

## Truth and Dare

Michael Sean Winters | Dec. 17, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

The closing days of a session of Congress resemble a game of partisan chicken. And, it is up to the President and the leaders of Congress to decide what proposals they most want to pass before Christmas.

It is a moment of truth for the White House. For all the talk about Obama's moving to the center, which is an undoubtedly smart political move, it is just as important that he move towards the 2012 electorate. If push comes to shove, will the White House push harder for the repeal of Don't Ask; Don't Tell, or for the enactment of the DREAM Act?

As I wrote yesterday, the White House sponsored a call with religious leaders about the DREAM Act yesterday and they have another one today with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Both DADT and the DREAM Act will only affect a small sliver of the electorate, but both carry great symbolic importance. Pushing for DADT repeal will strengthen the President with his base. Pushing for the DREAM Act will strengthen his position with Latino voters. To be clear, both goals are worthy and both goals are important, but in a bind, Obama should push for the DREAM Act. He was unable to deliver comprehensive immigration reform but failure to pass the DREAM Act would indicate to

Latinos that the political process is not worth their time and effort. Failure to repeal DADT will cost the Democrats in the fundraising department.

Latinos hold the balance of electoral power in California, Nevada, New Mexico, they are a critical voting bloc in Colorado, and if Democrats can get them to turn out better, increasingly and eventually Latinos will turn Texas blue. The White House is to be commended for pushing hard for the passage of the DREAM Act. Congressional Democrats should dig in on both issues but if push comes to shove, they should insist that the DREAM Act take precedence.

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**Source URL (retrieved on 07/26/2017 - 17:58):** <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/truth-and-dare>