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**Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio Both Headed for Trouble With South Carolina Latino Voters?**

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Despite a shared heritage, their hardline stances on immigration have left both candidates in the crosshairs of many Latino voters in the nation's second fastest-growing Latino population.

"It will be truly ironic if either Cruz or Rubio becomes the nominee for their party," Michael Jones-Correa, a political science professor at Cornell University, told [International Business Times](#). He added they are "the first Latino candidates of a major party and yet receive almost no Latino support and are running on positions that run contrary to those held by many Latino voters."

Back in August, a [Gallup poll found](#) Rubio had a net rating of only +5 among Hispanics, while Cruz was tied for next to last out of 10 GOP candidates with a net rating of -7. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush was the only Republican candidate registering a double-digit positive rating at +22, while Donald Trump lagged the field at -51.

**Rubio, Cruz Immigration Views Have Changed**

Rubio's current stance, which he articulated as "[no amnesty in any form, not even back-of-the-line](#)," is in stark contrast to 2012 legislation he cosponsored calling for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Cruz has often tried to score points with Latino voters by highlighting Rubio's flip flop on the issue, but each time the Florida senator has countered by arguing his rival also once offered an amendment to legislation that would allow undocumented immigrants to permanently remain in the U.S. and obtain legal status.

"I don't want immigration reform to fail," [Cruz reportedly said](#) during a May 2013 Judiciary Committee hearing. "I want immigration reform to pass, And so I would urge people of good faith on both sides of the aisle, if the objective is to pass common sense immigration reform that secures the borders, that improves legal immigration, and that allows those who are here illegally to come in out of the shadows, then we should look for areas of bipartisan agreement and compromise to come together. And this amendment, I believe, if this amendment were to pass, the

chances of this bill passing into law would increase dramatically."

Many predict there isn't much either man can do to put himself back in the good graces of the Palmetto State's Latino voters prior to this month's ballot, even though many Latinos there have traditionally shared some of the party's socially conservative views.

### **Trump Leads Anti-immigration Charge**

GOP front-runner Donald Trump has only fanned the flames with his fiery rhetoric, branding Mexicans immigrants "rapists" and "criminals" at the beginning of his campaign. Trump has also demanded a giant wall be erected along the Mexican border to keep out immigrants, and he continues to insist that, if elected, he would quickly deport 11 million undocumented immigrants.

"I think they could've stood up to Trump and that would've definitely gotten them some praise from Latinos," League of United Latin Americans national executive director Brent Wilkes told the IBTimes of both Cruz and Rubio. "But, you know, honestly the whole party is going to pay the price when you have somebody like Trump running around for a year bashing Latinos, bashing Muslims."

[According to Pew Hispanic](#), the Hispanic population in South Carolina has now grown to become the 29th largest in the nation, with 258,000 Latinos now residing there. Of that total, about 88,000, or 34 percent, are eligible to vote in the upcoming 2016 presidential election.

Given the steady rise in numbers, a 2006 [University of South Carolina study](#) deemed Mexicans the "new face of the South Carolina labor force."

A recent [The State poll](#) shows Trump leading the GOP field with 36 percent of the vote, compared to 20 percent for Cruz and 14 percent for Rubio.

Still, come Nov. 8, Wilkes predicted the Republicans will pay a price as a whole for the immigration stances the trio and other candidates have espoused during the primaries.

"This [election] could be the worst percentage ever [for Republicans], it really could," he said. "If things continue in the direction they're going, people may look back to Romney's paltry showing and think that was a good one compared to what happens this November."

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