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## **The Backlash to the Backlash: The Moral and Electoral Failure of Anti-Immigrant Political Campaigns in the U.S. 2018-2023**

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# The Backlash to the Backlash: The Moral and Electoral Failure of Anti-Immigrant Political Campaigns in the U.S. 2018-2023

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## Abstract

*Contrary to the common stereotype, anti-immigrant rhetoric is not a winning campaign platform. In an analysis of competitive gubernatorial and congressional elections across the United States in 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023, anti-immigrant rhetoric often proved to be a factor in losing campaigns. We conducted a textual analysis of official campaign material to detect anti-immigrant stances as part of a candidate's electoral platform. This paper looks at both the presence of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric relating to candidates with poor election outcomes and the narrative trends within the anti-immigrant rhetoric of these candidates. The most common narratives in campaign rhetoric are those of border securitization and the criminalization of immigrants. In the 2018 election cycle, twenty candidates in competitive elections employed harsh rhetoric regarding unauthorized immigration and border security—and ultimately lost. In the 2020 election cycle, the utilization of such rhetoric relaxed broadly, and Republican candidates benefitted. Still, ten candidates were found to have employed anti-immigrant rhetoric and lost. Former President Trump's 2020 presidential campaign followed this trend as well. In the 2022 election cycle, twelve candidates lost in competitive elections after employing anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout their campaigns. The data shows the common argument that being weak on immigration control is an electoral vulnerability is false.*

Keywords: xenophobia, right-wing, asylum seekers, border crisis, undocumented

## Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a common belief that immigration has become an increasingly politicized topic in the United States and globally. Debates on immigration abound, and anti-immigrant sentiment has become embedded within many political campaigns. The “common knowledge” is that increases in immigration help right-wing parties and politicians get elected. However, after analyzing the latest U.S. campaigns closely, we find that utilizing anti-immigrant sentiment is not a successful approach in winning elections. We sought to understand the role and frequency of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric as it corresponds to campaign outcomes through textual analysis of campaign material. This paper is guided by the question: to what extent was anti-immigrant rhetoric a disadvantageous campaign platform in the 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023 gubernatorial and congressional elections? We found plenty of candidates who employed anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in competitive congressional or gubernatorial elections and ultimately lost. Secondly, this textual analysis targets the presence of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in the 2020 election cycle, wherein Republican candidates flipped seats previously held by Democrats. This analysis of anti-immigrant rhetoric is premised upon assessments of overarching narratives of border securitization and the criminalization of unauthorized immigrants.<sup>i</sup> Anti-immigrant sentiment reflects prejudiced language and characterizes immigrants as a “threat to established group interests,”<sup>ii</sup> Anti-immigrant sentiment has been utilized throughout U.S. history to institute restrictionist policies against immigration and “discriminatory laws” towards immigrants.<sup>iii</sup>

The election years of 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023 were chosen as they show a different context to the 2016 election. In 2016, Donald Trump won the presidential election on a campaign that was, in part, platformed on blatant and widespread anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>iv</sup> The success of Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign and his reinvigoration of certain voters through a platform characterized by harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric in the background for the relevance of this analysis. Trump’s success in 2016 has seemingly encouraged the application of similar campaign platforms and rhetoric in the 2018 U.S. election cycle and beyond. However, the 2018 cycle’s outcomes ultimately favored democratic campaigns, calling into question the salience of campaigns that employ Trump-era rhetoric such as anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>v</sup> In the 2020 election cycle, Republicans narrowed Democrats’ control of the house, which offers the chance to analyze comparatively how anti-immigrant sentiment evolved and, in turn, impacted 2020

election outcomes. The 2022 and 2023 election cycles show that this trend of anti-immigrant campaign failures continues.

### **Literature Review**

Anti-immigration sentiment and rhetoric have permeated campaigns and political landscapes in the U.S. and abroad. The literature tends to focus on the salience that shifts in political leadership and rhetoric have on attitudes regarding immigration. The “Parochial Altruism” theory developed by Alexander Kustov argues that voters’ altruism is contingent upon privileging the interests of their “compatriots.” Until 2020, anti-immigration voter preferences were widespread across voter demographics, including those who are highly educated and have egalitarian views for ethnic and racial groups.<sup>vi</sup> However, since 2020, we have seen a trend of voter preferences “for increased immigration” emerge, exemplifying the shifting voter perspectives on the issue. These attitude shifts regarding immigration in recent years are situated within the social disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kustov advances that “altruistic nationalists” care about their country and compatriots but are also willing to welcome and help those in need, especially when governments implement beneficial pro-immigration policies and explain their benefits in, for example, filling gaps in labor markets and allowing economic growth and innovation.

Discussion of the health implications of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric for immigrants further situates the need to explore the efficacy of employing anti-immigrant rhetoric in campaigns. Following the 2016 U.S. election of Trump, hospital staff members interviewed reported an elevated sense of fear amongst immigrant populations of deportation and family separation risks and, consequently, an avoidance of “social services and clinics” and a decrease in healthcare utilization.<sup>vii</sup> A “chilling effect” seemingly took hold following the 2016 U.S. elections and the elevated anti-immigrant rhetoric in U.S. political narratives, whereby Emergency Department visits from unauthorized immigrants increased in tandem with the previously mentioned decrease in healthcare utilization from related demographics.<sup>viii</sup> With the growing prevalence of anti-immigrant rhetoric comes the “delaying or forgoing non-emergent visits due to fear of immigration-status discovery.”<sup>ix</sup> We have also seen the detrimental implications of anti-immigrant campaign ads on the mental health of unauthorized immigrants and Latino Americans.<sup>x</sup>

A “reverse backlash effect” has taken hold as the success of parties deemed “Populist Radical Right Parties” has increased in the European region, but this has not been accompanied by a general increase in popular anti-immigrant sentiment. Despite growth in anti-immigration policies and rhetoric from political leadership,

attitudes towards immigration have held steady— and, in some countries, turned more positive. On an aggregate level, the success of right-wing populist candidates has a “consistent negative relationship with anti-immigration attitudes.”<sup>xi</sup> Of note, while pro-immigration attitudes of voters have definitively increased since 2020, voters who identify as anti-immigration tend to care more about immigration as an issue compared to pro-immigration voters. Anti-immigration voices give the issues more salience and personal importance than the average voter.<sup>xii</sup> Voters with anti-immigration preferences tend to “care more about immigration in particular, not politics in general.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Similar assertions of attitudes in the United States were made in reference to public reactions to President Trump’s 2017 “Muslim Ban.”<sup>xiv</sup> Documenting Trump’s outright anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric and, in turn, the anti-immigration policies he promulgated and defended during his presidency, this “reverse backlash effect” is the goal of this paper.<sup>xv</sup> Assessments of the outcomes of the 2018 U.S. elections reflect an early understanding of this phenomenon.<sup>xvi</sup> Despite an increased awareness of anti-Asian hate crimes, overall public attitudes regarding immigration reflect no negative shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>xvii</sup>

The lack of analyses regarding the impact of candidates employing anti-immigrant rhetoric on voter preferences and election outcomes in recent and not-so-recent elections requires exploration. This paper begins filling this gap in knowledge.

### **Methodology**

We conducted a textual analysis of direct online campaign materials from losing candidates in competitive gubernatorial and congressional U.S. elections to answer the question, “To what extent was anti-immigrant rhetoric a detrimental campaign platform in the 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023 gubernatorial and congressional elections?” Additionally, we conducted a secondary textual analysis of anti-immigrant sentiment or lack thereof in Democrat-to-Republican flipped 2020 congressional races. By utilizing this dual-textual analysis approach, we demonstrate how the presence of anti-immigrant sentiment is a factor in campaign failure. We also find that in 2020, some winning Republican candidates learned the lesson and were less likely to voice anti-immigrant rhetoric in competitive elections.

This paper refers to the main textual analysis of anti-immigrant rhetoric in the campaigns of losing gubernatorial and congressional candidates as the primary textual analysis. We conducted a secondary textual analysis of anti-immigrant sentiment or lack thereof in Democrat-to-Republican flipped 2020 congressional races.

The primary textual analysis compares cases from 2018, 2020, and 2022 gubernatorial and congressional campaigns where ‘anti-immigrant sentiment’ was present in direct campaign material. Candidates were entered into the datasets of the primary textual analysis if they were found to have employed anti-immigrant sentiment in their campaigns, the race in which the anti-immigrant candidate ran was competitive, *and* the candidate ultimately lost their respective election. Because 2023 was a special election year, the four gubernatorial and congressional elections were analyzed outside these criteria. Primary elections were outside of the scope of this research. Candidates were tested against these criteria after they were selected either through preliminary internet searches of news articles and reports that discuss candidates with strong stances against immigration or through analyses of candidates found to have been in competitive elections.<sup>xviii</sup> Research of candidates’ direct campaign material relied heavily on Meta’s Ad Library and the Library of Congress U.S. Elections Web Archive.

While recent elections have held a broad spectrum of campaign promises on the topic of immigration, this textual analysis centers solely on campaigns that directly employ anti-immigrant rhetoric, as is outlined above.<sup>xix</sup> This research project was not premised upon any party affiliations in its effort to locate candidates with anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric. However, it should be acknowledged that all candidates entered into the primary textual analysis data were registered with the Republican Party. This phenomenon does not signify that other U.S. parties do not hold anti-immigrant sentiment, but rather, it is less overt in campaign rhetoric. Regarding the secondary textual analysis, flipped seats were analyzed on the premise that the gubernatorial or congressional seat changed from Democrat-held to Republican-held. This choice was made based on the primary textual analysis findings whereby anti-immigrant sentiment was found overwhelmingly in Republican campaigns.

Candidates within the primary and secondary textual analyses were deemed to have had anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric solely by analyzing their direct campaign material. This analysis assessed archived campaign ads with candidate endorsements, social media, debate answers, and statements from campaign websites. Direct campaign material notably does not include answers to reporters during interviews, unendorsed campaign material, or congressional voting patterns, if applicable.

Such distinctions were made on the premise that this textual analysis focuses on campaign rhetoric, not the actions and presentation of the candidate beyond their intended campaign platform. Candidates who employed minimal—though still present—anti-immigrant sentiment were omitted from the data on

the premise that occasional reference to anti-immigrant narratives of border securitization or the criminalization of immigration did not constitute a campaign platformed on such rhetoric. For example, if the only instance of anti-immigrant rhetoric was found to be an ad that references a candidate's support for a "secure border," the candidate was not deemed to have promoted anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in terms of this textual analysis. Under this research, applicable candidates must employ anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout their campaigns.

We considered an election competitive by how it was regarded while the election cycle was active and by how close the election results were ultimately. Anti-immigrant candidates were analyzed in the primary textual analysis if anti-immigrant sentiment was found to be present in their campaign material *and* if the candidate ran either in an election where the percentage margin by which the candidate lost was no more than 10% or in an election held in a swing state or district respectively. In the secondary textual analysis, the Democrat-to-Republican flipped-seat elections campaigns were assessed for the presence of anti-immigrant sentiment regardless of whether the campaign's respective candidate won. Doing so allowed for an understanding of how the use of anti-immigrant rhetoric evolved between the 2018 election cycle and the 2020 election cycle.

Initial data collection of anti-immigrant candidates who lost their respective elections was compared against the percentage of eligible Latino voters in the corresponding state or district. While further research is necessary, no correlation was found between campaign losses and a higher percentage of Latino electorate.

### **Findings Overview**

Anti-immigrant rhetoric is not a winning campaign platform. In an analysis of competitive gubernatorial and congressional elections across the United States in 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023, anti-immigrant rhetoric often proved to be a present factor in losing campaigns. In the 2018 election cycle, twenty candidates in competitive elections employed harsh rhetoric regarding unauthorized immigration and border security—and ultimately lost. In the 2020 election cycle, the utilization of such rhetoric relaxed broadly, and Republican candidates benefitted. Still, ten candidates were found to have employed anti-immigrant rhetoric and lost. Former President Trump's 2020 presidential campaign followed this trend as well. In the 2022 election cycle, twelve candidates lost in competitive elections after employing anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout their campaigns. The data discovered through this research reinforces recent claims that a campaign emphasis on

immigration, particularly in terms of the 2018 election, does not often lead to election success.<sup>xx</sup>

This research looks at both the presence of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric relating to candidates with poor election outcomes and the narrative trends within the anti-immigrant rhetoric of these candidates. This textual analysis aims to unpack the trends in losing anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric employed across the 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023 election cycle data sets in terms of typical anti-immigrant narratives (see appendices). Narratives of border securitization and the criminalization of immigrants are the dominant indicators of anti-immigrant sentiment present in campaign rhetoric.<sup>xxi</sup> The following data assessments look at the frequency across campaigns that utilize the two narratives.

### **2018 Election Cycle – Primary Textual Analysis**

This primary textual analysis focuses on candidates who employed anti-immigrant sentiment within their competitive elections and lost. In 2018, research determined that twenty candidates lost in competitive gubernatorial or congressional elections after employing anti-immigrant rhetoric within their campaigns. The anti-immigrant sentiment present in these campaigns demonstrated a range of narratives within this rhetorical category (see Appendix A). Rhetoric from losing candidates included references to the threat of unauthorized immigrants and the “caravan” encroaching upon the U.S.-Mexico Border. The necessity for “secure borders” through border militarization and the building of a border wall also hallmarked these candidates’ losing campaign rhetoric. As previously mentioned, broader narratives of border securitization and the criminalization of immigrants are indicative of anti-immigrant sentiment. Analyzing campaign material from candidates in the 2018 U.S. election cycle dataset, fourteen of the twenty candidates utilized campaign material that promoted border securitization efforts. For example, Lena Epstein’s campaign touted that “Our border is a national security disaster,” and Wendy Rogers’ campaign asserted that the border wall on the U.S.-Mexico border “must” be built.<sup>xxii</sup>

Eleven candidates within the 2018 U.S. election cycle dataset employed criminalizing narratives of immigrants, with some candidates pointedly characterizing unauthorized immigrants as “illegal aliens.” Some candidates within this campaign narrative category—including Barbara Comstock, John Chrin, Kevin Yoder, and Rod Blum—took the narrative of criminalization a step further, promoting campaign materials that showcase instances where unauthorized immigrants engaged in criminal activity. Comstock and Chrin even go so far as to reference sexual violence against children and gang violence allegedly perpetrated by unauthorized



immigrants.<sup>xxiii</sup> Worth noting, it has been statistically proven that unauthorized immigrants as a demographic have “substantially lower crime rates than native-born citizens and legal immigrants across a range of felony offenses.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Seven candidates from the 2018 U.S. election cycle dataset noted their opposition to sanctuary cities or attacked their candidates based on their alleged support for sanctuary programs. In analyzing the rhetoric surrounding sanctuary cities, the role of former President Trump’s immigration policies during his presidency and his attack on the institution of sanctuary should be acknowledged in tandem.<sup>xxv</sup>

### **2020 Election Cycle – Primary Textual Analysis**

In the 2020 election cycle, the trend of candidates who employ anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric continued to be a losing trend (See Appendix B). Ten candidates were identified in competitive 2020 elections as having utilized anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout their campaigns and lost. Emphasis on border security and the ‘necessity’ of the border wall construction along the U.S.-Mexico border continued in tandem with the overall criminalization of immigrants.

Of the ten candidates who fit the 2020 dataset criterion, six candidates centered anti-immigrant narratives of criminalization within their campaign material. Similar to the rhetoric applied by those in the 2018 candidate dataset, the campaign material of several candidates within the 2020 dataset characterized undocumented immigrants as “illegal aliens” and implied their presence in the U.S. as an intrinsic threat in terms of increasing criminal activity and committing an “invasion” of the United States. Exemplifying the application of this narrative, Jim Oberweiss framed the “current immigration crisis” within the context of the death of a constituent’s brother who was killed in a drunk-driving incident by “an illegal alien with a history of criminal offenses.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

Eight of the ten candidates from the 2020 U.S. election cycle dataset were found to have inserted a narrative of border securitization into their campaign material. Interestingly, the vast majority of references to border securitization found within these candidates’ anti-immigrant campaign material aimed to establish the candidates’ support for the Trump-propagated border wall concept along the U.S.-Mexico border. Several candidates imply that ensuring U.S. border security is synonymous with constructing the border wall. David Perdue demonstrates this rhetoric through his campaign material’s assertion that “barriers” are an important aspect in combatting the “crisis at our southern border,”<sup>xxvii</sup> Rich McCormick states he is “ALL IN... on the Trump economy” and building “the wall.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Further conclusions can be made on this phenomenon and are analyzed later in this paper.

Notably, candidates within the 2020 U.S. election dataset focused less on establishing definitive opposition to sanctuary cities within their anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric. Only two of the ten candidates from the 2020 U.S. election dataset—Dan Forest and Sandy Smith—were found to explicitly share their opposition to sanctuary policies.

### **Democrat-to-Republican Flipped Seats in 2020 Election Cycle – Secondary Textual Analysis**

There are fewer examples of anti-immigrant sentiment in losing gubernatorial and congressional campaigns during the 2020 election cycle compared to the number of candidates who employed anti-immigrant sentiment in losing gubernatorial and congressional campaigns during the 2018 election cycle. Considering how anti-immigrant sentiment overwhelmingly presents in Republican campaigns, therein lies an important question of whether the 2020 U.S. elections' decline in anti-immigrant sentiment found in losing campaigns *produced* or *is a product of* Republican candidates' increased success in the 2020 election cycle.

Through a secondary textual analysis of anti-immigrant sentiment in 2020's Democrat-to-Republican flipped congressional and gubernatorial elections, we are able to gain a clearer understanding of how this distinction manifests. Nearly half (seven of the seventeen) of the Democrat-to-Republican flipped seat candidates did not utilize anti-immigrant sentiment in their official campaign materials. Following trends within border securitization narratives from the primary textual analysis, many of the candidates who employed anti-immigrant sentiment centered such rhetoric on broader allegiances to former President Trump (see Appendix C).

### **2022 Election Cycle – Primary Textual Analysis**

Similar to our analysis of the 2018 and 2020 U.S. election cycles, anti-immigrant campaign platforms largely failed to capture voters in the 2022 gubernatorial and congressional elections to the degree that many strategists expected.<sup>xxix</sup> In this election cycle, twelve candidates were found to have employed anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in competitive elections and lost (See Appendix D). The criminalization of immigrants and border securitization remained prevalent narratives amongst campaigns platformed on anti-immigrant sentiment. Reflective of the shifting political landscape under the first two years of Joe Biden's presidency, the 2022 dataset reflects growing claims that today's immigrant population is taking advantage of 'overgenerous' U.S. immigration policies promulgated by current left-wing political leaders.

Ten of the thirteen candidates who were found to have led anti-immigrant campaigns and lost in the 2022 U.S. election cycle employed criminalization rhetoric against immigrants. This data points to a continuation of rhetorical trends in both the 2018 and 2020 election cycles. Immigrants' crossing of the U.S.–Mexico border continues to be characterized as an “Invasion.”<sup>xxx</sup> Paralleling both the 2018 and 2020 datasets, candidates preserve anti-immigrant rhetoric that relegates immigrants to “illegals” or “illegal aliens” and centers “Dangerous criminals like MS-13 gang members and ‘coyotes’...” in their assessment of immigration into the U.S.<sup>xxxi</sup> References to the drug smuggling—namely fentanyl—and human trafficking are also situated within the narratives that campaign propagate and are further examples of their anti-immigration stances.

Seven of the twelve candidates in the 2022 U.S. election cycle dataset utilized narratives of border securitization throughout their campaigns. The U.S.–Mexico border is described by candidates as “porous” and in dire need of increased securitization and militarization efforts to properly combat the border “crisis.”<sup>xxxii</sup> Interestingly, several candidates—including Adam Laxalt (Nevada Senate race), Herschel Walker (Georgia Senate race), and Tom Barrett (Michigan-7 Congressional race)—made claims that their respective states have begun to experience the asserted ill-effect of immigration as if their state was a “border state.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> In tandem, five candidates asserted the need to continue Trump-Era immigration policies, which include the “Migrant Protection Protocols” and the construction of the border wall.

As will be discussed further, a recognizable shift in rhetoric has occurred whereby candidates express their anti-immigrant sentiment through more direct critiques of current policies supported by Democrats. While this may be a continuation of the 2018 and 2020 U.S. election cycle datasets whereby candidates targeted Sanctuary Cities to signal their anti-immigrant rhetoric, the policy targeting is far more widespread. Arizona Senate Candidate Blake Masters epitomizes this form of anti-immigration rhetoric, promoting the idea that President Joseph R. Biden and his opponent, incumbent Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ), incentivized undocumented immigration by inviting “illegals to come here and give them housing and cash.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Black’s campaign approach towards immigration did not help him win the race.

During the data selection process of the 2022 U.S. election cycle, seventeen candidates were found to have employed anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in total, with five candidates securing an electoral victory: Joe Lombardo (Nevada Gubernatorial race), JD Vance (Ohio Senate race), Monica de La Cruz (Texas-15 Congressional race), Ted Budd (North Carolina Senate race), and

George Santos (New York-3 Congressional race). In alignment with the above flipped-seat analysis of the 2020 U.S. election cycle, a clear rhetorical shift from incumbents who were previously anti-immigrant and pivoted away from such sentiments took place, signaling another important dimension of this cycle. In 2023, the seat previously held by George Santos went to Democrat Joseph A. Suozzi.

### **2023 Special Election Cycle – Primary Textual Analysis**

In the 2023 special election cycle, four congressional and gubernatorial elections took place. While immigration remained a topic across several campaign trails during this cycle, the degree to which immigration was mentioned clearly declined (See Appendix E).

This cycle's three gubernatorial elections demonstrate this general decline in the use of anti-immigrant rhetoric. In the Kentucky Gubernatorial race against Democratic incumbent Andy Beshear, Daniel Cameron utilized anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric and lost. Cameron's anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric was distinctly linked to the cases he prosecuted as Kentucky's Attorney General and his efforts to hold "[Beshear] and Biden accountable over illegal immigration."<sup>xxxv</sup> Our research found no criminalization rhetoric and only one example of border securitization narratives within the data. In the Louisiana Gubernatorial election wherein Republican Jeff Landry won and flipped the seat, minimal direct mention of immigration was found aside from his campaign's reference to "fighting against the surge of illegal immigration and working with federal officials to pursue fugitives and take criminals off the streets."<sup>xxxvi</sup> This example was coded as criminalization rhetoric. Tate Reeves won the Mississippi Gubernatorial election and utilized anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout his campaign. Border securitization and the criminalization of immigrants were both present narratives. Reeves claims that "Suspected terrorists are streaming across Biden's broken border."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Regarding the 2023 special congressional elections in Rhode Island's first district, Utah's second district, and Virginia's fourth district, minimal campaign material on immigration, let alone examples of anti-immigrant rhetoric, was found. While this election cycle has notably fewer elections, the lack of emphasis on immigration in each campaign demonstrates the potential decline in campaigns' use of immigration as a voter salient topic in elections to come. This decline in references to immigration parallels the growing emphasis on abortion and reproductive rights that was central to the 2023 special election cycle.<sup>xxxviii</sup> This shift in campaign emphasis rings particularly true in terms of the gubernatorial elections, with news outlets asserting that "There's nothing like

abortion to aid Democrats.”<sup>xxxix</sup> Contextualized by the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, a landmark initiative passed in Ohio to enshrine abortion rights in the state’s constitution, and Democrats won the House in Virginia state elections.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this research exhibit both the extensive nature of anti-immigrant sentiment in competitive U.S. gubernatorial and congressional elections from 2018 until 2023— *and* the lack of success such campaign platforms have had in winning elections. While the goal of this analysis is not to claim that the presence of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric is the sole factor in these election losses, the research indicates an undeniable pattern that proves the lack of salience such rhetoric has in winning competitive elections across the country. This research faces limitations in that it focuses on the correlation between *the loss* of a candidate’s campaign and *the use* of anti-immigrant rhetoric. This research stands to prove that a preliminary relationship exists. Further research is required to definitively prove the degree to which anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric determines candidates’ success in a given election and voter responses to such rhetoric.

### **Shifting Usages of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Rhetoric**

In assessing the 2018 and 2020 election cycle data, the emphasis on anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric relaxed during the 2020 cycle compared to the 2018 cycle. Kris Kobach’s losing 2018 Kansas Gubernatorial campaign exemplifies the failures of a campaign largely platformed on anti-immigrant sentiment. Labeled as an “anti-immigration hard-liner,” Kobach’s campaign hinged largely upon his pointed immigration rhetoric.<sup>xi</sup> He touted his role as President Trump’s immigration advisor and employed the characterization of unauthorized immigrants as “illegal aliens” throughout his campaign.<sup>xii</sup>

Kobach lost in the 2018 Kansas Gubernatorial Election. In alignment with the assertion that anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric declined in 2020 both in terms of its presence on campaign platforms and its salience with voters more generally, “anti-immigration hard-liner[s]” like Kris Kobach largely disappeared in the competitive 2020 elections. That is not to say that anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric disappeared; rather, fewer candidates premised their campaigns fully upon such narratives. Despite Georgia Governor Brian Kemp not meeting the dataset criterion for the primary textual analysis of the 2020 or 2022 gubernatorial elections, a comparison of the campaign rhetoric he employed regarding immigration during these two election cycles helps further frame the above conclusions.

Kemp ran and won the 2020 Georgia gubernatorial election on a platform that included ads of him “rounding up criminal illegals [him]self.”<sup>xlii</sup> His 2022 ads, however, painted a much more moderate picture and included no direct reference to unauthorized immigration.<sup>xliii</sup>

Of the candidates who did utilize anti-immigrant rhetoric, several used it mainly as a signal of support for and allegiance to former President Trump and his policies (see Appendix C). The findings of the secondary textual analysis of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric in the 2020 gubernatorial and congressional elections that flipped the seat from Republican to Democrat also demonstrate the declining role of anti-immigrant sentiment in campaigns during the 2020 cycle and the unreliable nature of this rhetoric in earning constituent votes. Nearly half of the Republican candidates that flipped a previously Democrat-held seat did not employ anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric.

### **Exploring Embedded Narratives**

The utilization of anti-immigrant rhetoric during recent campaigns points to a broader trend between the 2018 and the 2020 election cycles wherein strong stances against immigration became a means to establish shared values and allegiance with former President Trump (See appendix C). By applying “Build The Wall” narratives and framing border security as imperative, candidates can showcase how their campaigns are founded on Trumpist values more broadly.<sup>xliv</sup> Understanding that “Trumpism” and its politics towards immigration contributed to the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment within U.S. elections and campaign platforms, data from this textual analysis further supports this claim.<sup>xlv</sup> In a sense, immigration became a dog whistle for white nationalism and for candidates to signal alignment with former President Trump. For example, in Greg Gianforte’s winning bid for the Montana Governorship in 2020, Gianforte promised to “stand with President Trump to crack down on illegal immigration.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Interestingly, Donald Trump’s 2020 presidential campaign aligns with the findings of this paper—his extensive use of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric during his 2020 bid for reelection did not prove to be enough. Donald Trump lost in the 2020 U.S. presidential election after employing anti-immigrant rhetoric.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Unlike the 2018 and 2020 U.S. election cycles, references to the border wall and the need for its construction from the 2022 dataset largely de-emphasized this securitization project's explicit link to Trump. A clear decrease in explicit references to former President Trump when discussing the border wall construction is present compared to the 2020 dataset (See Appendix C). While calls to “finish the wall” were present in multiple candidates’ anti-

immigrant campaign rhetoric, candidates offered a similar amount of attention to the re-establishment of the “Migrant Protection Protocols”—commonly known as the “Remain in Mexico” program—that required certain Asylum-seekers to remain in Mexico while waiting for their asylum hearings.<sup>xlviii</sup> The program has been widely critiqued for its breach of human rights and the creation of unsafe conditions.<sup>xlix</sup> Arizona Gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake regarded the policy as “the best [immigration] policy I’ve seen.”<sup>l</sup> Through further assessment of the rhetoric employed by candidates of the 2022 and 2023 dataset, we see candidates shift their anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric away from targeting migrants themselves and instead targeting Democratic leadership, whom they label as in support of so-called “open borders.”<sup>li</sup> Many other Republicans argued that “generous” policies attracted more immigrants. The campaign of candidate for Nevada’s 2<sup>nd</sup> District, April Becker, demonstrates claims the Biden Administration has encouraged such migrants to cross illegally by guaranteeing them government benefits. Several anti-immigrant politicians promoted the idea that the new Democratic leadership under President Joe Biden was to blame for a large increase in unauthorized immigration. Nonetheless, the U.S. is not alone in experiencing increases in immigration after the lulls during the pandemic.<sup>lii</sup>

Candidates such as Kari Lake take this concept a step further, arguing that Democrat leadership has a vested interest in the continuation of undocumented immigration as a means of “solidifying a permanent political majority.”<sup>liii</sup> These claims on the campaign trail should be problematized as alarmingly similar to the foundationally racist “Great Replacement” theory, the idea that elites are purposefully bringing in immigrants as a means of undermining the social framework of Western civilization by “replacing” it.<sup>liv</sup> There is no empirical basis to support this claim, nor a historical recognition of how previous immigrant ethnic groups have become part of the mainstream.

The 2022 elections also demonstrated a rise in claims that immigration is no longer confined to states along the U.S.–Mexico border. As an effort spearheaded by Texas Governor Greg Abbott brings “busloads” of immigrants to cities farther north of the border, the framing of immigration as an issue of concern has shifted both on the campaign trail of candidates employing anti-immigrant rhetoric and beyond.<sup>lv</sup> Candidate for Pennsylvania Senate Mehmet Oz stated, “Now every state has become a border state.”<sup>lvi</sup> In an eerily similar fashion to the rhetoric discussed throughout this article, the Democratic mayor of New York City, Eric Adams, is

quoted as saying that this influx of immigrants “will destroy” the city.<sup>lvii</sup> In the 2023 election cycle, campaign rhetoric from Gubernatorial candidate Tate Reeves further exemplifies this conclusion.<sup>lviii</sup> Just as the U.S. is increasingly externalizing its border by instituting visa requirements and border outposts in places like Panama, historical conceptions of borders and their significance are shifting across the U.S., thus being employed on the campaign trail.<sup>lix</sup> “The multidirectional expansion of borders” is showcased through campaign narratives.<sup>lx</sup>

In the suit, the campaigns of three 2022 dataset candidates—Tyler Kistner (Minnesota – 2 Congressional race), Jim Bognet (Pennsylvania – 8 Congressional race), and Mehmet Oz (Pennsylvania Senate race)—take aim at “ghost flights” of migrants. They claim that the Biden Administration sponsors flights carried out covertly and consequently bring undocumented immigrants across the United States. While it is true that these flights are taking place, these anti-immigrant candidates are misrepresenting what they are. These flights often consist of undocumented minors, who are being flown to centers designed for such children, which exist all over the country. This practice has existed for decades, including under the Trump administration.<sup>lxi</sup>

### **Rematch Wins & the Role of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric**

In an assessment of the campaign rhetoric of candidates who ran in 2018 with anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric and chose to run again in 2020, there is an observable decrease in the use of anti-immigrant sentiment in the candidate’s campaign platforms. Candidates in this category include Martha McSally (Arizona – Senate), John James (Michigan – Senate), Matt Rosendale (Montana At-Large District), Claudia Tenney (NY-22), and Young Kim (CA – 39). While not all these candidates won their respective elections in 2020, their shifts in campaign rhetoric point to the broader trend of relaxed anti-immigrant sentiment following the 2018 U.S. election cycle (see Appendix F).

Matt Rosendale, Claudia Tenney, Young Kim, and Yvette Herrell (NM-02) offer interesting opportunities to compare the success of campaigns that employ anti-immigrant rhetoric and those that do not. Matt Rosendale, Claudia Tenney, and Young Kim employed anti-immigrant rhetoric during their campaigns in competitive 2018 congressional elections and lost. In 2020, however, all three candidates did *not* utilize the same anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric during their 2020 races—and ultimately won. Of note, Matt Rosendale ran for Montana Senate in 2018, but Montana’s At-Large District in 2020.



Interestingly, Yvette Herrell conversely employed minimal anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric during her 2018 campaign against Xochitl Torres Small for the position of NM-02 House Representative and lost. However, in Herrell's 2020 rematch against Torres Small, she employed extensive anti-immigrant sentiment throughout her campaign and won, pointing to the fact that the trend is not universal, and that immigration is not the main issue on which voters make their choice.

Young Kim, who ran for the U.S. representative seat for the 39<sup>th</sup> district of California, is an immigrant herself. In 2018, Kim's campaign offered ads that promoted border securitization and criminalized immigrants. During both the 2018 and 2020 election cycles, Kim promoted her identity as an immigrant; but in her 2020 rematch against Gil Cisneros (D), Kim dropped the anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric and instead emphasized her personal experiences as an immigrant.<sup>lxii</sup> This shift in campaign rhetoric proved to be a fruitful decision for Kim as she won her rematch election.

## **Conclusion**

These analyses of campaign materials and electoral outcomes in competitive races show that contrary to common knowledge and frequent comments made by pundits and campaign managers, being openly anti-immigrant is a way to win. What explains this? Polls show that most U.S. citizens have a favorable view of immigration in general. Most Americans, regardless of their party affiliation, are in favor of giving a path to citizenship to Dreamers, DACA recipients, their parents, essential workers, and those who have been in the United States for decades working, paying taxes, raising American families, but lacking political rights.

Anti-immigrant groups and voices are loud, well-organized, and overrepresented in the media and public discussions. They are not representative of popular sentiment. The salience of immigration as an issue is larger for this group than for the average population. Anti-immigrant views are often based on stereotypes, myths, misinformation, or white nationalist ideologies.

A reason why immigration has not been a magic formula for candidates in the U.S. after Trump's 2016 election is that Trump captured that platform and a base that prioritizes this topic. It also probably constitutes the ceiling of the topic's salience to gain voters over any other issues. By implementing extreme policies such as family separation at the border and closing the border to asylum seekers implementing Title 42, Democrats showed a unified opposition to these policies during the Trump presidency. Biden partly campaigned against these draconian policies. Immediately after becoming president, Biden stopped construction of the border

wall and ended the so-called Muslim Ban that Trump revised and implemented after many courts blocked it, with no political cost. Later, the Biden administration ended the “Remain in Mexico” policy and then Title 42. Thus, Trump's extreme anti-immigrant policies became a feature of the MAGA movement. Democrats became more vocal about immigrant rights and the long tradition and benefits of migration to America. At the same time, the Biden administration had to address border crossings and increases in asylum seekers in a pragmatic manner with policy innovation such as the CBP-One App to schedule appointments at the border, regional offices to process applications, and an extension of the parole program to include Afghans, Ukrainians, Haitians, Venezuelans, Cubans, and Nicaraguans. Nonetheless, White House advisors have been nervous about immigration policy and worried about critiques about supposed “open borders” and continuous media images of asylum seekers turning themselves in at the border and sleeping outside shelters in U.S. cities. Nonetheless, anti-immigrant discourse or policies will not peel away hard MAGA voters away from Trump. Though, anti-immigrant campaigns can alienate independent, progressive, Asian, and Latino voters. As the analyses shown here show, having a more humane, measured, and pragmatic view of immigrants can indeed be the morally and politically right thing to do.

## Appendices

### Appendix A:

#### Losing Anti-Immigrant Candidates (2018 Gubernatorial and Congressional Election Cycle)

Candidate (Party Affiliation)	Election	Election Outcome - % of Votes	Examples of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material*
Kris Kobach (Republican)	Kansas - Gubernatorial	Laura Kelly (Democrat) – 48.0% Kobach – 43.0% <sup>lxiii</sup>	Kobach has experience locating “Security Loopholes” in the U.S. immigration system. <sup>lxiv</sup> Post-Campaign Announcement Speech – “We encourage illegal immigration in Kansas,”; “[In Kansas State Universities], you are going to pay three times as much in tuition as an illegal alien who has been breaking our laws,” <sup>lxv</sup>
Martha McSally (Republican)	Arizona – Senate	Kyrsten Sinema (Democrat) – 50.0% Martha McSally – 47.6% <sup>lxvi</sup>	“[Sinema] supports open borders, sanctuary cities, and amnesty for illegal immigrants,” <sup>lxvii</sup> “Insanity at the border,” <sup>lxviii</sup>
Matt Rosendale (Republican)	Montana – Senate	Jon Tester (Democrat) – 50.3% Matt Rosendale – 46.8% <sup>lxix</sup>	“Hey - Two-Faced Tester... Enough with the dangerous illegal immigration policies! We do NOT want amnesty and sanctuary cities in this nation. We need to enforce our laws and get tough on illegal immigration... and help President Trump BUILD THE WALL,” <sup>lxx</sup>  “It's time to get tough, elect a Conservative Senator who will support Trump, and build the wall!” <sup>lxxi</sup>
John James (Republican)	Senate – Michigan	Debbie Stabenow (Democrat) – 52.3% John James – 45.8% <sup>lxxii</sup>	“End Illegal Immigration; Secure the Border; Defund Sanctuary Cities,” <sup>lxxiii</sup>
Barbara Comstock (Republican)	VA – 10 <sup>lxxiv</sup>	Jennifer Wexton (Democrat) – 56.1%	“[Wexton] opposes the removal of criminal alien gang members...” <sup>lxxvi</sup>

		Barbara Comstock – 43.7% <sup>lxxv</sup>	In support of the “Criminal Alien Gang Member Removal Act” during September 2018 Debate. <sup>lxxvii</sup>
Dave (David) Brat (Republican)	VA – 7	Abigail Spanberger (Democrat) – 50.3% Dave Brat – 48.4% <sup>lxxviii</sup>	Repeated campaign ad attacking Spanberger for support of “sanctuary cities,” <sup>lxxix</sup>
Rod Blum (Republican)	IA – 1	Abby Finkenauer (Democrat) – 51.0% Rod Blum – 45.9% <sup>lxxx</sup>	“We need to control the border,”; “[DACA Recipients] should not be rewarded for breaking the law,” <sup>lxxxii</sup>  “[Finkenauer] put criminal illegal aliens back on Iowa streets” <sup>lxxxii</sup>
Wendy Rogers (Republican)	AZ – 1	Tom O’Halloran (Democrat) – 53.8% Wendy Rogers – 46.1% <sup>lxxxiii</sup>	“Arizona is ground zero in illegal alien invasion,”; “It’s time to secure our borders,” <sup>lxxxiv</sup>  Illegal immigration “threatens our national security,”; “Must build the wall,” <sup>lxxxv</sup>
John Chrin (Republican)	PA – 8	Matt Cartwright (Democrat) – 54.6% John Chrin – 45.4% <sup>lxxxvi</sup>	Cartwright is “a disgrace” for supporting “sanctuary cities,”  Campaign ad that centers upon to rape of a 5-year-old girl by an unauthorized immigrant <sup>lxxxvii</sup>
Kevin Yoder (Republican)	KS – 3	Sharice Davids (Democrat) – 53.6% Kevin Yoder – 43.9% <sup>lxxxviii</sup>	“The open borders policies espoused by extreme liberals like Sharice Davids and Nancy Pelosi are the reason why thousands of people are heading towards our borders,” <sup>lxxxix</sup>  “[Davids will leave] communities vulnerable against drug cartels and sex traffickers.” <sup>xc</sup>
Katie Arrington (Republican)	SC – 1	Joe Cunningham (Democrat) – 50.6% Katie Arrington – 49.2% <sup>xcii</sup>	“Secure the border...” <sup>xcii</sup>  “[Cunningham is against] building the border wall,” <sup>xciii</sup>

Seth Grossman (Republican)	NJ – 2	Jeff Van Drew (Democrat) – 52.9% Seth Grossman – 45.2% <sup>xciv</sup>	Backing Trump’s anti-immigrant narrative <sup>xcv</sup>  “Invasion. Pure & Simple.”; “They keep on coming.”; “Illegal Aliens,” <sup>xcvi</sup>
Claudia Tenney (Republican)	NY – 22	Anthony Brindisi (Democrat) – 50.9% Claudia Tenney – 49.1% <sup>xcvii</sup>	“[Brindisi supports] free healthcare for illegals,” <sup>xcviii</sup>
Lea Marquez Peterson (Republican)	AZ – 02	Ann Kirkpatrick (Democrat) – 54.7% Lea Marquez Peterson – 45.2% <sup>xcix</sup>	“Vote to protect our communities. Vote to secure our border.” <sup>cc</sup>  “We need to stop the flow of both human traffickers and drugs across our border -that means a wall, more border patrol officers, smart use of technology and more resources to our border sheriffs.” <sup>cci</sup>
Eddie Edwards (Republican)	NH – 01	Chris Pappas (Democrat) – 53.6%  Eddie Edwards – 45.0% <sup>cii</sup>	“The current crisis in illegal immigration is tearing our country apart. It is unacceptable and unsustainable. Immigrants are flocking here from Mexico and Central America, risking their lives on the chance that they can make it across our unsecured southern border.” <sup>ciii</sup>
Lena Epstein (Republican)	MI – 11	Haley Stevens (Democrat) – 51.8% Lena Epstein – 45.2% <sup>civ</sup>	“Our border is a national security disaster.” <sup>cv</sup>  “Secure the border. Stop illegal immigrants.” <sup>cvii</sup>
Jay Webber (Republican)	NJ – 11 <sup>cvii</sup>	Mikie Sherrill (Democrat) – 56.8% Jay Webber – 42.1% <sup>cviii</sup>	“Sanctuary city policies are completely irresponsible, and illegal. Sanctuary cities endanger our loved ones.” <sup>cix</sup>  “ICE does critically important work combating gang violence, battling drug dealers, stopping terrorist threats, protecting girls and young women from sex trafficking, and removing

			criminal aliens from our country,” <sup>cx</sup>
Young Kim (Republican)	CA – 39	Gil Cisneros (Democrat) – 51.6% Young Kim – 48.4% <sup>cx</sup>	“Reform the Immigration System; Increase Border Security; Vote Young Kim” <sup>cxii</sup>  “Politicians want to give sanctuary to illegal immigrants but we're not giving proper sanctuary to our veterans! Watch below and find out why Ed Royce endorsed Young Kim for Congress. Vote for Young Kim on Tuesday, June 5th!” <sup>cxiii</sup>
Keith Rothfus (Republican)	PA – 17 <sup>cxiv</sup>	Conor Lamb (Democrat) – 56.3% Keith Rothfus – 43.7% <sup>cxv</sup>	“Working to STOP Sanctuary Cities” <sup>cxvi</sup>  “Do you support securing the border to help keep out illegal immigrants and illegal drugs?” <sup>cxvii</sup>  “My Plan: Secure the border and respect the law. Like my Page for more,” <sup>cxviii</sup>
Tom MacArthur (Republican)	NJ – 03	Andrew (Andy) Kim (Democrat) – 50.0% Tom MacArthur – 48.7% <sup>cxix</sup>	“Our opponent, Andy Kim, who founded a radical organization to resist President Trump's agenda, just admitted that he does not favor a "physical wall" at the southern border,” <sup>cxx</sup>

\*The “Examples of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material” section does not include all data points respective to candidates.

**Appendix B:**

**Losing Anti-Immigrant Candidates (2020 Gubernatorial and Congressional Election Cycle)**

Candidate (Party Affiliation)	Election	Election Outcome - % of Votes	Examples of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material*
Dan Forest (Republican)	NC - Gubernatorial	Roy Cooper (Democrat) – 51.5% Dan Forest – 47.0% <sup>cxxi</sup>	<p>“Individuals who are in our country illegally that commit murder, assault, robbery, and sex offenses against minors should be turned over to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and not released back on our streets. These are not individuals who have been pulled over for a minor traffic violation, rather have been handcuffed and arrested for a crime committed in the local community”<sup>cxxii</sup></p> <p>“Instead of cooperating with federal agents to detain illegal immigrants accused of serious crimes, a handful of Democrat sheriffs have decided to ignore the law and release them back into the community.”<sup>cxxiii</sup></p>
David Perdue (Republican)	Senate - Georgia	Jon Ossoff (Democrat) – 50.6% David Perdue – 49.4% <sup>cxxiv</sup>	<p>“There is a crisis at our southern border. We need to put drug cartels out of business. We need to close loopholes that encourage illegal immigration. We need more technology, personnel, and, yes, barriers.”<sup>cxxv</sup></p>
Kelly Loeffler (Republican)	Senate – Georgia	Raphael Warnock (Democrat) – 51.0% Kelly Loeffler – 49.0% <sup>cxxvi</sup>	<p>Loeffler said she would introduce legislation to “crack down on gangs” and “deport undocumented people.”<sup>cxxvii</sup></p>
Tiffany Shedd (Republican)	AZ – 1	Tom O’Halloran (Democrat) – 51.6% Tiffany Shedd – 48.4% <sup>cxxviii</sup>	<p>“Not only does Tom put politics before people but he also puts illegal aliens before American citizens,”<sup>cxxix</sup></p>

			“BUILD THE WALL PETITION: Between the drug trafficking and illegal immigration, Tiffany Shedd knows firsthand the crises Arizonans are facing on the southern border,” <sup>cxxx</sup>
Rich McCormick (Republican)	GA – 7	Carolyn Bourdeaux (Democrat) – 51.4% Rich McCormick – 48.6% <sup>cxxxii</sup>	“I’m ready to go ALL IN to double down on the Trump economy, build the wall, and stop the socialistic fantasies of the left,” <sup>cxxxii</sup>
Dan Rodimer (Republican)	NV – 3	Susie Lee (Democrat) – 48.8% Dan Rodimer – 45.8% <sup>cxxxiii</sup>	“[Susie Lee] wrong for America,” because of her stance on immigration <sup>cxxxiv</sup>  Poll: “Should America Have Open Borders?” <sup>cxxxv</sup>
Monica De La Cruz Hernandez (Republican)	TX - 15	Vincente Gonzalez Jr. (Democrat) – 50.5% Monica De La Cruz – 47.6% <sup>cxxxvi</sup>	“BUILD THE WALL!” <sup>cxxxvii</sup>  “Monica will help President Trump BUILD THE WALL.” <sup>cxxxviii</sup>
Sandy Smith (Republican)	NC – 1	G.K. Butterfield (Democrat) – 54.2% Sandy Smith – 45.8% <sup>cxxxix</sup>	“I’m Sandy Smith, Republican for Congress & I’m fighting to build the wall,” <sup>cxl</sup>  “We must defend our border from the invasion of illegal aliens into this country. We are literally being overrun,” <sup>cxli</sup>
Nick Freitas (Republican)	VA – 7	Abigail Spanberger (Democrat) – 50.8% Nick Freitas – 49.0% <sup>cxlii</sup>	“There is a MAJOR crisis at the Southern border. Stand with Nick if you are ready to build the wall.” <sup>cxliii</sup>  “If you believe it’s time to build the wall and secure our southern border, then stand with Nick and add your name below,”; “BUILD THE WALL” <sup>cxliv</sup>
Jim Oberweis (Republican)	IL – 14	Lauren Underwood (Democrat) – 50.7%	“Democrats support giving Illegal aliens free health care - I disagree. Send me to Washington so I can work with President



		Jim Oberweis – 49.3% <sup>cxliv</sup>	Trump to make sure our tax dollars go to help Americans,” <sup>cxlv</sup>
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\*The “Examples of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material” section does not include all data points corresponding to candidates.

**Appendix C:**

**Trump Aligned Campaign Rhetoric – Immigration (2020)**

Candidate (Republican or Democrat)	Election & Outcome	Trump-Aligned Rhetoric*
Rich McCormick (R)	GA – 7 - Lost	“I’m ready to go ALL IN to double down on the Trump economy, build the wall, and stop the socialistic fantasies of the left,” <sup>cxlvi</sup>
Dan Rodimer (R)	NV – 3 - Lost	Campaign Ad featuring Border Wall <sup>cxlviii</sup>
Monica De La Cruz Hernandez (R)	TX – 15 - Lost	“Monica will help President Trump BUILD THE WALL” <sup>cxlix</sup>
Sandra Whitten (R)	TX – 28 - Lost	“I completely agree with what [President Trump] is doing”; “We have a real invasion going on,”; “[Trump] is spot on,” <sup>cl</sup>
Sandy Smith (R)	NC – 1 - Lost	“I’m Sandy Smith, Republican for Congress & I’m fighting to build the wall,” <sup>cli</sup>
Nick Freitas (R)	VA – 7 - Lost	“There is a MAJOR crisis at the Southern border. Stand with Nick if you are ready to build the wall” <sup>clii</sup>

Jim Oberweis (R)	IL – 14 - Lost	“Democrats support giving Illegal aliens free health care - I disagree. Send me to Washington so I can work with President Trump to make sure our tax dollars go to help Americans,” <sup>cliii</sup>
Greg Gianforte (R)	Montana – Gubernatorial – Won	“As Governor, I will enforce the rule of law, BAN sanctuary cities and stand with President Trump to crack down on illegal immigration.” <sup>cliv</sup>
Tommy Tuberville (R)	Senate – Alabama - Won	“Drain the Swamp and Build the Wall” <sup>clv</sup>  “We have got to have a wall on the southern border.” <sup>clvi</sup>
Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R)	IA – 2 - Won	“I will stand with President Trump to finish the Border Wall in order to crack down on illegal immigration, as well as human trafficking and the narcotics trade,” <sup>clvii</sup>
Yvette Herrell (R)	NM – 2 - Won	“Here I am down on the Southern Border looking at the beautiful wall President Trump is building. This is what Promises Made, Promises Kept looks like,” <sup>clviii</sup>  The Herrell/Trump Agenda: “Finish the Wall, Support the needs of our Border Patrol and work on true immigration reform,” <sup>clix</sup>
Nicole Malliotakis (R)	NY – 11 - Won	“Nicole is strong on crime & borders” – President Trump endorsed Conservative Nicole Malliotakis <sup>clx</sup>
Stephanie Bice (R)	OK – 5 - Won	“Stephanie stands with President Trump to secure our borders. The safety and security of Americans should come first.” <sup>clxi</sup>
Nancy Mace (R)	SC – 1 - Won	“I want to build the wall” “Stand with Trump,” <sup>clxii</sup>

\*The “Trump-Aligned Rhetoric” section does not include all data points respective to candidates.

**Appendix D:**  
**Losing Anti-Immigrant Candidates (2022 Gubernatorial and Congressional Election Cycle)**

<b><u>Candidate</u></b>	<b><u>Election</u></b>	<b><u>Outcome - % of Votes</u></b>	<b><u>Ex. of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment</u></b>
Adam Laxalt (R)	Nevada Senate	Catherine Cortez Masto (D) (48.8%)  Adam Laxalt (R) (48.0%) <sup>clxiii</sup>	Supporter of “finish the wall” and “remain in Mexico” <sup>clxiv</sup>  Supports “all of the above approach” for border security, including wall, more agents and technology. “CBS Reno highlights my call to fight illegal immigration with Nevada law enforcement leaders.” <sup>clxv</sup>  “Crisis at the southern border that has put communities across Nevada in danger”; “...close the porous border”; “fought against dangerous sanctuary city policies and worked to help stop their spread.” <sup>clxvi</sup>
Kari Lake (R)	Arizona Gubernatorial	Katie Hobbs (D) (50.3%)  Kari Lake (R) (49.6%) <sup>clxvii</sup>	Campaign Ad featuring footage of people running through desert, jumping fences, prompting declaration of “invasion” on southern border. <sup>clxviii</sup>  Claims to finish the wall and reinstate the “Remain in Mexico” policy: “the best policy I’ve seen in my 27 years, it worked.” <sup>clxix</sup>  “Washington D.C’s focus on immigration and border issues has been about incentivizing continued illegal immigration to satisfy big business’ lust for cheap labor, rewarding non-citizens for breaking our laws...” <sup>clxx</sup>  Claims “political leaders” are “crassly pushing mass amnesty for millions of non-citizens as a means of

			solidifying a permanent political majority.” <sup>clxxi</sup>
Blake Masters (R)	Arizona Senate	Mark Kelly (D) (51.4%)  Blake Masters (R) (46.5%) <sup>clxxii</sup>	“225,000 illegal aliens pour into our country each month”; “[President Biden and Senator Mark Kelly] invite illegals to come here and give them housing and cash”; Masters will “always oppose amnesty for illegal aliens, period.”; “Designate the Mexican crime cartels as terrorists.” <sup>clxxiii</sup> - “Mark Kelly supports giving your tax dollars to illegal aliens.” <sup>clxxiv</sup>
Herschel Walker (R)	Georgia Senate	Raphael Warnock (D) (51.4%)  Herschel Walker (R) (48.6%) <sup>clxxv</sup>	- “We got this border wide open and you hear Chuck Schumer talking already about bringing more people in, we’ve got to secure this border.” <sup>clxxvi</sup> - “(the issue of the border) is not just a border state problem, it is a Georgia problem that is bringing drugs, crime, and human trafficking to our state.” <sup>clxxvii</sup>
Tom Barrett (R)	Michigan Congressional District 7	Elyssa Slotkin (D) (51.7%)	“We’re 1,500 miles right here in Charlotte, Mich., from the southern border, and we’re a border town

		Tom Barrett (R) (46.3%) <sup>clxxviii</sup>	because of the spread of fentanyl,” <sup>clxxix</sup>  “...hundreds of thousands entering the country through our porous border.”; “I will also work to complete the border wall.” <sup>clxxx</sup>
Tyler Kistner (R)	Minnesota Congressional District 2	Angie Craig (D) (50.9%)  Tyler Kistner (R) (45.6%) <sup>clxxxi</sup>	Claims Biden Administration is “secretly flying illegal immigrants into communities across the country in the middle of the night.” <sup>clxxxii</sup> Biden’s border policy “exposes our country to dangerous gangs and criminals.” <sup>clxxxiii</sup>
Mark Robertson (R)	Nevada Congressional District 1	Dina Titus (D) (51.6%)  Mark Robertson(R) (46.0%) <sup>clxxxiv</sup>	“turn off the illegal flow of people coming into our country...end chain-migration, visa lotteries and vacation-birth citizenship.” <sup>clxxxv</sup>
April Becker (R)	Nevada Congressional District 2	Susie Lee (D) (52.0%)  April Becker (R) (48.0%) <sup>clxxxvi</sup>	2.3 million illegal immigrants under Biden, which will cost 9,000\$ each <sup>clxxxvii</sup>  “Thousands of pounds of fentanyl pouring into our communities”; “(Biden and Harris) have made outlandish promises of free healthcare and government benefits to those who come here illegally.” <sup>clxxxviii</sup>
Karoline Leavitt (R)	New Hampshire Congressional District 1	Chris Pappas (D) (54%)  Karoline Leavitt (R) (45.9%) <sup>clxxxix</sup>	“Dangerous criminals like MS-13 gang members and ‘coyotes’ are engaged in horrific episodes of human trafficking, including of young children, all fueled by the Biden administration’s promises of an open border.”; “I will fight to end the Biden Border Crisis by proposing legislation that has ZERO tolerance for illegal immigration, finishing construction of the border wall, and empowering our brave immigration law enforcement officers to do the jobs they’re trained to do. And I will NEVER support amnesty for

			individuals who broke our laws to come here.” <sup>cxc</sup>
Jim Bognet (R)	Pennsylvania Congressional District 8	Matt Cartwright (D) (51.2%)  Jim Bognet (R) (48.8%) <sup>cxc</sup>	“[incumbent Cartwright] voted <u>AGAINST</u> deporting violent gang members”; “[incumbent Cartwright] voted <u>AGAINST</u> President Trump’s Border Wall”; “[incumbent Cartwright] voted to give <u>FULL</u> citizenship to 13 million illegals.”; “[incumbent Cartwright] voted for \$1,200 Stimulus Checks to violent criminals & illegal immigrants.” <sup>cxcii</sup>  “...allow ghost flights packed with illegal immigrants to fly into Wilkes-Barre/Scranton airport in the middle of the night.... We don’t know who these people are or what their criminal records are. Just like with the Ghost Flights of illegals...”; “Biden’s open border policies have allowed cartels...to bring in drugs that poison our citizens. We know the damage illegal immigration can do to communities.” <sup>cxciii</sup>
Mehmet Oz (R)	Pennsylvania Senate	John Fetterman (D) (51.2%)  Mehmet Oz (R) (46.3%) <sup>cxciv</sup>	“The Biden administration’s failure on the border is so massive that they are flying illegal immigrants up to airports like this where illegal immigrants are being taken on buses. Now every state has become a border state.” <sup>cxcv</sup>
Tim Michels (R)	Wisconsin Gubernatorial	Tony Evers (D) (51.1%)  Tim Michels (R) (47.8%) <sup>cxcvi</sup>	“Joe Biden’s rolling out the red carpet for illegal immigrants.”; “For illegals, no driver’s license, no benefits, no tuition.” <sup>cxcvii</sup>

**Appendix E:**  
**2023 Gubernatorial and Congressional Special Elections**

Election	Outcome	Candidate using Anti- Immigrant Rhetoric	Examples of anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric
Kentucky - Gubernatorial	Andy Beshear (D) – 52.5% Daniel Cameron (R)– 47.5% <sup>cxviii</sup>	Daniel Cameron (Republican)	<p>“Since Joe Biden has been President, I’ve taken him to court 23 times.</p> <p>I’m taking the fight to Andy Beshear too— holding him and Biden accountable over illegal immigration, abortion, the war on coal, and their vaccine mandates.”<sup>cxix</sup></p> <p>“When Joe Biden abused his power and opened the Southern Border, I took him to court,”<sup>cc</sup></p>
Mississippi - Gubernatorial	Tate Reeves (R) – 52.3% Brandon Presley (D) – 45.9% <sup>cci</sup>	Tate Reeves (Republican)	<p>“The far-left loves to say we shouldn’t worry about illegal immigration in Mississippi. This is yet another reminder that drugs, people, and illegal firearms don’t stay on the border. Good work, Trooper Bridges.”<sup>ccii</sup></p> <p>“Suspected terrorists are streaming across Biden’s broken border,”                      “When Joe Biden left the border open, Tate Reeves backed Trump’s wall,”<sup>cciii</sup></p>
Louisiana – Gubernatorial Gov (Flip)	Nonpartisan Primary Jeff Landry (R) - 51.6% Shawn Wilson (D) – 25.9% Stephen Waguespack – 5.9% <sup>cciv</sup>	Jeff Landry (Republican)	<p>“Under Landry’s leadership, Louisiana is fighting against the surge of illegal immigration and working with federal officials to pursue fugitives and take criminals off the streets.”<sup>ccv</sup></p>

RI – 01 (Special Election)	Gabe Amo – 64.8% (D) Gerry Leonard (R)– 35.2% <sup>ccvi</sup>	None found.	
UT – 02 (Special Election November)	Celeste Maloy (R) – 56.8% Kathleen Riebe (D) – 33.5% <sup>ccvii</sup>	None found.	
VA – 4 (Special Election February)	Jennifer McClellan (D) – 74.4% Leon Benjamin (R) – 25.5% <sup>ccviii</sup>	None found.	



**Appendix F:**  
**2018 & 2020 Election Rematch Cases – Anti-Immigrant Sentiment**

Candidate	2018 Election & Outcome	Example of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material	2020 Election & Outcome	Examples of Anti-Immigrant Campaign Material
Matt Rosendale (Republican)	Montana – Senate  Jon Tester (Democrat) – 50.3% Matt Rosendale – 46.8% <sup>ccix</sup>	““Hey - Two-Faced Tester... Enough with the dangerous illegal immigration policies! We do NOT want amnesty and sanctuary cities in this nation. We need to enforce our laws and get tough on illegal immigration... and help President Trump BUILD THE WALL,” <sup>ccx</sup>  “It's time to get tough, elect a Conservative Senator who will support Trump, and build the wall!” <sup>ccxi</sup>	MT - At-Large District  Matt Rosendale – 56.4% Kathleen Williams (Democrat) – 43.6% <sup>ccxii</sup>	None found.
Young Kim (Republican)	CA – 39  Gil Cisneros (Democrat) – 51.6% Young Kim – 48.4% <sup>ccxiii</sup>	“Reform the Immigration System; Increase Border Security; Vote Young Kim” <sup>ccxiv</sup>  “Politicians want to give sanctuary to illegal immigrants, but we're not giving proper sanctuary to our veterans!” <sup>ccxv</sup>	CA – 39  Young Kim – 50.6% Gil Cisneros (Democrat) – 49.4%	Switch to emphasis on immigrant identity <sup>ccxvi</sup>
Claudia Tenney (Republican)	NY – 22  Anthony Brindisi (Democrat) – 50.9%	“[Brindisi supports] free healthcare for illegals,” <sup>ccxviii</sup>	NY – 22  Claudia Tenney – 48.8% Anthony Brindisi	None found.

	Claudia Tenney – 49.1% <sup>ccxvii</sup>		(Democrat) – 48.8% <sup>ccxix</sup>	
Yvette Herrell (Republican)	NM – 2  Xochitl Torres Small (Democrat) – 50.9% Yvette Herrell – 49.1% <sup>ccxx</sup>	None found.	NM – 2 Yvette Herrell (R) – 53.7% Xochitl Torres Small – 46.3%	“Securing our Southern border remains a top priority for many New Mexicans and I will work with the President to finish the job he has started,” <sup>ccxxi</sup>  “For too long Washington insiders have played games with our border security and President Trump has taken action to protect our families. I will stand with the President and ensure we secure the border, finish the wall, and support our Border Patrol law enforcement!” <sup>ccxxii</sup>

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