

Inside the Moderate Mind

A progressive immigration activist recently told me that every election year, moderate Democrats urge him to shut up. Moderate Democrats clearly consider immigration a losing issue. But according to my source, they're also quite self-righteous about their shushing. Which makes me wonder: What's going on inside the mind of the moderate Democrat?

Leading possibilities:

1. They care about immigration just as much as the progressive immigration activists. But moderates live in the real world. They want the activists to hold their tongues because they understand the ugly truths that (a) immigration policy won't improve unless the Democrats win, and (b) talking about immigration makes Democrats lose.
2. They care about immigration, but assign it lower priority than the immigration activists. Focusing on immigration raises the expected liberalism of immigration policy, even adjusting for probability of victory; after all, it's hard to ignore immigration after the election if you make it a major issue during the campaign. However, immigration activism simultaneously lowers the expected liberalism of *non*-immigration policy by alienating mainstream voters.
3. Moderate Democrats barely care about immigration. Health care, redistribution, the environment, and gender/race/sexual orientation policies are all far higher priorities.

I know few moderate Democrats well, so I'm fairly agnostic here. If you know more, what's the truth of the matter?