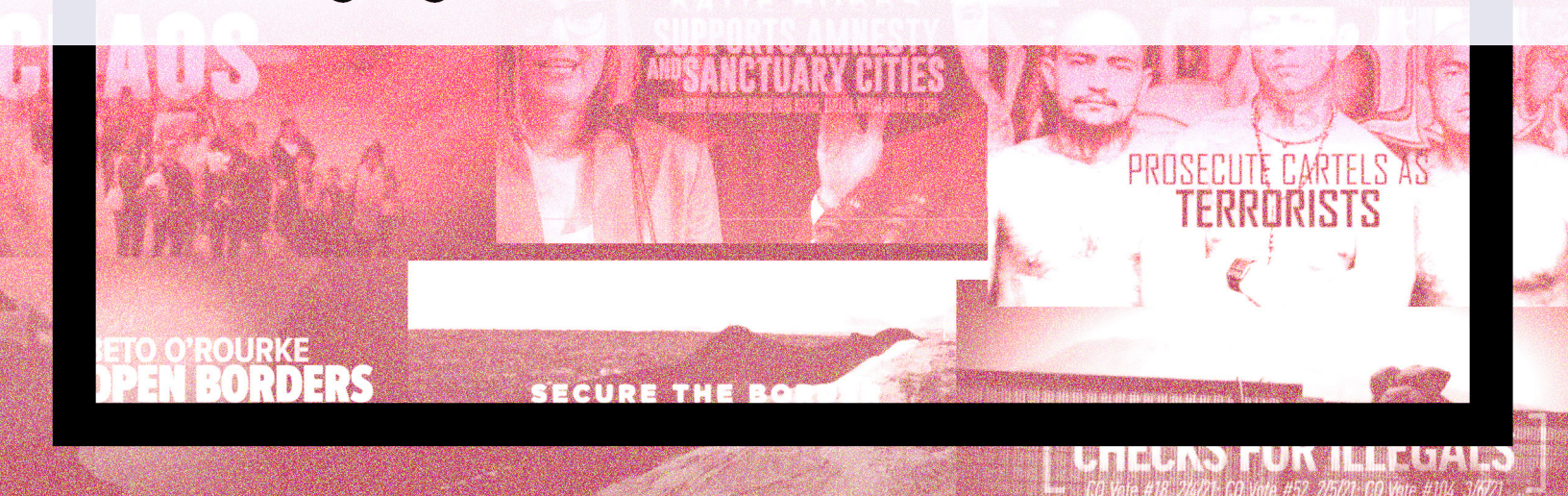


THE GOP INVESTMENT IN NATIVISM FAILED TO DELIVER, **AGAIN**

America's Voice Report on Nativist Political Messaging and Ads in the 2022 Midterms



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, Republicans again committed to the xenophobic strategy of attacking immigrants at every opportunity while embracing the deadly, white nationalist invasion and replacement conspiracy. Based on the tracking of America's Voice, we know this messaging was a top priority from the Republicans' candidates, party organizations, and SuperPACs. As this report documents, their significant investment in a nativist strategy failed at the ballot box.

High inflation, a President with low approvals, a Congress controlled by the President's party, previous trends, and overwhelming conventional wisdom all pointed to a 2022 midterm that should have been a banner year for Republicans. As it turned out, Democrats increased their majority in the Senate, and Republicans were only able to net 13 seats in the House for the slimmest majority that [wreaked chaos](#) from the very beginning.

Republicans across the country, up and down the ticket, throughout the primaries into the general, made a nativist narrative a top messaging priority. Their strategists were convinced that ceaseless demagoguery about the U.S. southern border would be critical in delivering the red wave. But once the votes were counted, it was clear Republicans wildly underperformed.

America's Voice extensive GOP message tracking throughout the midterms, as detailed in this report, provides critical insight into the development and deployment of their nativist narrative and the extent of their investment. Meanwhile, immigration and border issues largely took a back seat in Democratic messaging and voter priorities outside the GOP base. Largely focusing on the disproportionate Republican messaging, this report provides a detailed analysis of how immigration and border messaging from the candidates, PACs, and committees played in the 2022 midterm elections.

The **five** key takeaways from the report:

- 1. Republicans made a massive investment into a nativist electoral strategy, and it failed to deliver.** Even before Biden was sworn in, Republicans launched an "open borders" attack, spending the first few months of 2021 building a "Biden Border Crisis" narrative and the next year and a half relentlessly driving the attack line. Clearly spending tens of millions of dollars, if not more, on anti-immigrant attack ads, the GOP made a serious investment in this narrative. America's Voice ad tracking project found 3,200 different paid communications from Republicans and their allies from this cycle that employed anti-immigrant attacks, including over 600 "open borders" attacks and over 600 that falsely equate migrants with the illicit drug trade. Throughout the cycle, they kept their nativist narrative a top messaging priority. While the issue worked for their base, outside of it, voters were largely unconvinced. The nativist strategy is not solely responsible for Republicans' lackluster showing, but because there was such a significant investment behind the strategy and it failed to deliver, it should shoulder a great deal of blame.
- 2. Republican competition for the loyalty of their nativist base was a driver of the extremism voters rejected at the ballot box, particularly during primaries.** Republican candidates across the country waged ad wars as they competed to prove they were the true nativist in the race. Pushing each other further to the extremes on the issue, many, including the third-ranking House Republican Elise Stefanik, adopted white nationalist talking points and conspiracies. This escalating

rhetoric demagoguing migrants helped lead to either extreme general election candidates or candidates who took extreme positions. While not the sole cause of MAGA extremism in the general, nativism nevertheless played a critical role in the primaries. Driven by Stephen Miller and others, this MAGA extremism drove straight through the general election and failed at the ballot box. America's Voice identified over twenty battleground races where MAGA extremist candidates lost. And an America's Voice analysis found that by adopting a MAGA extremist persona, Stefanik saw a 78 percent loss rate among the 36 battleground House candidates she endorsed.

3. Republicans embraced white nationalist invasion and replacement conspiracy as an organizing principle courting more political violence. America's Voice ad tracking project found well over 700 examples of Republicans employing versions of the deadly lies about a so-called migrant invasion and white replacement. Republicans were echoing the same deadly white nationalist conspiracy theories as domestic terrorists - like the shooters in Buffalo and El Paso - and a leading Republican activist called for adopting this conspiracy as a litmus test for Republican candidates at the CPAC conference at the beginning of 2022. The threat emanating from adopting this lie comes as it both courts more deadly political violence and reinforces their election lies undermining American democracy. However, the 2022 midterms marked the ascent of this destabilizing conspiracy into the mainstream of the Republican party.

4. Despite the GOP's relentless demagoguery about immigrants and the border, voters are still largely pro-immigrant and prefer common-sense reforms. The 2022 Midterm Election Voter Poll surveyed more than 12,200 Americans who voted in the 2022 elections and found persistent strong majorities who hold pro-immigrant positions. The poll found: 68-32% support for citizenship for Dreamers; 63-37% support for legal status and citizenship for undocumented immigrants; 57-43% support for a balanced approach to immigration policy instead of the "enforcement and border-first" approach; and by a 60-40% margin, voters support candidates who favor access to asylum. And while the midterms were largely decided on issues other than immigration, voters in Arizona and Massachusetts also approved common-sense reforms for their undocumented neighbors where they were on the ballot this cycle.

5. Looking forward, Republicans have failed to learn the lessons of the 2022 midterms and continue to double down. In spite of repeated losses over the last several election cycles where GOP nativism was a centerpiece of their strategy, Republicans doubled down in the immediate weeks following the election and up to now. Texas Governor Greg Abbott officially declared an "invasion" just a week after the election. With their new majority, House Republicans put forward two extreme anti-immigrant bills not meant as serious policy proposals but as political setups. House Republicans are also pushing what will surely be a long dragged out nativist political theater around DHS Secretary Mayorkas and the border. And the leading cheerleader for an aggressive nativist election strategy, Stephen Miller, is still welcomed as a sought-after strategist in the party. While the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) is already attacking 2024 Senate Democrats with the exact same attack ads. The analysis of the 2022 midterms looks to be more of a blueprint for what to expect from the GOP in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

For the last five years, America's Voice has closely tracked the racist and xenophobic dog-whistles from elected officials and electoral campaigns' and compiled an [extensive database](#) to analyze the trends, debunk the lies, and interrupt racist narratives.

Our 2022 midterm tracking project was the most expansive yet, with over 5,000 unique pieces of political communication in our database from the primaries to the Georgia Senate run-off election. The project tracked tv and digital ads from campaigns across the country from up and down the ticket and monitored hundreds of campaigns' fundraising emails and hundreds of Twitter accounts of leading Republican politicians. From this extensive tracking work, this report provides a critical analysis of the nativist political messaging in the 2022 elections.

For the two years between the 2020 election and the 2022 midterms, Republicans made a massive investment in a nativist messaging strategy. Even before Joe Biden was sworn into office, Republicans began constructing a disingenuous narrative for their demagoguery. Building a narrative over the next two years, the GOP sought to create a fiction about a "Biden Border Crisis," where migrants seeking asylum and safety in the United States were an ever-present threat just beyond your doorstep, responsible for fentanyl overdoses, and constituting a literal "invasion" deliberately facilitated by Democrats' "open borders" policies to replace "real" American voters. Divorced from factual reality, Republicans across the country, up and down the ticket, throughout the primaries into the general, nevertheless spent hundreds of millions of dollars on ads driving this nativist narrative and made it a top messaging priority.

Baseless anti-immigrant attacks were not a new addition to the 2022 midterms, Republicans have run versions of these attacks for many years prior. However, the radicalizing effect of the escalating call-and-response from the GOP base and leading Republicans tipped over into dangerous extremism. The GOP adopted the once-fringe white nationalist conspiracy about a non-white migrant invasion and fears of white replacement as an organizing principle. Echoing the rhetoric of domestic terrorists became a regular occurrence for top Republicans and their supporters with the biggest megaphones over the last two years. Even after another white nationalist terrorist murdered 10 Americans in Buffalo, New York, in May 2022 who peddled the invasion and replacement lie, the leaders of the Republican Party either loudly doubled down or publicly turned a blind eye.

Republican strategists were convinced that ceaseless attacks about the U.S. southern border and their nativist narrative with all its dangerous dehumanization, would be critical in delivering a red wave in November. But they were wrong. The overwhelming conventional wisdom said the 2022 midterm should have been a banner year for Republicans. Instead, Democrats picked up a seat in the Senate and Republicans were only able to net 13 seats in the House for the slimmest majority.

While the outcomes of midterms cannot be sufficiently explained by one or even a handful of national trends, the GOP's nativist strategy, which was given such significant investment and priority, should shoulder a great deal of blame for their lackluster showing. This report does not suggest that nativism is a singular liability for all Republicans, the GOP base is clearly motivated by the narrative. However, outside of the Republican base, the issues of immigration and the border did not resonate as a top concern for voters. No matter how deep the war chest, effective electoral campaigns turn on wise investments and hundreds of millions of dollars, the nativist messaging did not come close to its promised returns.

THE GOP INVESTMENT IN NATIVISM

The GOP spent hundreds of millions of dollars on thousands of ads and two years of their daily chatter building a nativist narrative that was a centerpiece of their midterm messaging strategy. Divorced from factual reality, the GOP nativist narrative trained its attacks on the border with the wall acting as a focal point of their fiction about a “Biden Border Crisis,” where migrants seeking asylum and safety in the United States were an ever-present threat just beyond your doorstep, responsible for fentanyl overdoses and constituting a literal “invasion” deliberately facilitated by Democrats’ “open borders” policies to replace “real” American voters. While some campaigns put more emphasis on the anti-immigrant attacks than others, from leadership on down, from primaries to the general election, the GOP made demagoguing immigration and border a top messaging priority.

Even before Biden was sworn in, Republicans launched an anti-immigrant election strategy spending the first few months of 2021 building a “Biden Border Crisis” narrative and the next year and a half relentlessly driving the attack line. As Politico [reported](#), in January 2021, Republicans already “hatched a plan that they thought could get them back into the seats of power.” A plan that rested on ceaselessly demagoguing the predictable increase of migration “as a political cudgel to try to retake Congress in the midterm elections.” Two months later, in March, the [word](#) had [gone out](#) that “#BidenBorderCrisis” would anchor their nativist electoral strategy. The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) released near-daily statements for the next year and a half using the hashtag and pushing nativist attacks.

Leading Republicans and top GOP strategists and talking heads repeatedly affirmed their commitment to a nativist electoral strategy and predicted that their nativism would be decisive to their victory. For example:

- Stephen Miller, former Senior Adviser to President Trump, was peddling this strategy as early as February 2021, [telling](#) the Washington Post that Republicans should make the 2022 midterms all about immigration. Referring to the 2010 midterms, Miller said, “From a purely political standpoint, this is a recipe for Democrats to have a historic drubbing in the midterms if we can make it [the southern border] even as big an issue or bigger than Obamacare.”
- Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) on ‘Hannity’ in February [said](#) “I predict this, that immigration will be a bigger issue in 2022 than it was in 2016.” Republicans were still singing from that hymnbook in November 2021 with Sen. Rick
- Scott (R-FL), then chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), [predicting](#) their border message would be key to flipping the Senate. In the days following the overturning of Roe and fifty years of established rights,
- Sen. Mitch McConnell [asserted](#), “the three biggest issues this fall will be inflation, crime, and open borders.” And again named the supposed “open border” as a top three issue in a [tweet](#) on November 2, 2022, while downplaying voters’ concerns about the GOP’s attacks on democracy.
- On September 6, 2022, the then House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy [pitched](#) his “Commitment to America,” and bid for the majority in the House as a “choice

between an open border or a secure border.” The GOP’s nativist narrative was at the core of McCarthy’s plan, sending out a [memo](#) to members asking them to hold press conferences at the border and local events to push the false fentanyl attack.

- In August, as the general election season kicked off, Tucker Carlson [argued](#) that Republicans should run “on illegal immigration and crime,” describing them as two issues that “threaten the existence of our society.” Carlson pointed to Blake Masters in Arizona, and Joe Kent in Washington as models other Republican campaigns should emulate. And the [following night](#) in August, Tucker had Stephen Miller on to argue the same point that doubling down on nativism was the only path to victory.
- Former Republican House majority leader, Newt Gingrich, predicted in mid-September that Blake Masters would win the Arizona Senate race in a [Newsweek](#) op-ed claiming the nativist attacks would be key to a Masters’ victory. Gingrich claimed the border was [Arizona incumbent Senator] “Kelly’s greatest vulnerability.”

The GOP backed these predictions up with massive spending and daily efforts through their candidates, elected officials, political organizations and superPACs. This included the big four, the National Republican Senatorial Committee ([NRSC](#)), the Senate Leadership Fund ([SLF](#)), the

Congressional Leadership Fund ([CLF](#)), and the National Republican Congressional Committee ([NRCC](#)), all of which ran nativist attack ads, all across the country.

Clearly spending tens of millions of dollars, if not more, on anti-immigrant attack ads, the GOP made a serious investment in this line of attack. America’s Voice [identified](#) 3962 unique pieces of anti-immigrant paid communications in the 2022 election cycle. These ran across 278 federal or statewide races and 86 percent of federal battleground races that saw at least one nativist piece of paid communication.

These paid communications include TV, digital, and radio ads, email and SMS solicitations, and various forms of print advertising. Some of these ads aired hundreds of times with millions of Americans viewing them, while others were micro-targeted to a small number of fundraising targets. Republican campaigns started running anti-immigrant ads from the very start of their primary campaigns all the way through the general election.

The GOP nativist paid communications focused on a handful of interconnected narrative lines of attack that were largely divorced from factual reality. America’s Voice found:

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- ➔ **Over 940 pieces of paid communications that use the phrase “border crisis,” and over 1,110 paid communications that featured Trump’s wall, either communicating support for the wall or using it as a backdrop.** Both were used to send easy signals to their base, but are notably absent of real policy substance.
- ➔ **Over 610 pieces of paid communications that use an “open borders” attack line.** Despite the fact that [the border is not, in fact, open](#), nor does the White House or Democrats support any such policies. No matter how often the GOP repeats, this attack line will not make it true. In reality, over the last 30 years, the Border Patrol budget has [increased](#) tenfold, and the number of agents has [increased](#) fivefold. The Biden administration continued that pattern [requesting](#) \$97 billion for DHS in FY 2023, which included billions of dollars for border security and interior immigration enforcement. DHS [estimates](#) that FY 2012 was the first time the Border Patrol apprehended most people crossing the border, while [CBP reports](#) that in FY 2021, Border Patrol agents “reache[d] a detection site in a timely manner” 96.9% of the time, the highest rate recorded to date. Meanwhile, net migration has [dropped](#) significantly from 2016 to 2021.
- ➔ **Over 600 paid communications that falsely equate the issue of illicit drugs and immigration, largely around opioids like fentanyl.** Fentanyl, while a serious issue, is [not an immigration issue](#). Fentanyl is [trafficked through legal ports of entry \(POEs\) by US citizens](#), not by desperate people facing steep odds and a dangerous crossing who are seeking out U.S. authorities to whom they can surrender themselves while asking for asylum. While the attacks blamed Democrats’ handling of the border for the dramatic spike in fentanyl, this problem also [did not start with the Biden administration](#). And a deep-dive series from the Washington Post titled “CARTEL Rx Fentanyl’s Deadly Surge” [noted](#): “President Donald Trump told Americans that a wall along the border with Mexico would stop the torrent of drugs. But nearly all the fentanyl entering the United States passes through official border crossings – not through the deserts and mountains.” Underscoring the disingenuousness of this line of attack, most Republicans voted against the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which included \$430 million to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the construction and modernization of land ports of entry. Improvements like [“multi-energy portal”](#) screening technology would increase the ability for illicit narcotics seizures at the nation’s borders without significantly impacting the massive amount of legal trade that runs through those same POEs.
- ➔ **Identified over 700 examples of Republicans amplifying the white nationalist “invasion” and “replacement” conspiracy, including 80 races for federal or statewide elections as well as the top GOP PACs.** An absurd but dangerous white nationalist conspiracy theory that moved into the mainstream of the Republican party in the ‘22 midterm cycle, fully detailed in the next section.

Prominent code words of past cycles continued to appear in some of the paid communications but were less prominent this cycle. For example, America’s Voice found around 160 paid communications that use the pejorative “amnesty” and around 110 that fear-mongered about so-called “sanctuary cities.” Both dog-whistles have been more prominent in cycles past.



Katie Hobbs ad screenshot May 4, 2022 AZ Gov.



MAGA Inc. ad screenshot Oct. 10, 2022 GA Senate



Adam Laxalt ad screenshot Sept. 21, 2022 NV Senate

Republicans pushed out their anti-immigrant attacks throughout the cycle as a prominent message up to their closing arguments. In an analysis of the last two weeks of the midterms, the [Wesleyan Media Project](#) found that 28.6% of Republican Senate, 11.1% of Republican House, and 11.3% of Republican Governors campaign TV ads pushed their anti-immigrant attack lines.

While America's Voice message tracking project did not track spending data, reporting suggests Republicans likely spent hundreds of millions of dollars on their nativist messaging strategy. From Labor Day to late October, the [Washington Post](#) reported that Republicans spent \$27 million on immigration and border issues. The [New York Times](#) reported that from October to the beginning of November, "Republicans have poured nearly \$38.3 million into more than 380 television ads focused on border security and immigration." Data published by Third Way [found](#) that in the top 8 Senate races, the GOP spent over \$115 million on "public safety, crime, and immigration" related ads.

Beyond their paid communications, the GOP and their allies in right-wing media made their nativist narrative a regular and consistent part of their daily communications. An [analysis](#) of 350 Twitter accounts

from top GOP elected officials, viable Republican candidates, and top GOP political operatives from May through October, Republicans put out an average of about 2,500 Tweets a month with anti-immigrant messages. For context, Republicans were [nine times](#) more likely to mention the border than abortion. The [analysis](#) of these accounts from the entire year found that they mentioned the border more than inflation and crime combined.

An analysis from the Immigration Hub [found](#) that right-wing media aided Republicans' efforts to elevate their nativist narrative averaging around 4,000 negative mentions of immigration in right-wing media a month in the five months leading up to the election. For example, Fox News helped push the GOP's pernicious and false fentanyl narrative about the border heavily in the lead-up to the election. As Phillip Bump wrote for the [Washington Post](#): "In the months before the midterm elections, for example, Fox News's coverage of fentanyl increased dramatically. . . Fox News commentators sought to tie fentanyl deaths to Biden's border policies. . . Fox News mentioned fentanyl nearly twice as often in September and October as it did in December and January. Most of the time, those mentions were in the context of the border."

It is also critical to note that this massive investment from Republicans to demagogue immigration and the border went almost entirely unanswered by the Democrats in the cycle. Almost all the [paid media](#) to provide a counter message to the GOP's nativist narrative from Democrats came from Mark Kelly's Arizona Senate reelection campaign. When asked, Democrats largely had a consistent [both/and response](#), stressing the need for both reform to our immigration system, including pathways to citizenship for our undocumented neighbors who call the U.S. home, and the need for reforms at the border for a safe, orderly, and fair process for asylum seekers. However, Democrats largely focused their time and treasure on other issues, largely leaving the GOP nativist message strategy to stand on its own merit. And as detailed below, the GOP strategy failed to deliver.

MAGA PRIMARIES & WHITE NATIONALISM

Throughout the Trump years, the GOP base was radicalized as it gorged itself on a steady diet of xenophobic fear-mongering. In the 2022 midterms, Republican candidates across the country competed for the loyalty of that radicalized base to prove they were the true nativist in the race. The escalating rhetoric in an ongoing call-and-response from the base and leading GOP voices has paved a downward spiral of extremism. Pushing each other further to the extremes on the issue, many, including the third-ranking House Republican, Elise Stefanik, adopted white nationalist talking points and conspiracies. This escalating rhetoric demagoguing migrants helped lead to either extreme general election candidates or candidates who took extreme positions. While not the sole cause of MAGA extremism in the general, nativism nevertheless played a critical role in the primaries. Driven by Stephen Miller and many others, this MAGA extremism drove straight through the general election.

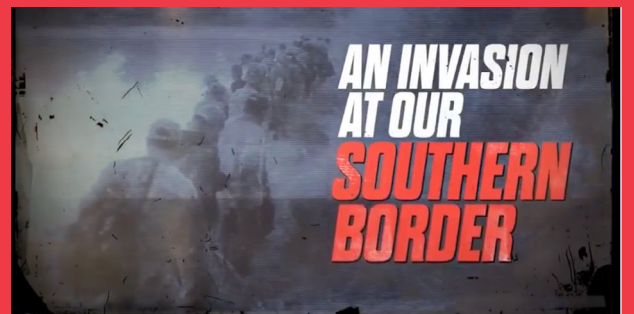
This descent into extremism is bad politics, as detailed in the following section, and fuels the threat of domestic terrorist attacks and the assault on American democracy. While the anti-immigrant attacks are not new, the 2022 midterms marked the ascent of white nationalist talking points to an organizing principle for the mainstream of the Republican party. Understanding this turn in the GOP is critical to contextualize the role of the nativist messaging strategy in 2022 and the underlying threat of this electoral strategy beyond horse-race political calculations.

There are three parts of the equation driving the descent of nativist extremists inside the GOP that give important context to how and why the GOP adopted a white nationalist orientation towards immigration: (1) internal competition (2) political expediency and relevance, (3) and committed nativists with sway in the party and megaphones in the right-wing media.

The 2022 midterms saw several highly competitive primaries for Senate, House, and Governor seats, and nativist attacks were a feature of most of the races. Nearly all the viable Republican candidates competed to position themselves to the right of each other on immigration and the border, attacking their opponents as being insufficiently nativist and positioning the most extreme rhetoric when attacking Democrats on the issue. Serious policy solutions were largely absent; commitments to finish the ineffectual wall were common and typical. The reforms that were proffered were focused on cruelty and chaos and closing off paths for legal migration. The attacks against fellow Republicans generally revolved around accusations of supporting “amnesty” or being insufficiently tough on border security. But the



Karoline Leavitt ad screenshot Aug. 18, 2022
NH-01



CLF ad screenshot Aug. 17, 2022

competition to dehumanize immigrants as attacks at Democrats rapidly developed into adopting white nationalist talking points.

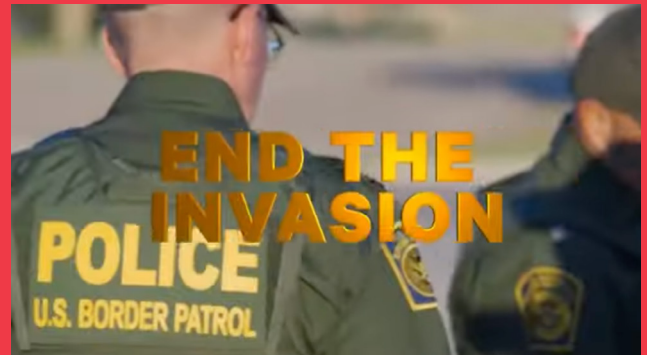
Months before Biden was even elected, some of the loudest nativist voices and anti-immigrant hate groups were already blaming Biden for an increase in migration. In a telling example in August 2020, the hard-right activist with ties to hate groups and the former Acting ICE Director, Tom Homan, went on [Fox News](#) to blame an increase in border apprehensions on Biden. In November, 2022, Homan [said](#) on Fox, “The cartels are celebrating...The border numbers are already going up because they think Joe Biden is going to be the president... ‘It’s a Biden effect. It’s already happening.’” By December 2020, leading Republicans were actively plotting to turn the anticipated increase in regional migration into a political attack. On the day Biden was sworn into office, the hate group Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) released a press release about the “Biden Border Crisis.” By early March 2021, Republicans had fully adopted the hate group’s framing as their

own, with the influential Republican Study Committee sending out a [memo](#) to their members encouraging them to use the #BidenBorderCrisis. As the tagline took hold in the party, Republican candidates looked for even more hyperbolic rhetoric to differentiate themselves, with dozens of Republicans turning to the white nationalist replacement and invasion rhetoric.

Republicans began invoking versions of the anti-Semitic white nationalist Great Replacement Theory – an [old lie dressed up in new rhetoric](#) that falsely asserts that non-white migration from the global south to the north represents a civilizational threat to which a cabal of Jews, or Democrats, or elites, are facilitating an invasion of inherently pliable third-world (non-white) migrants to usurp democracy by replacing the power of “real” or white voters with fraudulent non-white voters. The language of a so-called migrant “invasion” is inexorably tied to the Great Replacement Theory. The subtext is not subtle – the dangerous “other” is invading us so they can replace us and must be stopped.

This invasion and replacement conspiracy has repeatedly been the motivating inspiration for repeated acts of political violence and domestic terrorism. It was chanted in the streets of [Charlottesville](#) in 2017, posted online before a man murdered 11 in [Pittsburgh](#) in 2018, shared in a racist screed before the murder in [Poway](#) and the murder of 23 in [El Paso](#) in 2019, believed by those who attacked the [Capitol](#) in 2021, and copied by the gunman who killed ten people in [Buffalo](#) in May of 2022.

In spite of the direct link to deadly acts of racist terrorism, the GOP embraced the rhetoric. The conspiracy was part of the midterm strategy. This adoption was not just of the fringes of the



Blake Masters ad screenshot June 17, 2023
AZ Senate



Mike Collins ad screenshot June 7, 2023
GA-10

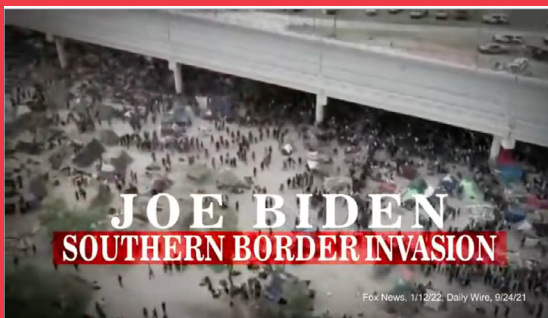
party but throughout the party's leadership and main party organs. The official Republican National Committee's Twitter account [employed](#) the rhetoric. The largest superPAC connected to Republican House leadership, the Congressional Leadership Fund ([CLF](#)), and the Republicans Governors Association ([RGA](#)) ran ads that deployed the invasion rhetoric.

Leading Republican elected officials embraced the white nationalist rhetoric or turned a blind eye. After the terrorist attack in Buffalo, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) pointedly [refused](#) to condemn the great replacement theory. Meanwhile, Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) [promised](#) to reinstate Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) to Committee assignments, a promise he kept even after they [openly attended a white nationalist conference](#).

But Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) illustrates this turn to white nationalist conspiracies for political expediency and relevance. A member of the [Gang of Eight](#) and once a Republican champion of sensible immigration reforms, Sen. Graham warned of a so-called "invasion" of migrants on the Fox News Channel in [July](#) 2021. He followed up with [fundraising ads](#) that pushed the same racist fiction.



Kari Lake ad screenshot July 6, 2022 AZ Gov.



RGA ad screenshot Feb. 23, 2022 GA Gov.



Lindsey Graham ad screenshot Sept. 24, 2021

There is no clearer example of adopting white nationalist rhetoric and other forms of extremism than Elise Stefanik. First elected to Congress in 2014, she positioned herself as a young [moderate](#), even opposing the strident nativism of the Trump administration early on and downplaying his wall as "unrealistic." But after the 2020 election and assault on the Capitol, Stefanik saw a [path to House leadership](#) in embracing election denialism and downplaying the January 6 attack. Stefanik ousted Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY) for the third-ranking House GOP leadership post and, from that new position of power, ran [Facebook ads](#) peddling a version of white nationalist Great Replacement Theory.

Over half a million Facebook users saw her ads over two days. And after facing [significant pushback](#), Stefanik refused to back away from the white nationalist and invasion conspiracy and made it a regular part of her messaging. She promoted the deadly fiction in a speech on the House floor in the days leading up to the terrorist attack in Buffalo, New York. After the racist screed from the gunman pointed to the same white nationalist lies Stefanik was peddling, she didn't back off, but again doubled down. She even sent out a [fundraising email](#) just two days after the attack claiming that she was the true victim for being questioned about her rhetoric.

Once GOP leadership embraced the white nationalist rhetoric, it should not be surprising that other

Republicans followed suit. However, it is critical to note that from their positions of power or large megaphones, the Republicans employing this rhetoric are engaging in a form of stochastic terrorism - when public figures engage in dehumanizing rhetoric that points to an out-group as a serious threat and seemingly random but targeted violence is then directed at the targets of the dehumanization. The Republicans who push this invasion and replacement conspiracy and those who remain silent are in part responsible for that violence. Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, illustrates this idea. She [said](#), "there are people who gin up an atmosphere in which other people act, and if you don't recognize that creating this atmosphere as part of what's enabling it then you might think you are not guilty. We really need to find a way to convince the people who are creating this atmosphere that they are the one holding the gun and someone else is pulling the trigger."

The vocal hard-right members inside the party and many influential voices with access to massive platforms have pushed the party to adopt the white nationalist conspiracy. Members like Rep. Andy Biggs (R-AZ), Rep. Jodey Arrington (R-TX), and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) were in ruby-red districts and not in competitive districts, but campaigned to actively push the party further to the extremes. But there were also outside think tanks like the Center for American Renewal that repeatedly publicly criticized Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott for not more fully adopting the invasion conspiracy. Or leading activists in the party like Turning Points USA founder Charlie Kirk who used his February 2022 CPAC speech to call for adoption of the invasion conspiracy theory to be a litmus test for Republican candidates to receive support in the primaries. There was also Tucker Carlson, who used his significant platform to mainstream the replacement theory and push candidates to campaign on the white nationalist themes. And Stephen Miller, whose ascent and continued relevance inside the party is a clear marker of the commitment to a white nationalist orientation, especially towards immigration and border issues.

While the invasion and replacement conspiracy is absurd on its face, a not insignificant number of Americans believe a version of it. In January 2023, Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) [found](#) that "three in ten Americans (30%) completely or mostly agree with the statement "immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background." Most Republicans believe in a version of the white nationalist conspiracy. The PRRI poll found: "Majorities of Republicans (55%) and white evangelical Protestants (51%) believe that immigrants are invading the United States; a majority of Americans who most trust conservative media outlets (70%) also believe in this replacement theory." Additional [research](#) into the conspiracy found similar levels of support.

The pervasiveness of this belief is not only concerning because of the violence it inspires, but it is also a threat to American democracy. There is also a clear path between embracing 'replacement' lies and the lie of fraudulent elections. These lies lay the groundwork for destabilizing American democracy through the myth of an organized force of illegitimate votes. It fits within a broader campaign to create the pretext to deny the results of unfavorable election outcomes and employ a range of voter suppression tactics under the perverse guise of protecting the democratic process the lies seek to undermine. The more that Republican candidates build their campaigns around the lie that "Democrats have a secret plan to import millions of votes," the more incentive there is to blame that fiction for Republican losses. While neither is true, these lies become self-reinforcing and dependent on one another. This lie, if left unaddressed, erodes the very foundation of American democracy. Nor is this purely hypothetical. The twin lies of a fraudulent election and white replacement

drove the insurrectionists and were at the heart of the January 6 attack. An analysis from the University of Chicago's CPOST following the attack on the capital [found](#), "Great Replacement fears [were the] most important driver of the insurrectionist movement."

Embracing the extremism, the GOP exacerbated these threats and had little to show for it after the polls closed.

GOP Anti-LGBT Attack Ads & Political Violence

It is also critical to note that extremist rhetoric from the GOP in the 2022 midterms was not limited to immigrants. Often the attacks were intertwined or came one right after the next, blurring the hate together. Over the past several years, our ad tracking project identified a concerning and noticeable uptick in anti-LGBT attacks and dog-whistles. In the 2022 cycle, America's Voice [cataloged](#) over 230 pieces of paid communication with anti-LGBT attacks. The attacks largely focused on transgender Americans, particularly trans youth, an already vulnerable population. In addition, some Republicans launched [attacks on drag queens](#) who have become another go-to for anti-LGBT+ ads. An analysis from the Human Rights Campaign found: "Extremist candidates and their well-funded allies have spent at least \$50 million in political ads spreading disinformation and attacking LGBTQ+ people."

Horribly but not unpredictably, violence has followed these political attacks on the LGBTQ community. Last June, 31 members of the white nationalist group, Patriot Front, were arrested for [planning a riot](#) at a Pride event in Northern Idaho. According to [NPR](#), "Members of the far-right nationalist Proud Boys stormed a [Drag Queen] story time event in California's Bay Area this summer and confronted patrons outside events in Maryland and North Carolina." There has been increased vandalism and threats across the country aimed at venues that welcome the queer community and medical professionals who treat young LGBT + patients. And, in October, there was a mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Shortly after the 2022 elections, the [Department of Homeland Security added](#) the LGBTQI+ community to its list of potential targets of domestic terrorism.

There was a similar trend in 2020, led by then-President Trump, who conflated attacks on China and the COVID-19 virus. This xenophobic dog-whistling around the virus may have contributed to the rise in Asian-American hate crimes during that time. Early in the pandemic, the FBI warned local law enforcement agencies that "hate crime incidents against Asian-Americans likely will surge across the United States" as people falsely associate them with the spread of COVID-19. At the height of the GOP's amplification of these xenophobic tropes, Asian Americans were suffering, on average, around one hundred attacks every single day. In August 2020, Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, released a toolkit to encourage her colleagues to avoid inciting anti-Asian sentiment and racism when talking about the COVID-19 pandemic and China. Her counsel was largely ignored, mainly by Trump, who spent millions on television ads that, according to the [New York Times](#), "repeat[ed] xenophobic tropes regarding the Chinese origin of the coronavirus" while frequently invoking the same kind of incendiary rhetoric at his campaign rallies.

THE INVESTMENT IN NATIVISM FAILED

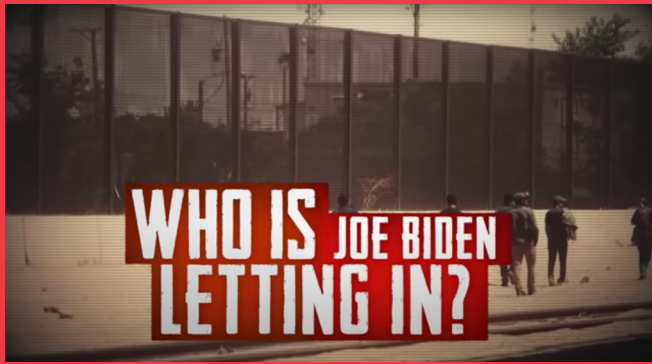
Republicans made a massive investment into a nativist electoral strategy, and it failed to deliver. Clearly spending tens of millions of dollars, if not more, on anti-immigrant attack ads, the GOP made a serious investment in this line of attack. The nativism adopted by Republicans this cycle was a part of the overall MAGA extremism that voters rejected. While the issue may have worked for their base, outside of it, voters were largely unconvinced. And while the GOP's nativist messaging strategy is not solely responsible for Republicans' lackluster showing, a strategy that was given such significant investment should shoulder a great deal of blame.

The GOP's nativist messaging strategy failed on multiple fronts. Outside their own base, issues of the border and immigration were far from a top concern for voters as they cast their ballots. Whether it was the committed nativists like Stephen Miller who helped mainstream a white nationalist orientation to the border inside the GOP or those who adopted the orientation as a path to power, like Elise Stefanik, their strategy failed to deliver in key battleground races. The extremism, including on immigration and border issues, backfired in multiple races for Republicans. Nor has their lengthy and expensive demagoguery meaningfully eroded the solid majority of Americans' support for their immigrant neighbors and desire for safe and orderly migration solutions.

Regarding voter motivation, the GOP's nativism failed to resonate outside their core set of voters. [Across the board](#) in the public opinion polling in the run-up to the election, immigration and border issues hardly registered as a top concern outside the GOP base. Gallup [polling](#) from late October 2022 described immigration as a "third-tier" issue in the year's midterms. The New York Times/Siena poll released on October 17 found similar results. In a question that asked: "What do you think is the MOST important problem facing the country today?" Among the totals of likely voters, immigration tied for fourth (5%) with abortion (5%). When broken down by party identification, only 1% of Democrats name immigration, while 12% of Republicans named immigration behind economy and inflation. For independents, the issue dropped to the seventh most likely response (4%) tied with climate change (4%). The massive [2022 Midterm Election Voter Poll](#), which surveyed more than 12,200 Americans who actually voted in the 2022 elections, similarly found that immigration and border issues ranked seventh when compared to what most voters said was their most important issue that they wanted Congress and the President to address. So, despite being a core message for the GOP throughout the cycle, they failed to make it a decisive issue in the election.

The failure of the GOP nativist messaging strategy at the ballot box, however, is best understood through two leading Republicans, Stephen Miller and Rep. Elise Stefanik. Miller is a true believer, while Stefanik adopted the strategy for political expediency, but both ended up promoting a white nationalist orientation to the border and were cheerleaders for the nativist strategy. They were also some of election nights' biggest losers tied to many of the key battleground losses.

Stephen Miller is a former Senior Advisor to President Donald Trump and a leading character in bringing white nationalism into the mainstream of the GOP. He has been banging the nativist drum for a [long time](#), convinced his zero-some apocalyptic vision of immigration will rally the GOP base, persuade independents, and depress Democratic turnout. In the '22 midterm cycle, Miller's strategy was given a platform that major candidates across the country adopted.



Citizens For Sanity ad screenshot Oct. 28, 2022



Citizens for Sanity ad screenshot Oct. 17, 2022
AZ Senate



Citizens for Sanity ad screenshot Oct. 17, 2022



Dave McCormick ad screenshot May 2, 2022
PA Senate Primary

Miller and [his aligned organization](#) themselves were massive players this cycle, likely spending close to \$100 million on vile ads in line with the aggressive nativist election strategy. Their main vehicle was Citizens for Sanity, which ran over [\\$51 million](#) in TV commercials in October. These included aggressive [nativist and racist ads](#) during the [Major League Baseball playoffs](#) and World Series that [shocked](#) and [unsettled](#) many viewers. Citizens for Sanity also spent additional millions on [digital ads](#), billboards, and mailers, hoping their brand of dog-whistle racism would help flip the Senate to Republicans. They concentrated their efforts in Senate races in Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire, but Democrats won all those races.

But no one embodied the Miller philosophy of campaigning more than Arizona Senate candidate Blake Masters. He made nativism the centerpiece of his campaign, Masters promoted the deadly white nationalist “invasion” and “replacement” conspiracies as a central part of his campaign. Meanwhile, Miller’s wife, Katie Miller, was the Masters’ campaign’s top spokeswoman. And in their last closing ad, the top Masters aligned superPAC, Saving Arizona, even parroted the same “stop the insanity” tagline of Stephen Miller’s ads. But the nativist strategy failed, and Masters ended up losing the purple state by 5 points.

In the key battleground Pennsylvania Senate Race, Miller’s hand again reveals how the nativist strategy is far from a winning one. Miller was a top and early advisor to Republican primary candidate David McCormick. Following the Miller playbook, McCormick and his allies ran hard-right, spending tens of millions of dollars on nativist, racist, and transphobic attack ads similar to the ones Citizens for Sanity would run a few months later. With Miller’s help, the primary revolved around the accusation of being a “Republican In Name Only” – a RINO – with the candidate’s veracity towards immigrants being a dominant way to signal to a radicalized GOP base that they were deserving of their support.

Miller's advice to fully embrace nativism did not win McCormick the nomination but pulled Mehmet Oz hard right on the issue. In one telling example, Oz sent out a fundraising email to supporters in mid-July that embraced the deadly white nationalist conspiracy about a so-called migrant "invasion."

New to the third-ranking GOP House leadership position, Stefanik was clearly trying to make her mark on the party in these midterms. And despite Stefanik's deadly white nationalist rhetoric, Republican candidates eagerly embraced her support. She made lofty predictions about coming Republican victories, but the red wave brought to shore by her candidates never materialized.

While her sharp turn to the hard right, election denialism, embracing deadly conspiracy theories and white nationalist tropes may have elevated her own star within the GOP, it did not carry the candidates she backed to victory. In 28 of the 36 battleground districts where she endorsed candidates, the Stefanik-endorsed candidates went down to defeat - that's a 78% loss rate. In total, Elise Stefanik endorsed 56 candidates, 43 of these candidates lost. In races rated a toss-up by political forecasters, 20 of 23 of Stefanik's candidates lost.

The investment into nativism and the embrace of the white nationalist conspiracy about "replacement" and "invasion" championed by Miller and Stefanik did not pay off and may have been a liability for general election candidates. And as Greg Sargent of the *Washington Post* [notes](#), "Invasion language did little for Republicans," writing that "Republicans have long enjoyed a presumption of a major advantage on this issue, but aside from Trump's 2016 victory, it keeps failing to deliver ... GOP confidence that President Biden's 'disastrous open border' would spark major electoral repudiation, giving Republicans space to hyper-radicalize their base around the issue, has proved wrong."

The overall MAGA extremism, including its dangerous strain of nativism and white nationalism, was a major reason why Republicans underperformed in the 2022 midterms. This extremism acted more as a costly liability instead of a political asset. America's Voice identified [over 20 examples](#) of gubernatorial, Senate, House, and other races where MAGA extremism, including Republicans' radicalization on immigration, turned a winnable race for Republicans into an electoral defeat. For example:

- **WA-03: Joe Kent** - the political cost of MAGA extremism is personified by Kent, who won a surprising victory over Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler in the Republican

Stefanik is a Loser

28 of 36

Stefanik-endorsed
battleground
candidates lost

78%

loss rate

43 of 56

Stefanik-endorsed
candidates lost

primary, turning the race into a competitive one. Kent had close and [prominent ties](#) to leading white nationalists and [made](#) the deadly “invasion” conspiracy a key part of his campaign. Going into election night, Kent was supposed to have a huge advantage given the partisan lean of the district, but it’s clear his extremism was a real barrier to a GOP win here.

- **OH-09: J.R. Majewski** - the definition of a MAGA Republican, gestured at political violence in his [opening campaign ad](#), echoed the deadly white nationalist conspiracy about a so-called migrant invasion, and attended the Jan. 6 rally. Majewski’s extremism turned this competitive district the GOP eyed as a top pickup opportunity into a 14-point loss.
- **PA-08: Jim Bognet** – an anti-immigrant zealot and protégé of [Lou Barletta](#) (a former Congressman and Mayor of Hazelton who is a celebrated anti-immigrant zealot), Bognet ran hard on nativism, [convinced](#) it would be the decisive issue in his election. Bognet employed “invasion” rhetoric and lost in this battleground district for the second time after [making](#) his extremism on immigration the centerpiece of his campaign.

Far from a boon for their electoral prospects, most voters were worried about the extremism and white nationalism from Republicans leading to violence and from the growing threat of authoritarianism. The massive 2022 Midterm Election Voter [Poll](#) found:

- ➔ **57%** of voters expressed worry that “extreme Republicans and white nationalists are promoting hate and attacks against minorities and immigrants.” The poll also tested respondents’ level of worry on a series of subjects. The number of those worried about the promotion of hate and attacks against minorities and immigrants jumped another 7 points (64%) when a similar question was asked without the partisan indicators.
- ➔ **63%** of voters expressed worry that the “political system of the United States is failing and there is a decent chance that we will no longer have a functioning democracy within the next 10 years.”

Despite all the investment in demagoguery and anti-immigrant attacks, a strong majority of Americans continue to support their immigrant neighbors, a safe and orderly approach to migration, and a pathway for citizenship for the undocumented who already call the United States home. So even on terms outside of the immediate electoral content, their nativist message failed. The massive 2022 Midterm Election Voter Poll found [durable](#) pro-immigrant sentiment. [The poll](#) found:

- ➔ **68-32% support for Dreamers.** Described as “Passing a law right after the election to provide permanent legal status to DACA recipients and Dreamers, undocumented immigrants who were brought to the country as children but raised in the U.S.” Support for Dreamers was 82-18% among Latino voters.
- ➔ **63-37% support for legal status and citizenship for undocumented immigrants.** Described as, “Creating permanent legal status and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.” Support was 77-23% among Latino voters.

➔ **57-43% support for a balanced approach to immigration policy instead of the “enforcement and border-first” approach:** Voters were asked to choose between two policy options: “Our immigration policy should focus on enforcement and border security first, including deporting those here illegally, cracking down on abuse of our asylum laws, and finishing the border wall” versus “Our immigration policy should focus on a healthy, growing economy for us all. We need a humane, orderly, and functional immigration system that removes unnecessary barriers for working people who want to contribute, establish a path to citizenship for hardworking immigrants, and ensures a safe and orderly border.” Overall, voters supported the latter balanced approach by a 57-43% margin and Latino voters supported the balanced approach by a 71-29% margin.

➔ **By a 60-40% margin, voters support candidates who favor access to asylum:** Respondents were asked if they preferred backing “Candidate A, who favors allowing people to legally request asylum at the southern border,” or “Candidate B, who opposes allowing people to legally request asylum at the southern border.” Overall, respondents preferred Candidate A by a 60-40% margin, including a 69-31% margin among Latino voters.

Beyond public sentiment, voters in Arizona and Massachusetts approved ballot measures that supported their undocumented neighbors. In Arizona, a hotbed for the nativist attacks, voters [approved](#) Proposition 308, which will grant non-citizen residents of Arizona eligibility for in-state tuition at Arizona state universities and colleges. Joining 22 other states with similar provisions, the success of the Arizona ballot measure is more evidence of the rapidly decreasing electoral efficacy of nativist positions in the state, as [in 2006](#), Arizona voters affirmed the exact opposite position of Proposition 308.

In Massachusetts, voters approved Question 4 (The Work and Family Mobility Act), rejecting the nativist challenge to a law passed earlier in the year to allow immigrants without permanent status to [apply for a state-issued ID](#). The success of these ballot measures provides evidence that both undermines the efficacy of the GOP’s nativist messaging strategy and signals support for common sense reforms.

The 2022 midterms are also far from the first time that the nativist electoral strategy failed. Republicans have been running the nativist first electoral strategy since it helped deliver the narrow electoral college win in 2016, but while Trump was able to bring more voters off the sidelines, this strategy has either directly backfired or failed to deliver the critical wins in the past several cycles.

In 2020, Stephen Miller [told](#) Reuters that Joe Biden’s immigration stance would prove to be “a massive political vulnerability” in the 2020 campaign. Between April and June 2020, the Trump campaign [spent more](#) on immigration ads on Facebook than on any other issue and [our 2020 ad tracking project](#) and report found that at the presidential level, Trump ran 157 unique ads that employed xenophobic messaging. Yet Biden won 306 electoral college votes and won by more than 7 million votes, while the American public broke ever more sharply in a pro-immigrant direction.

In 2019, red-state Republicans lost the gubernatorial mansion in Kentucky and failed to flip the seat in Louisiana after adopting the nativist playbook, making xenophobic fear-mongering a [cornerstone](#) of their respective campaigns.

In 2018, the GOP was fully behind the nativist election strategy. The number of immigration-related TV ads – and the amount of money spent on them – [increased fivefold](#) from 2016 to 2018. [Wesleyan Media Project](#) found that on [Facebook](#), between August 1 and September 30, 23.3 percent of the Republican ads on the digital platform discussed immigration, while 80 percent of Republican TV ads in the cycle moved their nativist message. The Miller-led strategy of focusing on immigration and migrant caravans backfired on Republicans, who saw Democrats win by the largest midterm margin in American history.

In 2017, Steve Bannon [claimed](#) Virginia gubernatorial candidate Ed Gillespie's embrace of aggressive nativist dog-whistling would be key to his victory. [It wasn't](#). He lost by 9 points. [Research](#) also found that Gillespie's xenophobic ads backfired among all groups who saw the ad, including white voters.

LOOKING FORWARD

Following yet another failed investment into nativism, the leading wing of the Republican Party appears to be learning the exact wrong lesson from the election, doubling down on their distorted and dangerous border narratives. But despite the losses, the incentives inside the GOP have only moved further towards extremism. And regardless of its effects on the country or their general election prospects, the nativist extremism is now a core organizing principle of the GOP. A point that the GOP has clearly demonstrated in the weeks and months following the election.

For the GOP, all the apocalyptic rhetoric is just a political show. Uninterested in reforms because they want the issue to demagogue, most elected Republicans will demand action and then scuttle any legislative proposal. In a telling example, Republicans quickly rejected a [lame-duck bi-partisan reform effort](#) after the election that would have seeded significant ground to the stated Republican position in exchange for the wildly popular policy of creating a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers. As Washington Post columnist Philip Bump succinctly [wrote](#) about the dynamic in the weeks following the 2022 election:

“The truth is that Republicans’ desire to Do Something is severely limited. What they want more than anything else is an issue they can use to anger and terrify their base, as they reliably do in almost every election. And the fact that immigration largely failed to produce the results they hoped for in this year’s midterms, just as it did in 2020 and 2018, has not deterred them.”

Rep. Kevin McCarthy's maneuvers for the Speaker's gavel in the initial weeks of 2023 are a prime example of Bump's point. In a clear demonstration of his priorities, one of the first things McCarthy did after Republicans clinched a narrow majority in the house was to stage a press

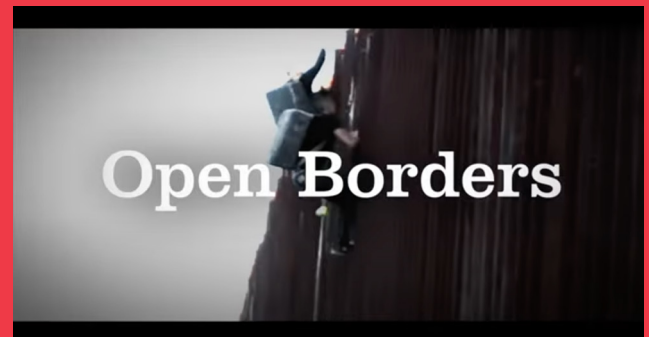
conference at the southern border to propose the sort of nativist political theater he would direct if he became Speaker. At the press conference on November 22, McCarthy floated holding congressional hearings [physically at the border](#) and [promised](#) to pursue near-endless hearings that could include a [sham impeachment of DHS Secretary Mayorkas](#). And in pursuit of a [historically chaotic bid](#) for the Speaker's gavel, McCarthy [invited](#) nonother than the lead cheerleader of the nativist electoral strategy, Stephen Miller, in for a closed-door meeting. Then McCarthy made trades with the most extreme elements in his caucus for their support for the speakership. McCarthy helped leading nativists, and some of the most vocal proponents of the invasion and replacement conspiracy to sit on key committees like Oversight, Judiciary, and Homeland Security. He also promised one of the first bills to be introduced would be an extreme measure that will effectively ban asylum - though it is [unclear](#) if the extreme legislative move will have the necessary [support](#) from Republicans in battleground districts.

Beyond Congressional machinations, the NRSC dropped new tv ads against the two of the most vulnerable Senate Democrats up for reelection in 2024, Sen. John Tester (D-MT) and Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), employing the exact same false nativist narratives. Both [ads](#) attack the Senators for allegedly supporting "open borders" using the same [2016 footage](#) of two men climbing a wall along the U.S./Mexico border and disappearing into Mexico. The Manchin attack also goes on to assert the same false fentanyl narrative. A move that signals something far less than lessons learned, but likely a full retread of the same strategy for 2024.

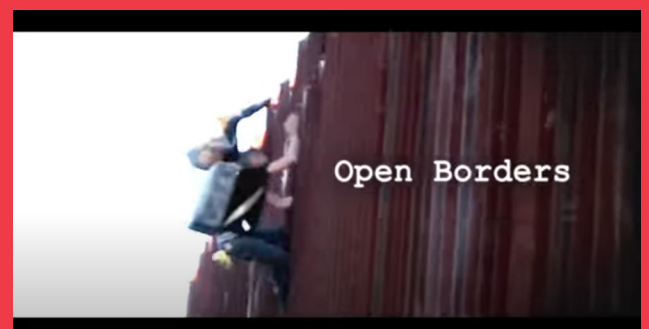
Leading Republican voices have also doubled down on the deadly invasion and replacement conspiracy following the election. On November 15, Texas Governor Greg Abbott made it official state policy by [declaring migrants to be a literal invading force](#). On that same

day, Donald Trump [announced](#) his 2024 presidential bid making multiple references to the deadly lie. Going from describing migrants as drug dealers and rapists in his announcement in 2015 to echoing white nationalist talking points describing migrants as invaders. And one of the loudest voices amplifying and mainstreaming the white nationalist conspiracy theory, Tucker Carlson, used his nightly monologue on [December 19](#) to channel the white nationalist terrorist who attacked El Paso, claiming the city was being invaded. And as dozens of House Republicans continue their push for a [sham impeachment of Secretary Mayorkas](#), they have done so by [claiming](#) the conspiracy to be real.

Republicans' doubling down on the white nationalist conspiracy coincides with persistent warnings from DHS about the present threat of more terrorism inspired by the dehumanizing ideas Republicans are espousing. In a late November 2022 memo, [DHS warned](#) of a "persistent and lethal threat to LGBTQ, Jewish, and migrant communities"



NRSC screenshot Jan. 23, 2023 MT Senate



NRSC screenshot Jan. 23, 2023 WV Senate

by those motivated by violent ideologies. Then on December 28, DHS issued another [warning](#) about threats to migrants and critical infrastructure at the border related to the possible end of Title 42. The memo described the horrifically violent threats they were monitoring online, [including](#) “firearms attacks, the placement of land mines along migration routes, and luring migrants into trailers to poison them with gas.” Just days later, a man was arrested in El Paso threatening a group of migrants with a gun, claiming he was doing it “for America.” Though the incident, thankfully, did not end in bloodshed, it was the latest reminder that the warnings from DHS should not be of idle concern. But tragically, Republicans’ political strategy involves cultivating even more heightened conditions for this type of political violence.

The current leading forces in the GOP are running full speed towards the same nativist electoral strategy that has failed them repeatedly at the ballot box and repeatedly courted deadly political violence. Continuing this current trajectory is not inevitable, but the incentives inside the party make a course correction highly unlikely. Still, it should be clear that the GOP’s investment in nativism is far from a silver bullet and may be a liability.