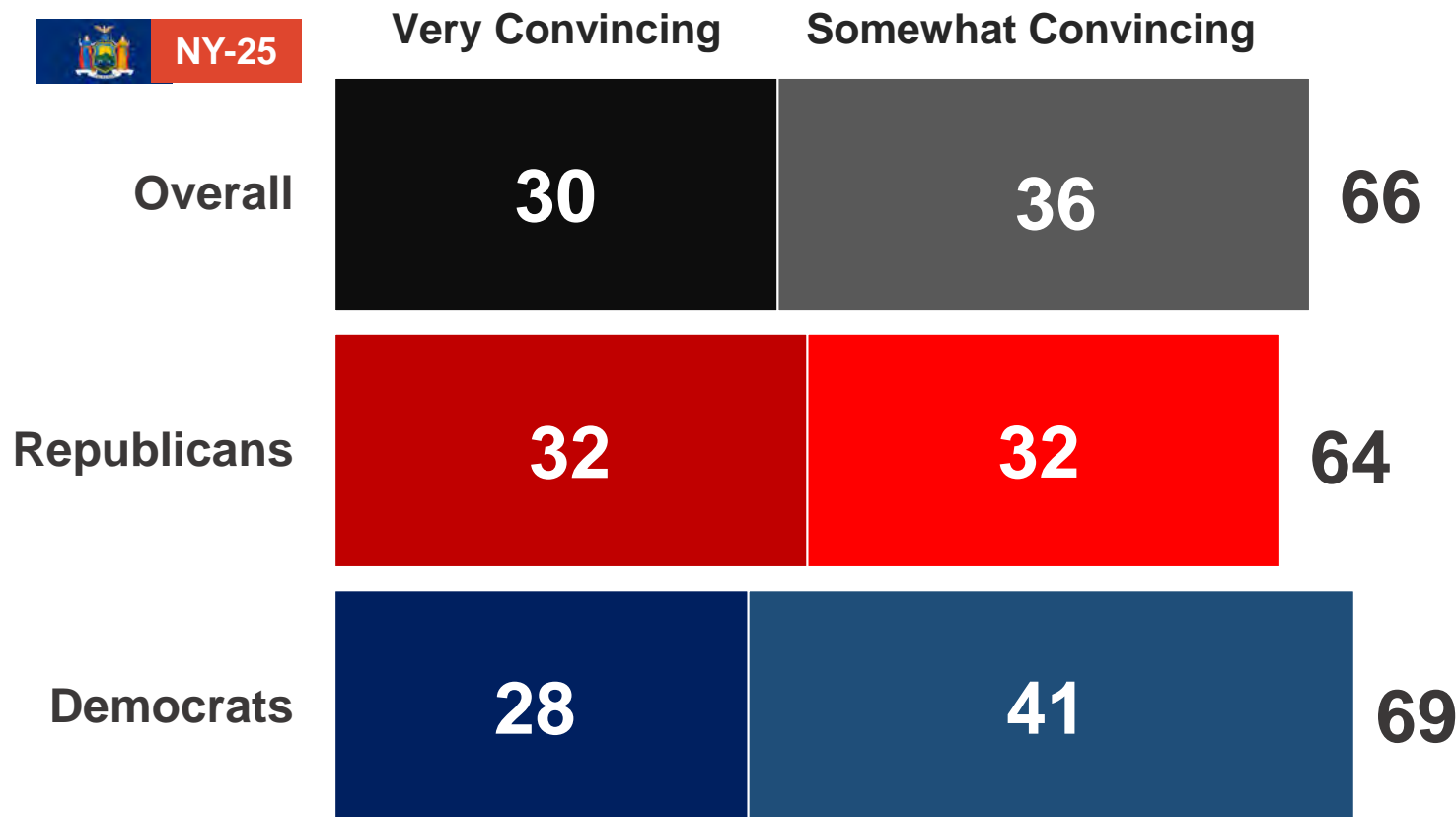
Should not be employer's responsibility to enforce immigration laws.

**Would cost small businesses \$127 per hire.
It's the government's responsibility.**

Employers should not have the responsibility to enforce US immigration laws. It is also costly for the employer. According to one study, requiring employers to use E-Verify would cost small businesses \$2.7 billion to implement, an average of \$127 per new employee. It is the government's job to ensure that illegal immigrants do not come into the US in the first place, rather than expecting employers to police them.

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Competition for Jobs: Argument Against Reduction



ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

7 million immigrants hold jobs in the US, while 23 million American citizens and legal residents can't find jobs.
Should ensure legal residents get those jobs first.

Approximately 7 million illegal immigrants hold jobs in the U.S. At the same time there are 23 million American citizens and legal residents who are currently unemployed or can't find full-time work. This is not right. Requiring employers to verify that their employees can work legally, would open up millions of jobs for citizens and legal immigrants, lowering their unemployment rate. Our first responsibility should be to ensure that legal workers have a job.

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Suppresses Wages: Argument in Favor



Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

42

29

72

Republicans

59

33

92

Democrats

30

26

56

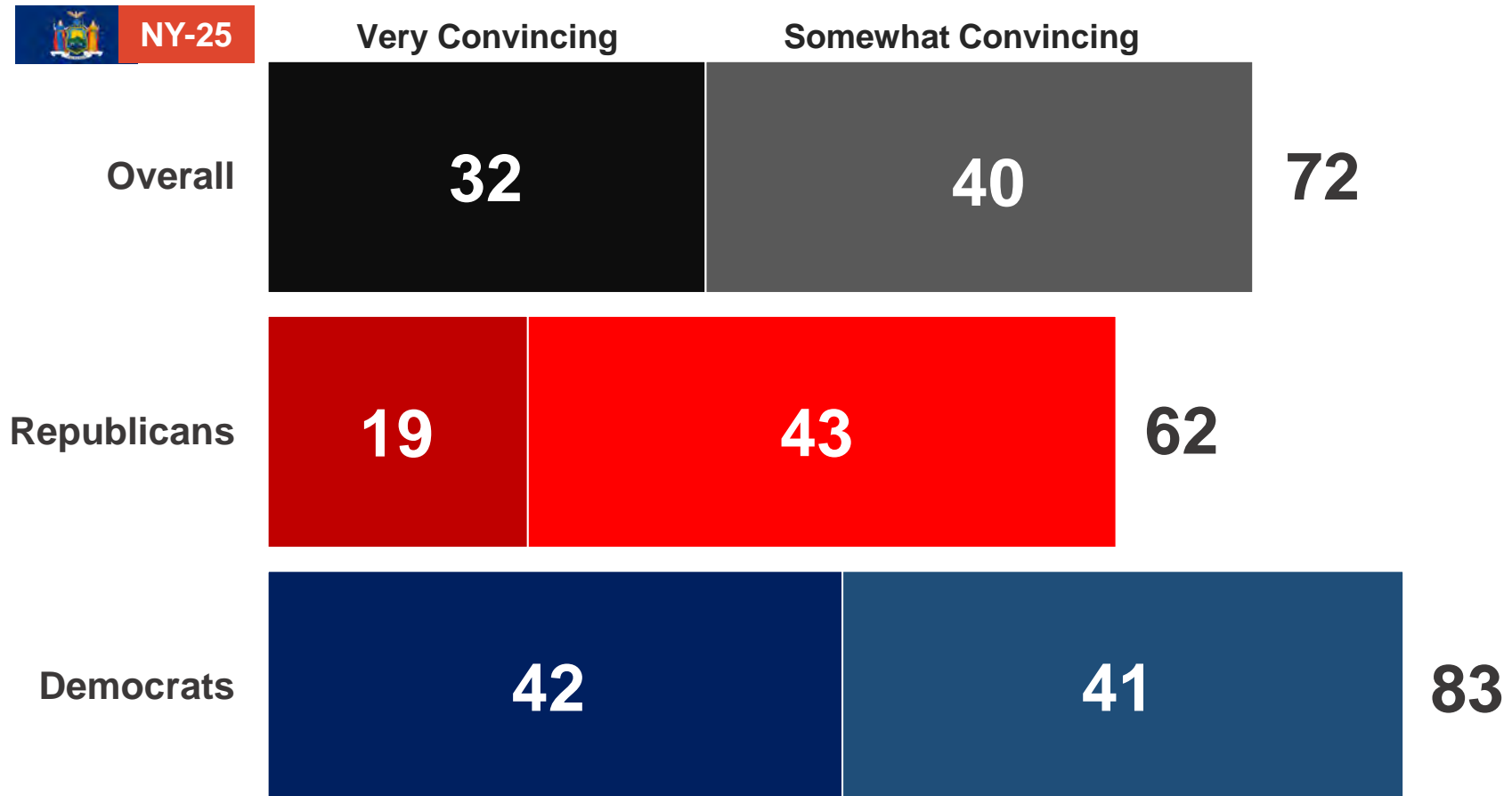
ARGUMENT AGAINST

**Government cannot keep track of everybody.
The system has been shown to make mistakes.
Also, most Americans don't want the jobs that
immigrants are doing, like farm work.
Will lead to labor shortages.**

The idea that the government is going to effectively keep track of who is and who isn't legal is really dubious. There are many cases of the E-Verify system saying that someone is not legal, when they really are. For example, this can happen when someone changes their name--something that is particularly likely to happen to women. Also, the idea that driving illegal immigrants out of their jobs is going to free up jobs for Americans is doubtful. Americans do not want many of the jobs they take -- like farm work--and driving them out will likely lead to major labor shortages that will hurt American businesses.

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Suppresses Wages: Argument Against



ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

E-Verify works and will get better with use.
87% of employers are satisfied.
Catches people who are here, unlike wall.
Cost is low.

The E-Verify system has proven to work very well. An overwhelming 87% of employers who use the system report satisfaction. There have been few cases of legal workers being flagged as illegal. In any case, as we make a commitment to use the system and it plays a more important role, improvements will be made and new technology will raise the performance level every year just as is the case with all technology. It can also catch people who are already here, which other systems, like a wall, cannot do. And its cost for taxpayers is quite low.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

Immigrants are a Burden: Argument in Favor



Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

34

43

77

Republicans

45

44

89

Democrats

27

43

70

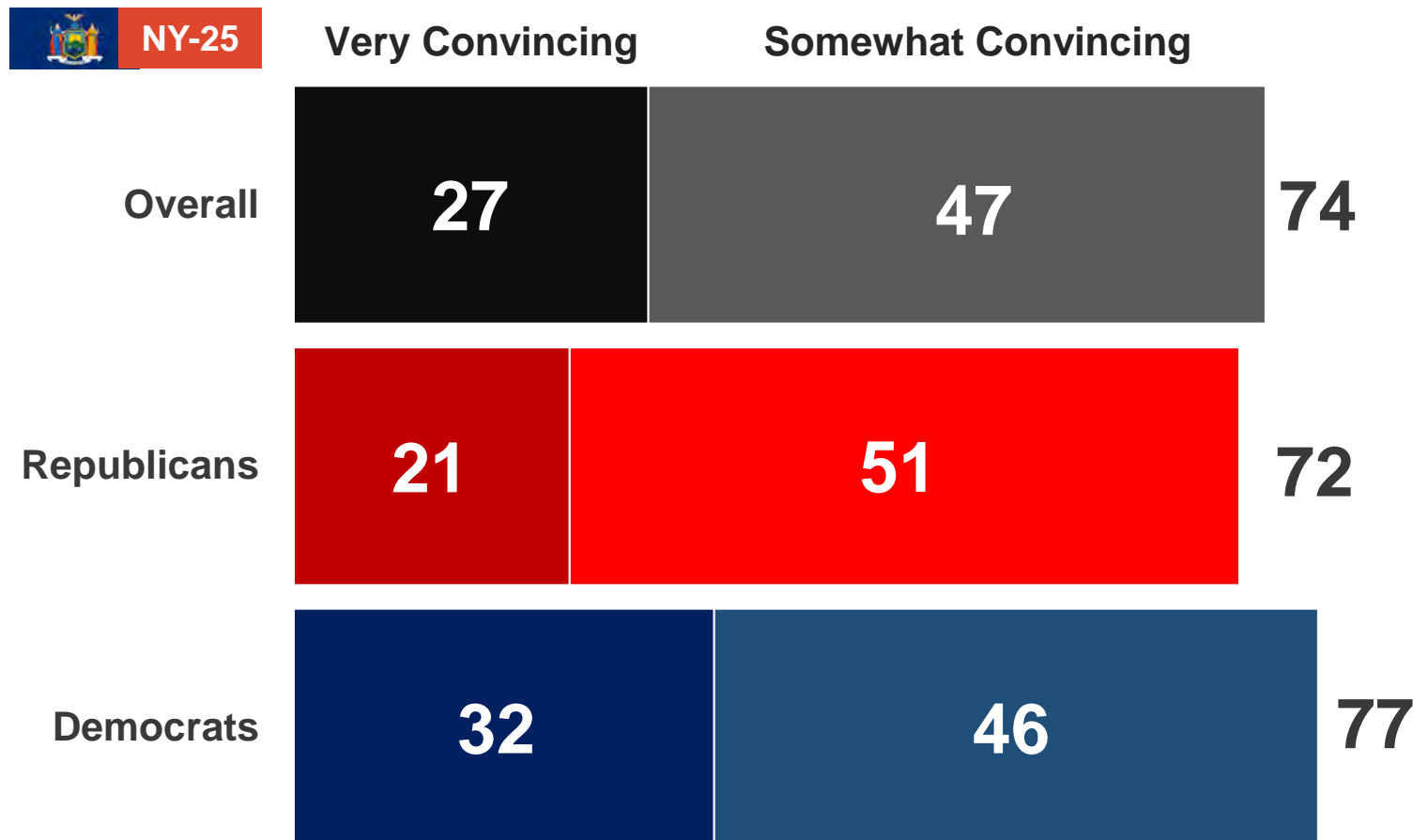
ARGUMENT AGAINST

**Study found system can be easily fooled,
thru black market in SS numbers.
Employers can evade by hiring contractors.**

While the E-Verify system sounds good on paper it can be easily fooled. A government funded study found that E-Verify mistakenly approved of 54 percent of unauthorized immigrants, mostly due to the fraudulent use of Social Security numbers. Such numbers are readily available on the black market from people who, for example, find ones associated with people who have died. Also, employers can evade some E-Verify requirements by hiring people as contractors rather than employees, which is probably why states that currently have E-Verify mandates have seen increases in the use of contractors.

Americans on Immigration Reform - Nov. 2019

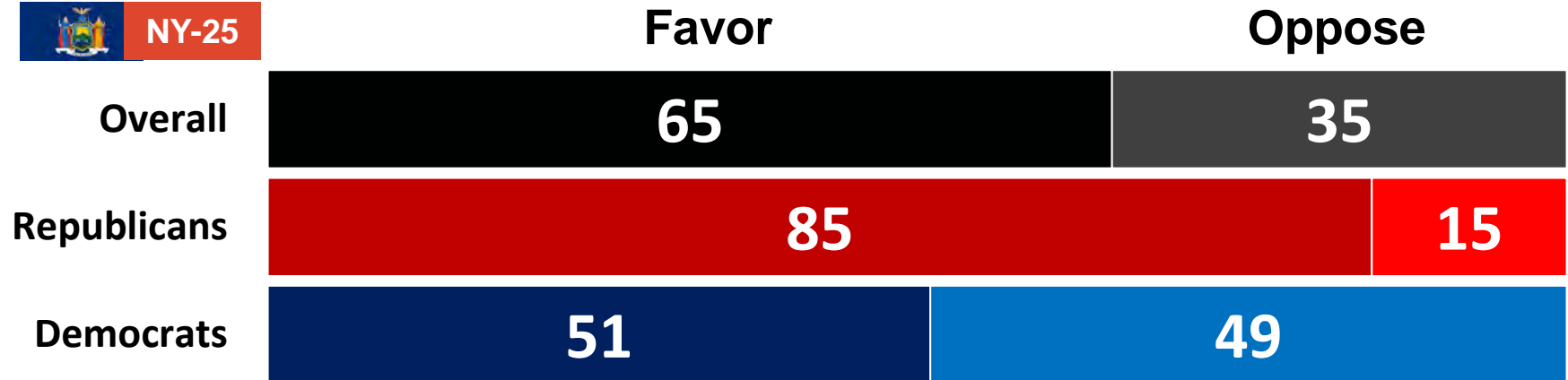
Immigrants are a Burden, Argued Against



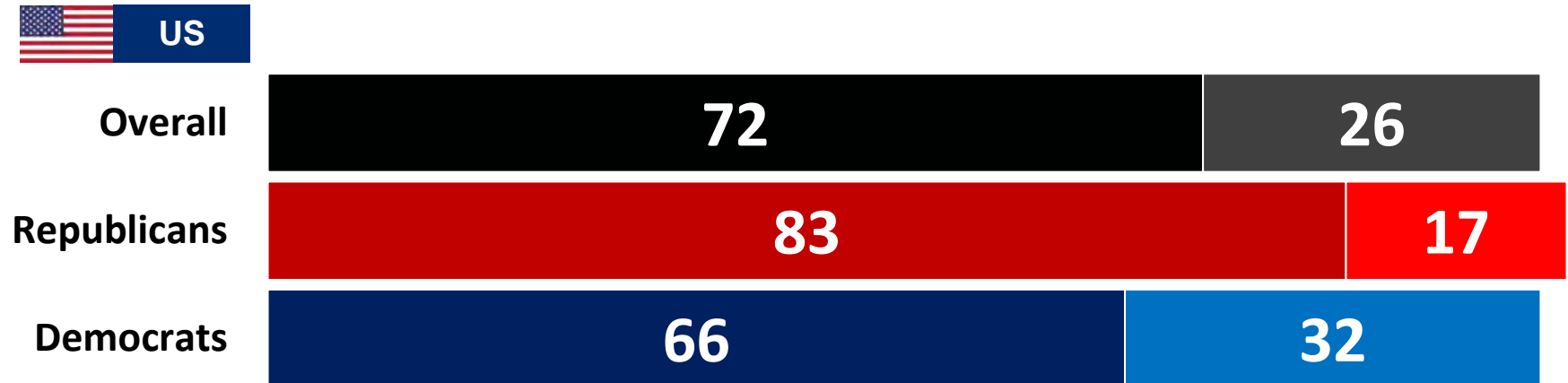
E-Verify

Final Recommendation

Proposal: Require employers to verify that the people they hire have the legal right to work in the US by going to the government's E-Verify website.

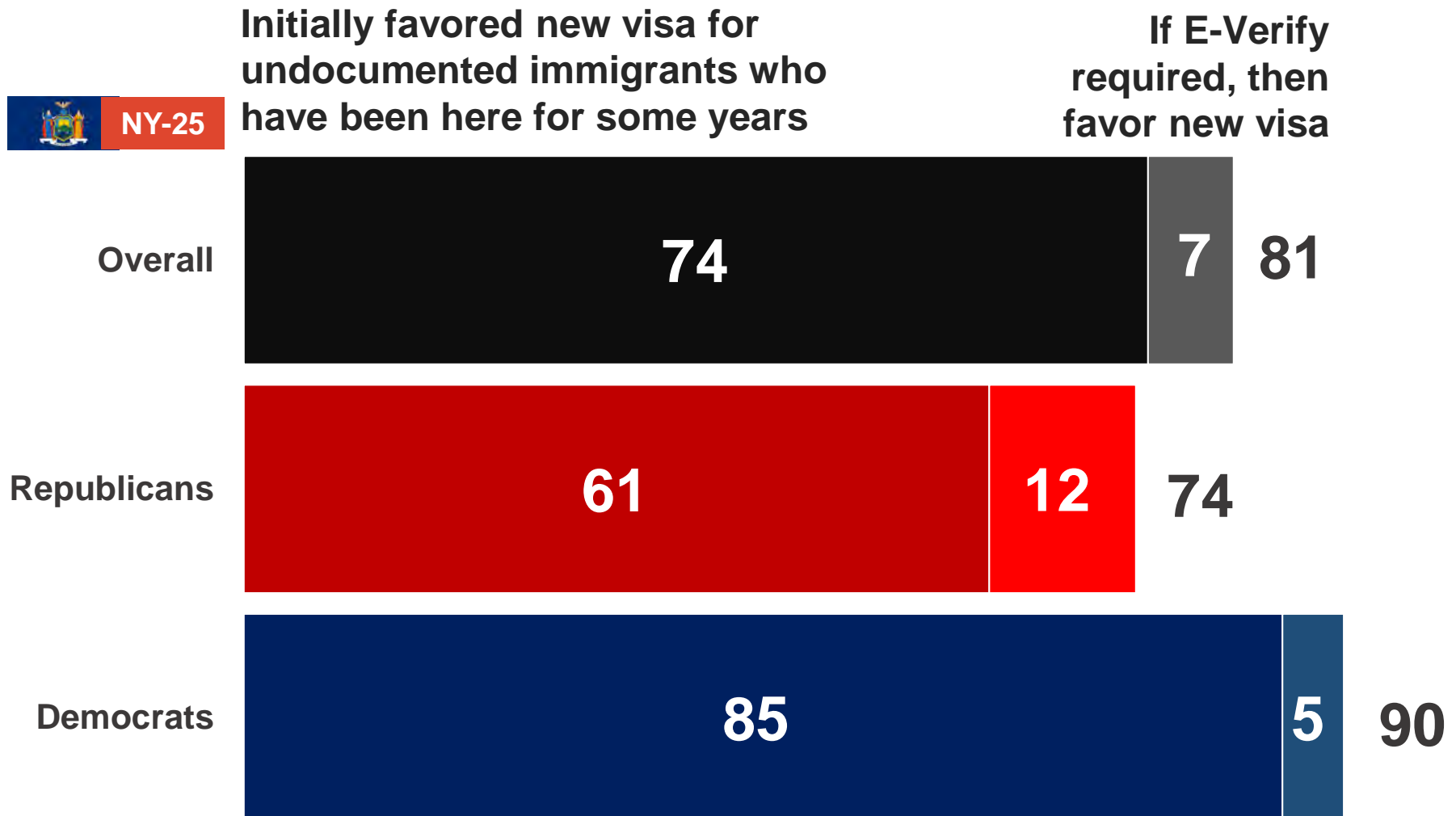


US



If E-Verify, Then Favor New Visa?

(Asked of those who initially opposed new visa for immigrants who have been living in the US for some years without legal status, but favored requiring E-Verify)



**Building a
Stronger Barrier
Along the
Southern Border**

Southern Border

The US government currently spends about **\$3.8 billion per year** policing the southern border, 1,195 miles long.

In 2016, 409,000 people were caught and prevented from crossing the border. However, the government estimates 170,000 succeeded in entering illegally.

Southern Border

Proposal: Spend \$25 billion to build and strengthen barriers along the southern border, primarily by building a wall along the border.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Good investment.

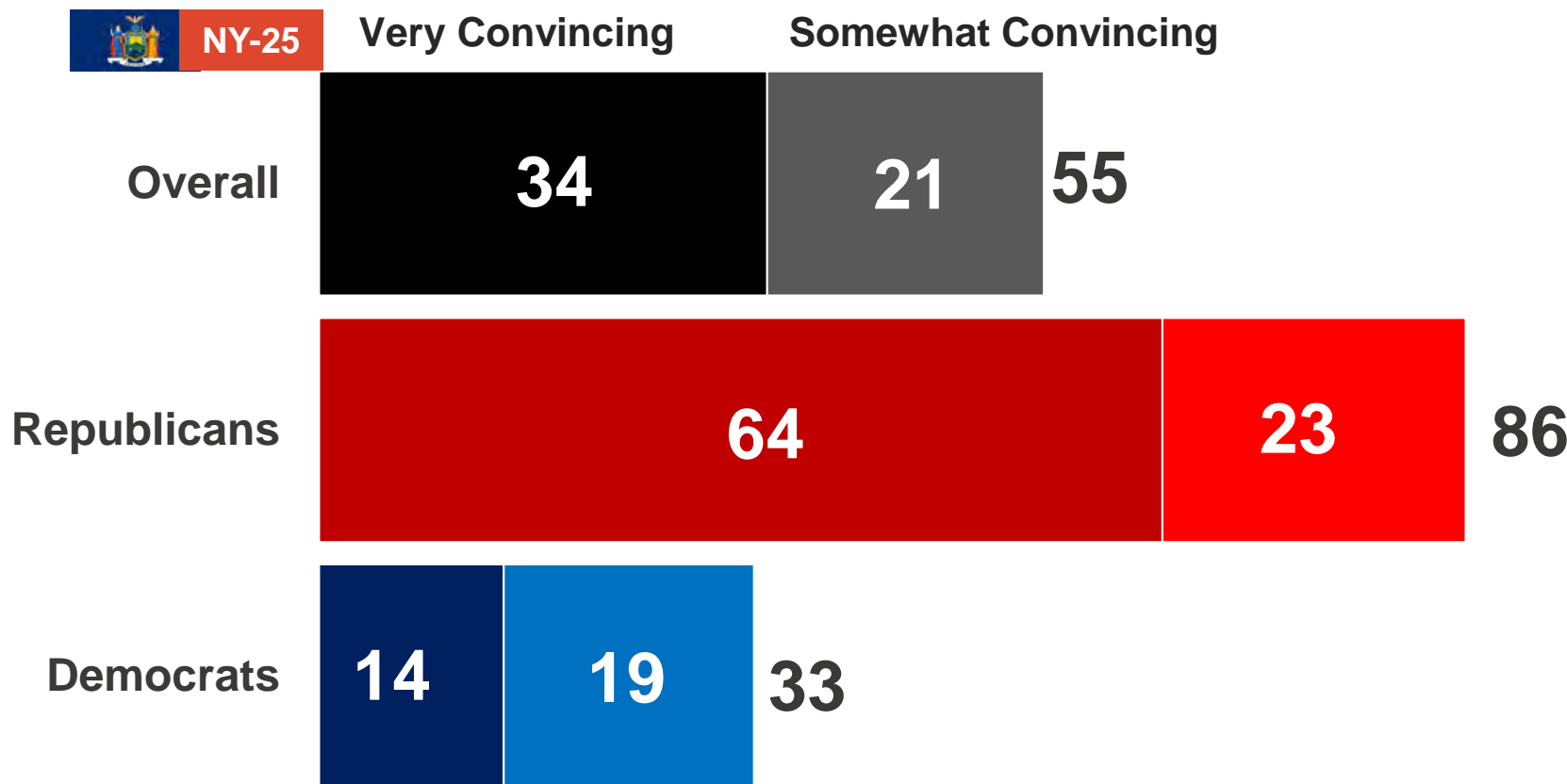
Hundreds enter US illegally via southern border daily: immigrants who take jobs and use social services; criminals bringing drugs; terrorists.

Research shows buildup of border security lowers illegal crossing.

Spending \$25 billion on securing our southern border is a good investment. Every day hundreds of immigrants succeed in entering the US illegally through the southern border. Many are immigrants who come here and use government social services, in addition to taking jobs that should be going to American citizens. Many are criminals, bringing in drugs and undermining the fabric of our society. Some are members of terrorist groups. New research suggests that the large build-up in border security and enforcement in the last decade contributed to the decline in illegal crossings. By preventing large numbers of economic migrants from crossing, our border patrol agents can focus more of their resources on the most serious traffickers causing the most harm. Ultimately, we need to recognize that a nation is only as strong as its borders. A country that can so easily be entered is a weak country. We need to make a statement to the world that we are in control of our destiny.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

Border Wall: Argument in Favor



ARGUMENT AGAINST

Wall is not effective.

**Can get around w/ ladders, tunnels, boats,
hiding in trucks through border checkpoints.**

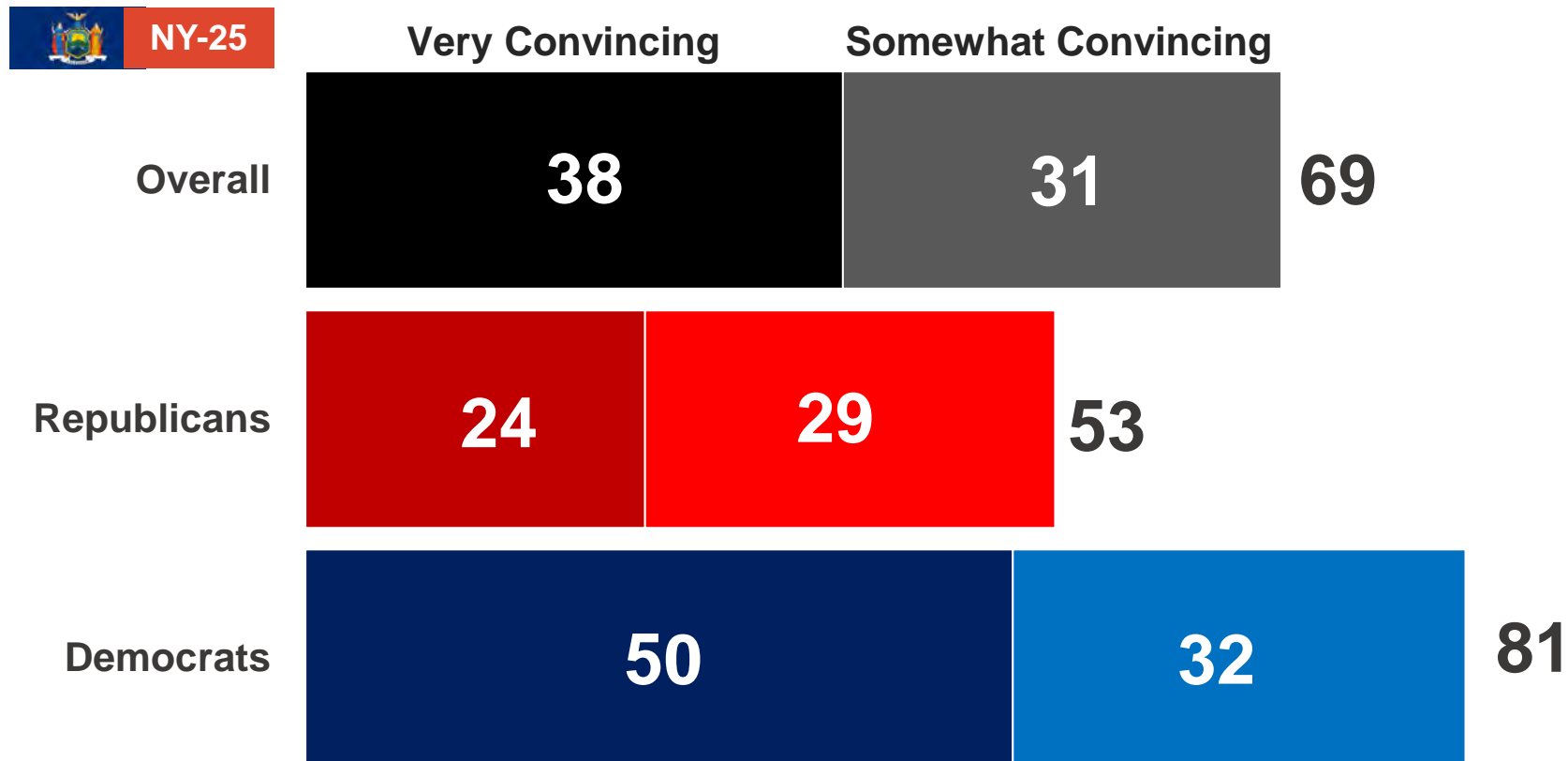
Wall is boondoggle for contractors.

More effective means like E-Verify.

Building a wall sounds bold and dramatic, but, realistically, it will not significantly reduce the number of people crossing the border illegally. Walls can be scaled with ladders. More importantly, if one route is blocked people will use others already in use. Hundreds of tunnels have been dug under the border. People can be smuggled by boat. People can be hidden in trucks and vans crossing the border, as there is no way that the border guards can check all of the millions of vehicles that cross over every month. Surely, there are a lot of big companies out there eager for the opportunity to get lucrative contracts building such a wall, but in the end we will see it was all just a boondoggle. If we want to get serious about reducing the number of people coming here illegally, there are more effective means, like discouraging them from coming by making sure that employers do not hire them once they get here.

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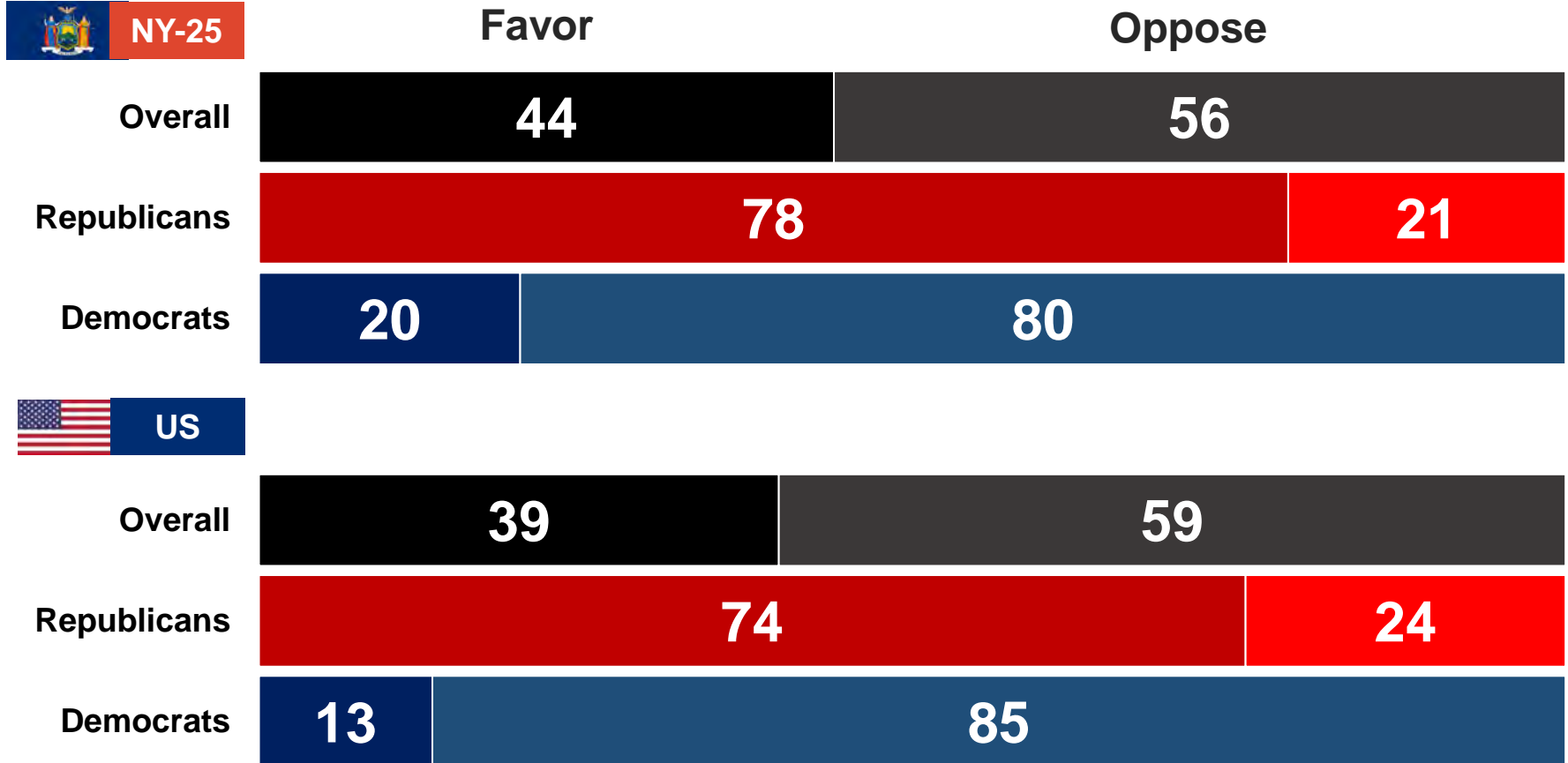
Border Wall: Argument Against



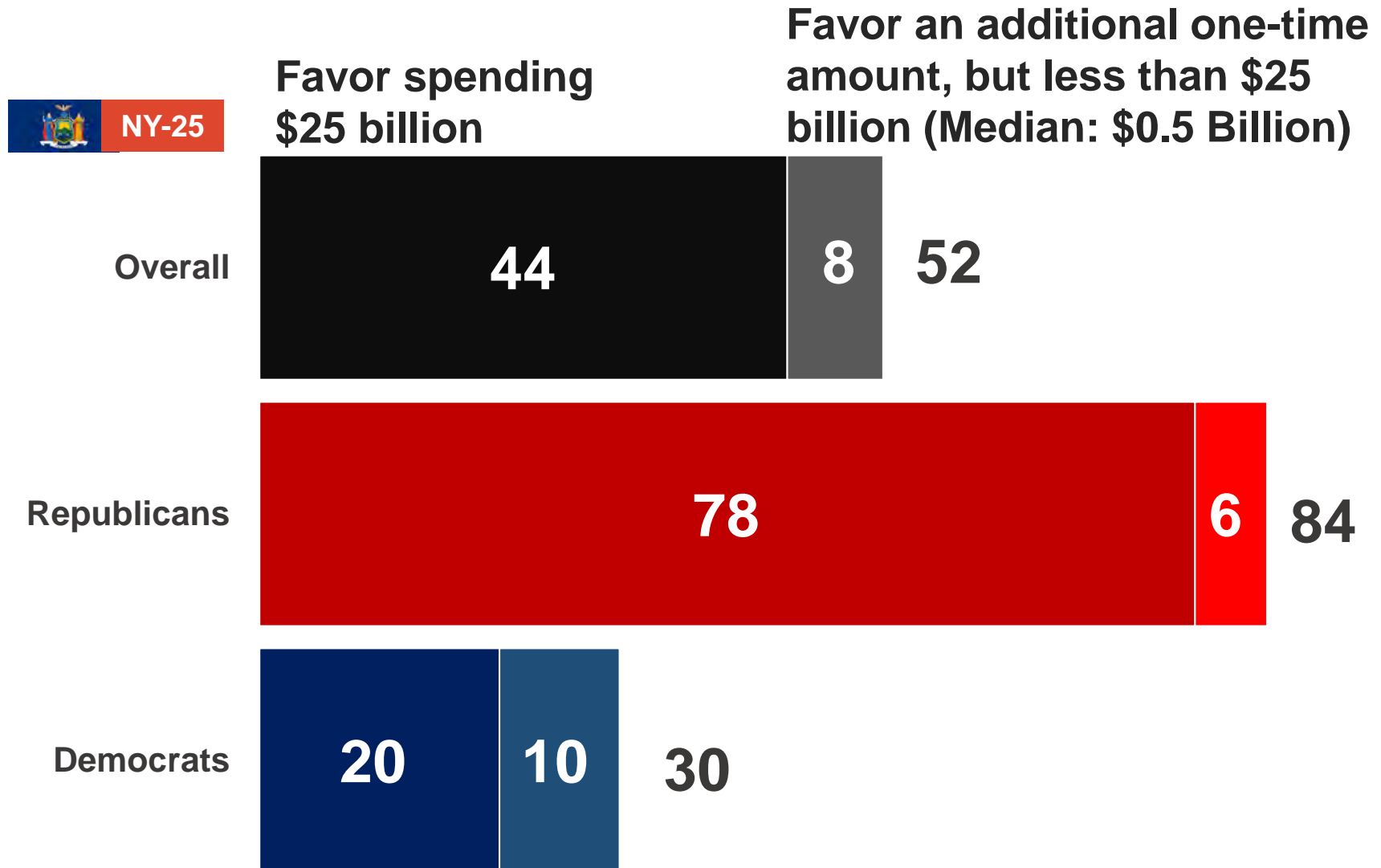
Southern Border

Final Recommendation

Proposal: Spend \$25 billion to build and strengthen barriers along the southern border, primarily by building a wall along the border.



Spending on Stronger Border



ADDRESSING DEMAND FOR TEMPORARY IMMIGRANT LABOR

Increase the Number of Non-Farm Guest Worker Visas (H2B Visas)

Guest Worker H2B Visas (Non-Farm)

Some industries rely on temporary, often seasonal, labor (such as landscaping, construction, and hotels).

Several million undocumented workers work in these industries.

Currently, employers can **request** a **limited number** of visas to hire immigrants on a **temporary basis**, provided:

- no American workers willing to fill that job
- immigrants paid same rate as American counterparts

Guest Worker H2B Visas (Non-Farm)

Proposal:

Increase the number of H2B visas from about 66,000 a year to around 200,000 a year.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

These companies need immigrant labor.

Better for it to be done legally.

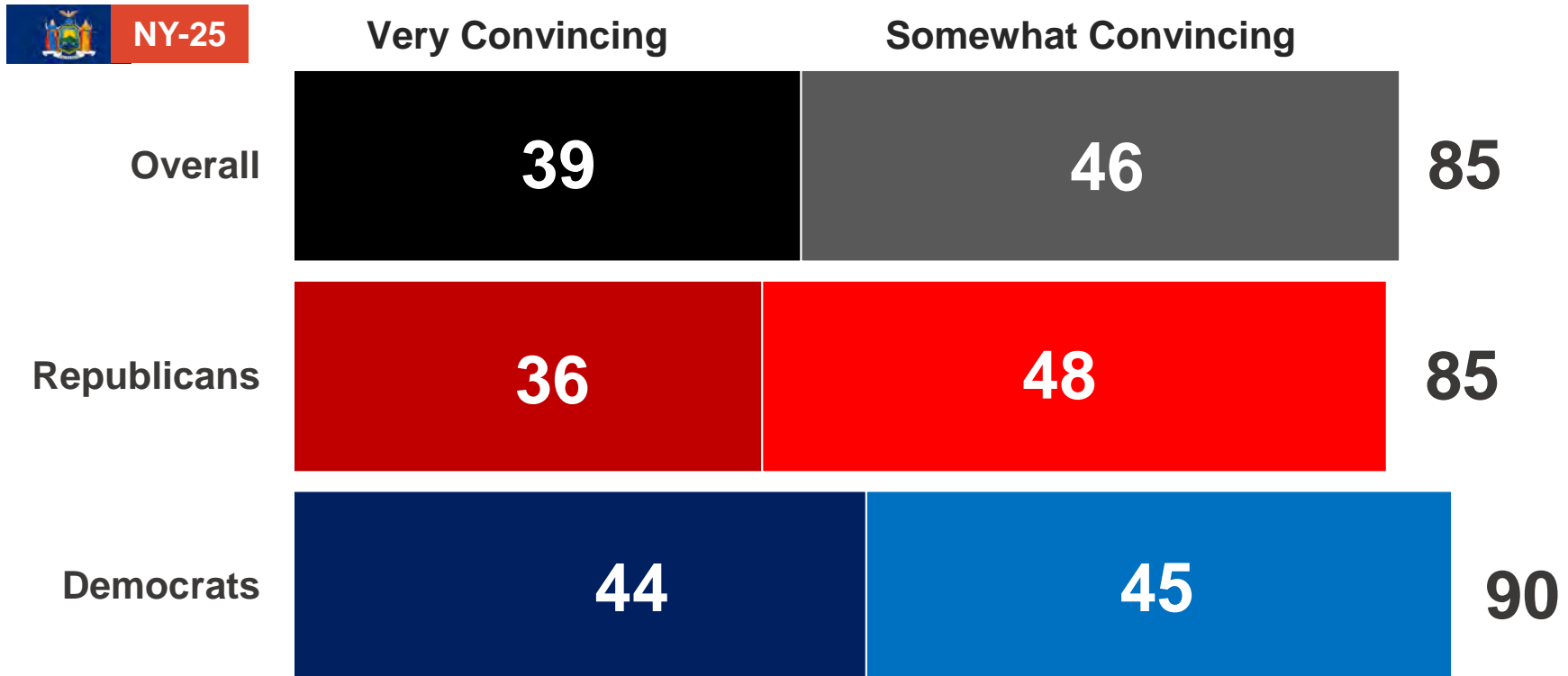
Ensures Americans get first crack and that immigrants do not undercut Americans' wages.

Can collect taxes and provide protection from abuses.

The fact is that there are many industries in the United States that need immigrant labor which is why they currently hire millions of them. It would be much better if this process was done in a legal way. It is essential to ensure that American workers get the first crack at those jobs. It is also important that the workers are paid the kinds of wages that go to Americans so that the immigrant workers do not undercut American workers. All this can only be done if we have a legal system of guest workers. American companies don't want to break the law by hiring illegal immigrants, but they have to be provided a way to do it legally when there is the need for those workers. And if they have that option to do it legally it will be more feasible to put more pressure on them to stop hiring illegals. By bringing immigrant workers out of the shadows it will also be possible to get tax revenue from them, as well as to provide them protection from the abuses that are so common in the shadow economy.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

Non-Agricultural Guest Workers: Argument in Favor



ARGUMENT AGAINST

**This only helps to put downward pressure on wages, which have been stagnant for decades.
Helps corporations get cheap labor.**

This whole idea of trying to solve the problem of illegal workers by replacing them with legal temporary workers fails to address the reason that illegal workers are a problem in the first place. Wages have been stagnant for decades now, especially in the lower wage industries that want to hire guest workers. It is Economics 101 that when wages are low it is because there is too big of a supply of workers. So many American workers have been frustrated in their effort to get a good job that the percentage of the population in the workforce is historically low. None of these things will improve as long as there is a ready availability of illegal workers ready to take jobs at low wages and with few benefits. While advocates of this proposal for guest workers may claim that it will think of American workers first, the chances are that the government will think of corporations first, and the corporations want an oversupply of labor so that they can keep wages low. That means they will pressure the government to look the other way and let the corporations hire guest workers who will undercut American workers, even when there are American workers still in need of a good-paying job.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

Non-Agricultural Guest Workers: Argument Against



Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

22

37

60

Republicans

28

44

72

Democrats

18

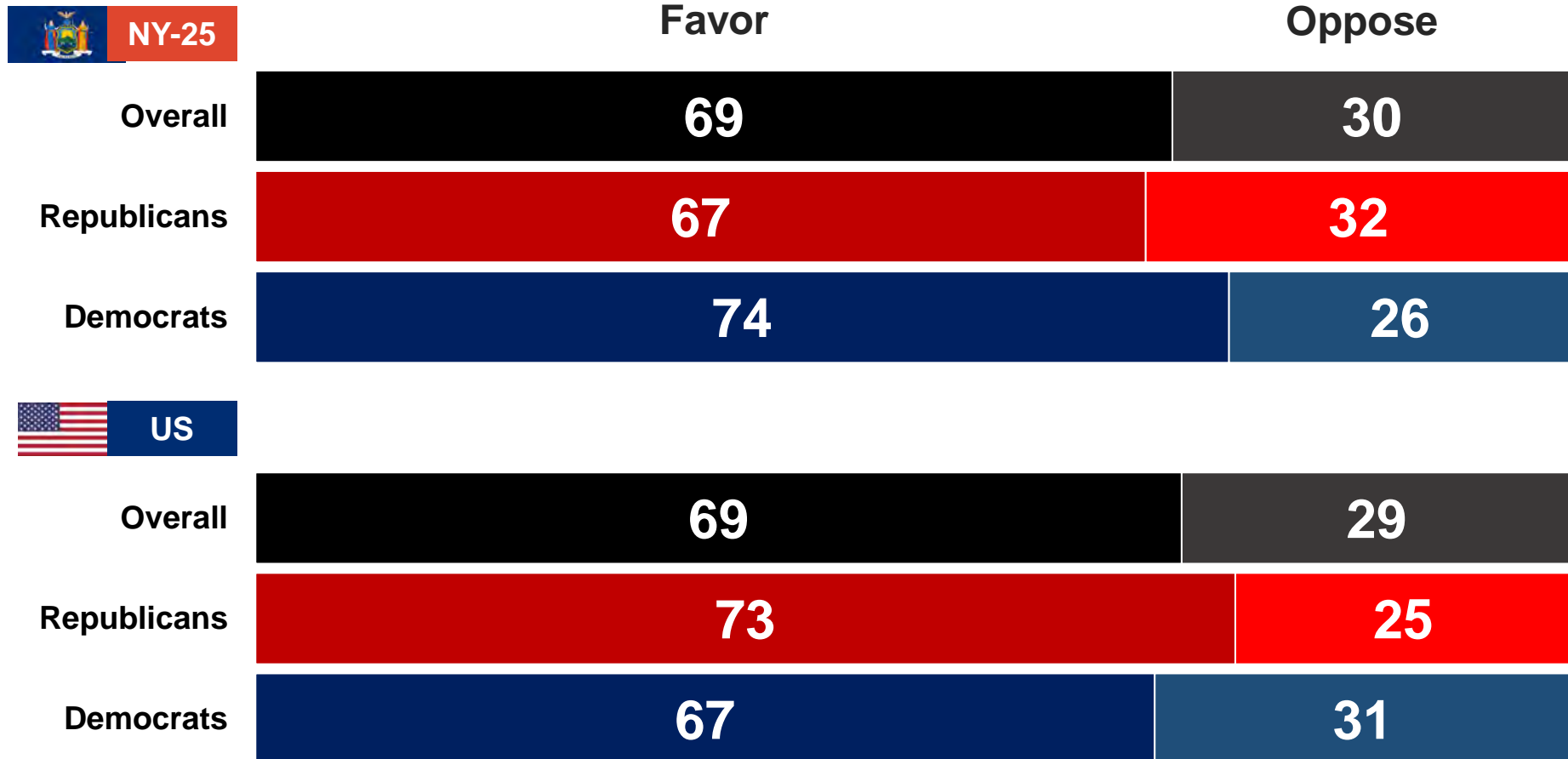
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50

Guest Worker H2B Visas (Non-Farm)

Final Recommendation

Proposal: Increase the number of H2B visas from about 66,000 a year to around 200,000 a year.



Create New Farm Worker Visas

Farm Worker Visas

Right now, there are about 2.2 million people who work on farms. Of these, **1.5 million are undocumented workers.**

200,000 have special visas as guest workers.

Farmers are required to:

- pay these workers about \$11-14/hour;
- provide them with housing and transportation.

Many farmers choose to hire undocumented immigrants because they are cheaper (\$8/hour).

Farm Worker Visas

Proposal: Create a new farm worker visa with lower requirements for farmers, making it more attractive for farmers to hire legal migrants.

Under this proposal:

- farmers would be able to pay workers a minimum of \$8.43/hour (not \$11-14)
- farmers would not be required to provide them housing or transportation
- the length of the visas would be extended from 10 to 18 months

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Current visa requirements much higher than current labor market.

Farmers who use it are at disadvantage.

With realistic system, more will use it, creating tax revenue, steadier supply of workers, protections.

Having so many illegal undocumented workers is not a good thing, but the fact is there is a demand for farm workers. Simply deporting them would be a huge blow to the farm industry and is not an option. We do have a guest worker program but the current requirements are not realistic. It requires farmers to pay as much \$5 an hour more than the actual labor market costs, so they do not use the program and simply hire undocumented workers. Farmers who do use the program are at a competitive disadvantage. If all farmers were to have to pay these higher costs, the price of food would go up, which would be a burden on American families, especially ones with low incomes. This proposed change to the guest worker program would allow for more competitive wages and remove the burdens of providing housing and transportation. This will make it possible for farmers to use the guest worker visa system. More legal employment means more local and state tax revenue, and also more protections for workers. Employers will have better access to a stable supply of workers.

Americans on Immigration Reform – Nov. 2019

Visas for Farm Workers: Argument in Favor



NY-25

Very Convincing

Somewhat Convincing

Overall

26

47

73

Republicans

25

49

74

Democrats

28

47

75

ARGUMENT AGAINST

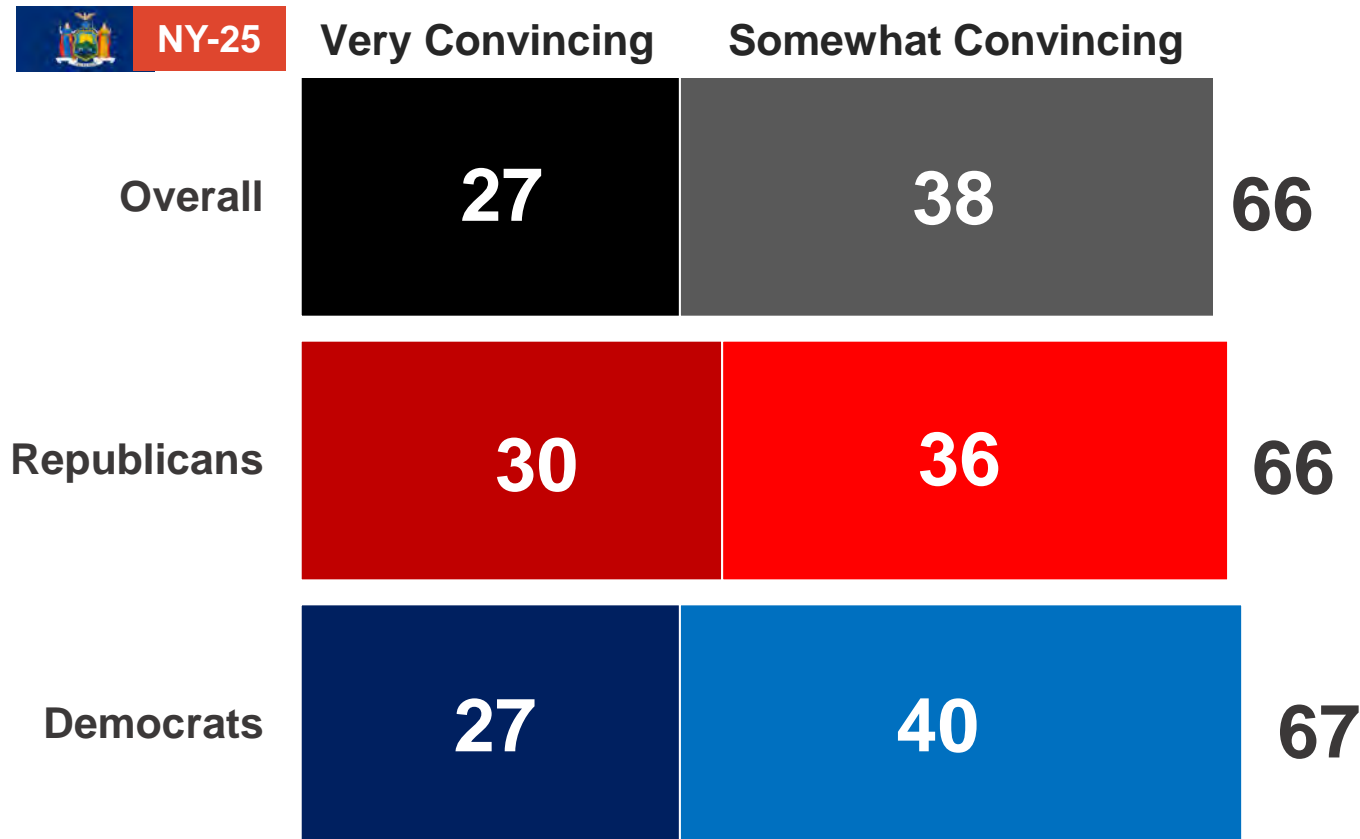
This plan would result in lower wages for the 500,000 legal farm workers.
Would give farmers the right to exploit workers who are doing back-breaking work.

Right now, farmers already have an option to hire foreign workers through the guest worker visa program and they should be required to use that system, rather than hiring undocumented workers. These proposed changes to the guest workers visa program will reduce wages and conditions for a group of people that work in some of the toughest conditions in the country, and that have for years provided this nation with an affordable source of food. Right now, there are over 500,000 legal workers, including US citizens, whose wages would be reduced by letting farmers hire foreigners to do back breaking work for very low wages.

For somebody who is working here under the current guest workers system, sending money back home to their families, a decrease of up to \$5 an hour will make it nearly impossible to afford short-term housing and transportation. Basically, this proposal is giving farmers the right to exploit both American and foreign farm workers by opening up the possibility of hiring unlimited numbers of foreign workers at exploitive wage levels.

Americans on Immigration Reform - Nov. 2019

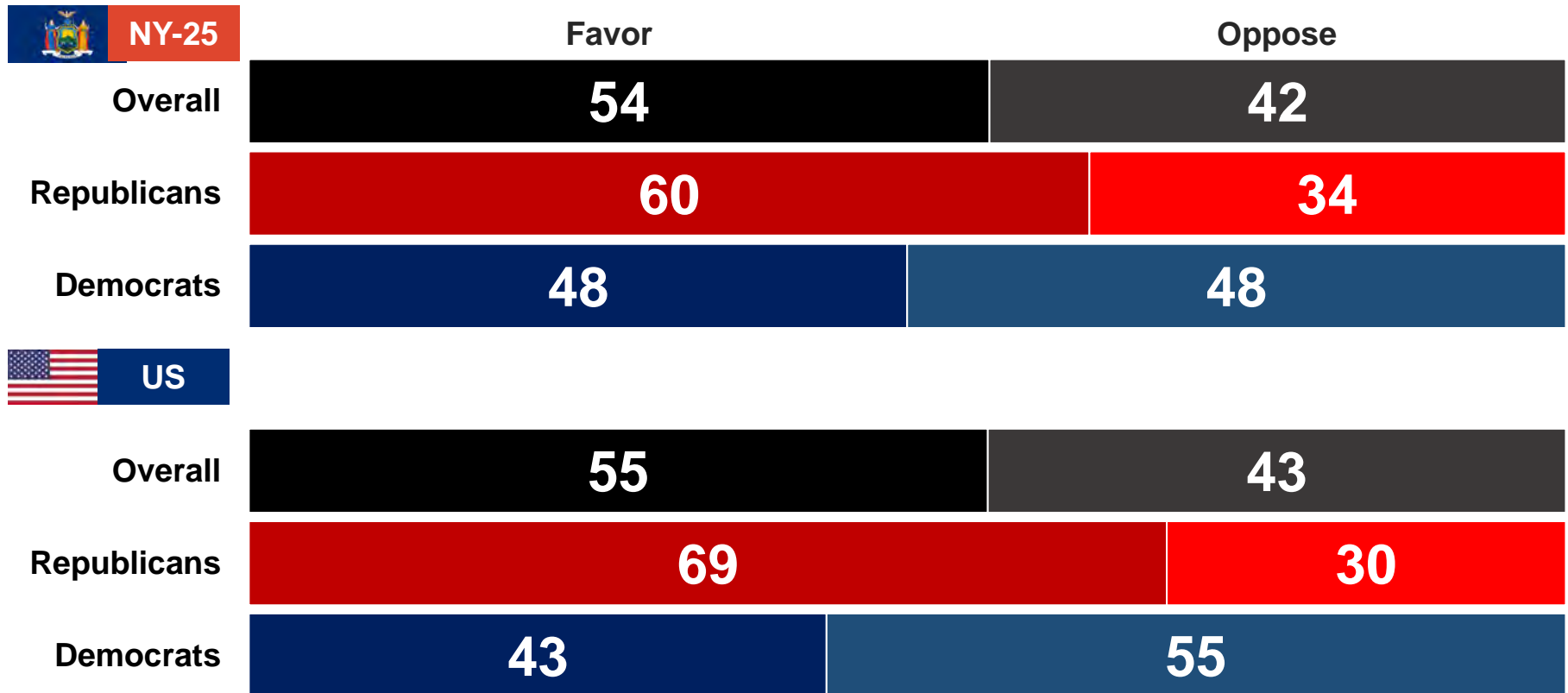
Visas for Farm Workers: Argument Against



New Farm Worker Visa

Final Recommendation

Proposal: Create a new temporary farm worker visa that allows farmers to pay lower wages and not provide housing and transportation, making it more attractive for farmers to use the visa system to hire immigrants legally.



Summary of Final Recommendations



NY-25

OVERALL

Favor

Oppose

DACA

54

42

**New Visa for
Undocumented
Immigrants**

74

25

E-Verify

65

35

Southern Border

44

56

Guest Worker H2B Visas

69

30

New Farm Worker Visa

54

32

IMMIGRATION REFORM

PRO AND CON
ARGUMENTS

Most 'Dreamers' were brought to this country as children by their families. And while the families did break the law, the children had no say in the matter and did not actively make that decision to illegally enter the country. It would be unjust to punish people for crimes they did not choose to commit. And considering many have been here their entire lives, it would be cruel to send them to a foreign land to start their lives over. This is not to mention that about 200,000 of them have US-born children who would have to either uproot their lives as well or be left living with relatives.

It may not be these young people's fault that their parents brought them here, but the law was still broken and in the end, this proposal would give these law-breaking parents' children citizenship. This rewards illegal behavior and encourages more illegal immigration. We always talk about punishing lawbreakers, but in the end we keep letting them get away with it which encourages others. This is just more amnesty. In the 1980s we gave amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants. We were told that this would be followed with a real crackdown on new illegal immigrants, but it only encouraged more to come in. This proposed program is more of the same.

The idea of deporting nearly two million young people who are integrated into US society makes no sense from an economic perspective. They have been educated here, at some cost to taxpayers and have a lot to offer the US economy. “Dreamers” are already estimated to pay as much as \$2 billion annually in taxes, and this will only increase as they age – getting higher-paying jobs and spending more. Deporting them will hurt businesses that rely on them for employment and consumption. Just the logistics of deporting nearly two million young people cost up to \$10 billion, twice the current budget of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. It would be a waste of resources and a major lost opportunity if we deport the Dreamers.

This plan will make it easier for immigrants who came here illegally as children to compete with young American citizens. This might be good for corporations who want to have an oversupply of workers so they can pay them less and offer little to no benefits, but it is bad for young Americans who are already having a hard time. Just recently, the unemployment rate for 18-29 year olds reached a whopping 11% and many more are underemployed. A recent study found that on average they earn 20% less than their baby boomer parents did at the same age and have more student debt. This is no time to introduce a new surge of young people into the legal job market.

We need to face the fact that it is simply not feasible to deport over 10 million people living and working here, most of them for more than a decade. These people have integrated into American society and are making valuable contributions to the economy and the society. If we were to try to deport them all it would undermine numerous industries and have very negative effects on the economy. If we give these immigrants legal status they would no longer need to live in the shadows and their children would not live in fear that their parents will be suddenly taken away. It would also benefit American workers, because they would be competing with immigrants on a level playing field, rather than competing with people who can be easily exploited and underpaid by employers. This proposal is a way to deal with immigrants in an orderly, realistic and humane fashion.

We need to remember that these undocumented people are here illegally. If we let them stay that would be giving them amnesty. This will undermine the rule of law. It is simply surrendering in the battle to defend our borders and a country with undefended borders is not a real country. Furthermore, legalizing millions of illegal immigrants will only make the problem worse. It will encourage more immigrants to come here illegally. In the 1980's when we granted amnesty illegal immigrants kept on coming. Giving illegal immigrants a free pass, just because they have been here a few years, is not fair to those who are abiding by our laws and going through the proper channels. We should not let people, who knowingly broke our laws, live here and try to become citizens.

The primary reason that people immigrate to the US illegally is because they are looking for a job. The reason that the US is such a job magnet is that so many employers do not bother to check whether the people they employ are legal--often turning a blind eye because they want to pay the lower wages that illegal immigrants will accept. Honest employers who do check to make sure their employees are legal are put at a disadvantage. This clearly needs to stop. All US employers should be required to verify that their employees are legal.

Employers should not have the responsibility to enforce US immigration laws. It is also costly for the employer. According to one study, requiring employers to use E-Verify would cost small businesses \$2.7 billion to implement, an average of \$127 per new employee. It is the government's job to ensure that illegal immigrants do not come into the US in the first place, rather than expecting employers to police them.

Approximately 7 million illegal immigrants hold jobs in the U.S. At the same time there are 23 million American citizens and legal residents who are currently unemployed or can't find full-time work. This is not right. Requiring employers to verify that their employees can work legally, would open up millions of jobs for citizens and legal immigrants, lowering their unemployment rate. Our first responsibility should be to ensure that legal workers have a job.

The idea that the government is going to effectively keep track of who is and who isn't legal is really dubious. There are many cases of the E-Verify system saying that someone is not legal, when they really are. For example, this can happen when someone changes their name--something that is particularly likely to happen to women. Also, the idea that driving illegal immigrants out of their jobs is going to free up jobs for Americans is doubtful. Americans do not want many of the jobs they take -- like farm work--and driving them out will likely lead to major labor shortages that will hurt American businesses.

The E-Verify system has proven to work very well. An overwhelming 87% of employers who use the system report satisfaction. There have been few cases of legal workers being flagged as illegal. In any case, as we make a commitment to use the system and it plays a more important role, improvements will be made and new technology will raise the performance level every year just as is the case with all technology. It can also catch people who are already here, which other systems, like a wall, cannot do. And its cost for taxpayers is quite low.

While the E-Verify system sounds good on paper it can be easily fooled. A government funded study found that E-Verify mistakenly approved of 54 percent of unauthorized immigrants, mostly due to the fraudulent use of Social Security numbers. Such numbers are readily available on the black market from people who, for example, find ones associated with people who have died. Also, employers can evade some E-Verify requirements by hiring people as contractors rather than employees, which is probably why states that currently have E-Verify mandates have seen increases in the use of contractors.

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Spending \$25 billion on securing our southern border is a good investment. Every day hundreds of immigrant succeed in entering the US illegally through the southern border. Many are immigrants who come here and use government social services, in addition to taking jobs that should be going to American citizens. Many are criminals, bringing in drugs and undermining the fabric of our society. Some are members of terrorist groups. New research suggests that the large build-up in border security and enforcement in the last decade contributed to the decline in illegal crossings. By preventing large numbers of economic migrants from crossing, our border patrol agents can focus more of their resources on the most serious traffickers causing the most harm. Ultimately, we need to recognize that a nation is only as strong as its borders. A country that can so easily be entered is a weak country. We need to make a statement to the world that we are in control of our destiny.

Building a wall sounds bold and dramatic, but, realistically, it will not significantly reduce the number of people crossing the border illegally. Walls can be scaled with ladders. More importantly, if one route is blocked people will use others already in use. Hundreds of tunnels have been dug under the border. People can be smuggled by boat. People can be hidden in trucks and vans crossing the border, as there is no way that the border guards can check all of the millions of vehicles that cross over every month. Surely, there are a lot of big companies out there eager for the opportunity to get lucrative contracts building such a wall, but in the end we will see it was all just a boondoggle. If we want to get serious about reducing the number of people coming here illegally, there are more effective means, like discouraging them from coming by making sure that employers do not hire them once they get here.

The fact is that there are many industries in the United States that need immigrant labor which is why they currently hire millions of them. It would be much better if this process was done in a legal way. It is essential to ensure that American workers get the first crack at those jobs. It is also important that the workers are paid the kinds of wages that go to Americans so that the immigrant workers do not undercut American workers. All this can only be done if we have a legal system of guest workers. American companies don't want to break the law by hiring illegal immigrants, but they have to be provided a way to do it legally when there is the need for those workers. And if they have that option to do it legally it will be more feasible to put more pressure on them to stop hiring illegals. By bringing immigrant workers out of the shadows it will also be possible to get tax revenue from them, as well as to provide them protection from the abuses that are so common in the shadow economy.

This whole idea of trying to solve the problem of illegal workers by replacing them with legal temporary workers fails to address the reason that illegal workers are a problem in the first place. Wages have been stagnant for decades now, especially in the lower wage industries that want to hire guest workers. It is Economics 101 that when wages are low it is because there is too big of a supply of workers. So many American workers have been frustrated in their effort to get a good job that the percentage of the population in the workforce is historically low. None of these things will improve as long as there is a ready availability of illegal workers ready to take jobs at low wages and with few benefits. While advocates of this proposal for guest workers may claim that it will think of American workers first, the chances are that the government will think of corporations first, and the corporations want an oversupply of labor so that they can keep wages low. That means they will pressure the government to look the other way and let the corporations hire guest workers who will undercut American workers, even when there are American workers still in need of a good-paying job.

Having so many illegal undocumented workers is not a good thing, but the fact is there is a demand for farm workers. Simply deporting them would be a huge blow to the farm industry and is not an option. We do have a guest worker program but the current requirements are not realistic. It requires farmers to pay as much \$5 an hour more than the actual labor market costs, so they do not use the program and simply hire undocumented workers. Farmers who do use the program are at a competitive disadvantage. If all farmers were to have to pay these higher costs, the price of food would go up, which would be a burden on American families, especially ones with low incomes. This proposed change to the guest worker program would allow for more competitive wages and remove the burdens of providing housing and transportation. This will make it possible for farmers to use the guest worker visa system. More legal employment means more local and state tax revenue, and also more protections for workers. Employers will have better access to a stable supply of workers.

Right now, farmers already have an option to hire foreign workers through the guest worker visa program and they should be required to use that system, rather than hiring undocumented workers. These proposed changes to the guest workers visa program will reduce wages and conditions for a group of people that work in some of the toughest conditions in the country, and that have for years provided this nation with an affordable source of food. Right now, there are over 500,000 legal workers, including US citizens, whose wages would be reduced by letting farmers hire foreigners to do back breaking work for very low wages.

For somebody who is working here under the current guest workers system, sending money back home to their families, a decrease of up to \$5 an hour will make it nearly impossible to afford short-term housing and transportation. Basically, this proposal is giving farmers the right to exploit both American and foreign farm workers by opening up the possibility of hiring unlimited numbers of foreign workers at exploitive wage levels.