

2024 REPORT

**Two Years After the Deadly Terror Attack
in Buffalo, the Replacement Theory has
Only Gone More Mainstream**





It has been two years since the domestic terrorist attack in Buffalo, New York, where a white nationalist traveled to a grocery store to target Black Americans, murdering ten people and leaving a community shattered. The mass shooter was inspired by the white nationalist and antisemitic “replacement” and “invasion” conspiracy theory, about a plot to undermine the power of white people. Since then, the Republican Party has increasingly adopted this bigoted conspiracy as their central message on border and immigration issues – and therefore it has become a major electoral message for the GOP in 2024.

MOTIVATED BY WHITE NATIONALIST CONSPIRACY THEORY

The mass murderer admitted his attack was driven by anti-Black racism, and the bigoted screed he left behind pointed to his

obsession with the replacement theory, a false white nationalist and antisemitic conspiracy that holds that Jews and liberal elites are conspiring to facilitate an invasion of non-white foreigners who will replace whites and thereby destroying the nation.

The replacement theory has inspired multiple domestic terrorist attacks over the last decade, including the attacks in El Paso and Pittsburgh, as well as other foiled plots, like the one out of Tennessee where a group of men sought to kick off a civil war by murdering migrants and law enforcement officers along the southern border.

Once confined to the dark corners of the fringes of avowed neo-Nazi and white nationalists, the replacement theory driving the domestic terrorists like the one who attacked Buffalo has been adopted by the GOP electeds, party officials, and candidates.

As the New York Times recently noted: “It was not so long ago that the term invasion had been mostly relegated to the margins of the national immigration debate. Many candidates and political figures tended to avoid the word, which echoed demagoguery in previous centuries targeting Asian, Latino and European immigrants. Few mainstream Republicans dared use it. But now, the word has become a staple of Republican immigration rhetoric.”

THE VICTIMS

The terrorist chose this specific town in this specific location to act out his conspiratorial racist beliefs that the victims were “replacers.”

The Americans killed in the attack had lives and families and histories. A powerful piece from ABC News published last year on the anniversary remembered those who lost their lives in this deadly domestic terrorist attack:

- Ruth Whitfield was returning home from visiting her husband in a nursing home when she stopped by the Tops supermarket to pick up seeds for a garden her son had built her as a Mother’s Day present a year ago, her family told ABC News.
- Roberta Drury was born in Cicero, New York, about 150 miles east of Buffalo, and moved to the city in 2010 after her oldest brother, Christopher Drury, received a bone marrow transplant to treat his

leukemia. She helped her brother run his restaurant, The Dalmatia, and care for his family, her sister Amanda Drury said. She was picking up groceries for Christopher when she was fatally shot, her family said.

- Aaron Salter was working as a security guard and shot at the assailant, Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia told ABC News. But the bullets had no effect due to the bulletproof vest the suspect wore, and the gunman returned fire, striking Salter. Gramaglia described Salter as a “true hero” who undoubtedly saved more lives during the encounter.
- Heyward Patterson was a deacon at the State Tabernacle Church of God in Christ in Buffalo.
- Pearl Young, an Alabama native, spent the final years of her life teaching children as a substitute teacher in the Buffalo School District and was heavily involved in her church community, her sister, Mary Craig, told ABC News.
- Geraldine Talley was one of nine siblings and was “an amazing sister, mother, aunt,” said Chapman-Johnson. “She just was truly an amazing woman.”
- Katherine “Kat” Massey was a civil rights activist who worked tirelessly to improve Buffalo’s Black community, her sister, Barbara Massey Mapps, told ABC News.
- Celestine Chaney, was a mother and grandmother of six. “My mom was in my corner for whatever, for better or worse,” Wayne Jones, Chaney’s only child, told ABC News.



- Margus Morrison was a father of six, who worked as a school bus aide for the Buffalo Public Schools District.
- “He [Andre Mackneil] went to that store to pick up a cake for my little brother because May 14 was my little brother’s birthday. And he turned 3 years old and he didn’t get to celebrate his birthday with his dad because he never came back,” Mackneil’s daughter, Deja Brown, said.

THE AFTERMATH

In the wake of the Buffalo massacre, media outlets pointed out the embrace of the Great Replacement by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), the third ranking House Republican:

The Washington Post: [”Stefanik echoed racist theory allegedly espoused by Buffalo suspect”](#)

The New York Times: [”Racist Attack Spotlights Stefanik’s Echo of Replacement Theory”](#)

NBC News: [“Stefanik's echo of 'great replacement' rhetoric offers clues to her national ambitions – and her changing district”](#)

Rolling Stone: [“High-Ranking Republican Pushes ‘Great Replacement’ Rhetoric Two Days After White Supremacist Mass Shooting”](#)

While Republicans often do not peddle the most explicit antisemitic and racist forms of the replacement theory, they have, with increasing regularity, peddled coded or soft versions of the bigoted conspiracy to arrive at the same destination. Generally, this includes the coded versions of rhetoric associated with the idea there is an intentional plot to facilitate an invasion of non-white migrants to shift the voting power of "real" Americans in favor of Democrats. As an [excellent resource](#) from Human Rights First explains: “Dog whistles for this conspiracy include ‘voter replacement’ or statements claiming increases in border crossings are ‘intentional.’”

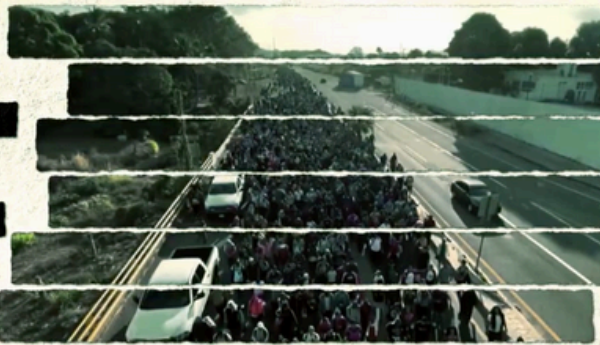
Source: WFW Action Fund

INVASION ON OUR SOUTHERN BORDER

Source: Protect Freedom PAC

**BOB GOOD:
STOP THE
MIGRANT
INVASION**

the invasion



Source: Abrams for OH



DEREK MERRIN
STOP THE INVASION

9TH DISTRICT DEBATE, SANDUSKY REGISTER, 2/27/24



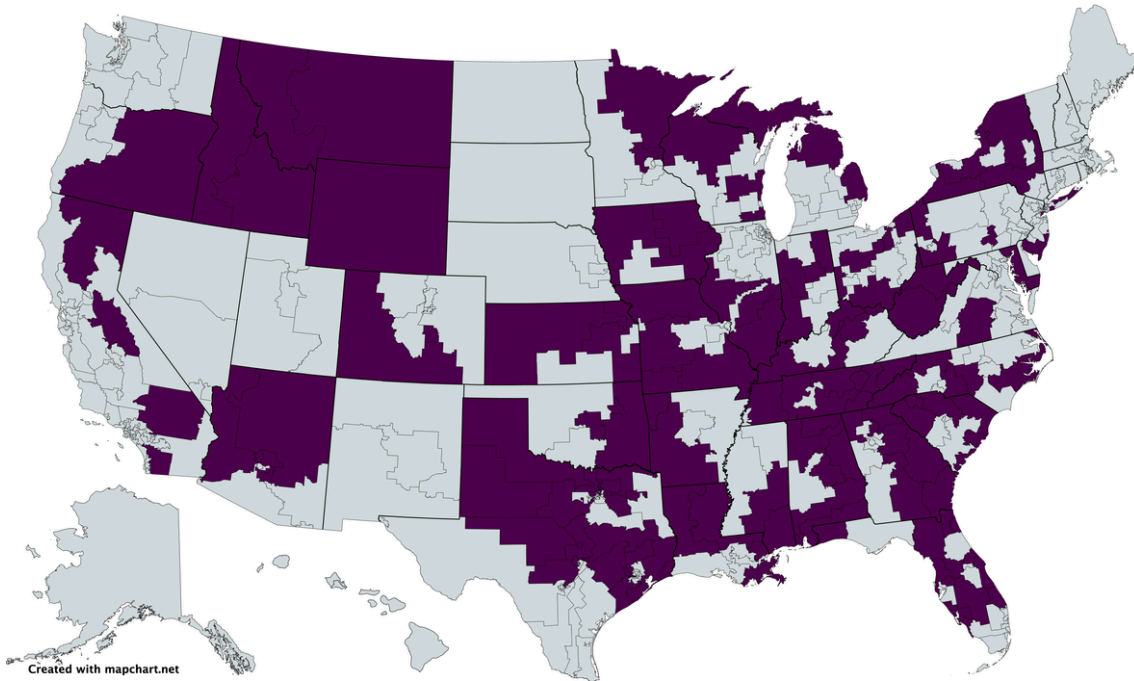


WIDELY ADOPTED AND DISSEMINATED BY REPUBLICAN LEADERS

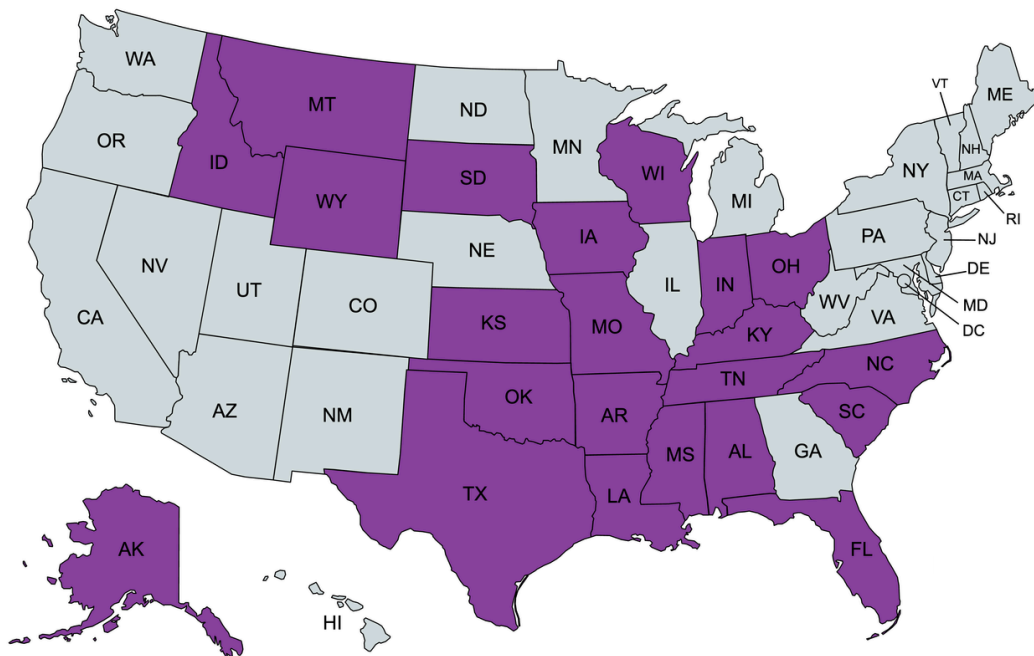
The language of “invasion” and descriptions of migrants as military force have become the most ubiquitous invocation of the replacement theory. Members of the current 118th Congress – the Members of Congress who were elected in November 2022 – have spent their session mainstreaming the same bigoted conspiracy as the Buffalo mass murderer.

- As of April 2024, America’s Voice has identified 165 Members of the 118th Congress employing this rhetoric in their official capacity 584 times, totaling to 1,259 times from the 118th Congress.
- They have used the language 31 times in Congressional hearings and 96 times on the floor of Congress.
- Republican Members of Congress have introduced twelve pieces of legislation that employ the “invasion” conspiracy theory.
- The Republican House Majority invited at least 17 witnesses to Congressional hearings who had a history of promoting the conspiracy theory.
- The Republican House voted to make Rep. Mike Johnson the Speaker of the House after a long public track record of peddling the bigoted conspiracy theory.
- 219 Republicans voted for the Child Deportation Act (H.R. 2), which was promoted by their caucus repeatedly by invoking the conspiracy theory.
- Republican Members also made the conspiracy theory the central driving force behind the sham impeachment of DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.
- Last year, during a House Oversight Committee hearing, Republicans made a fuss about being called out for amplifying this bigoted rhetoric. But when ranking Democrat Jamie Raskin urged his colleagues to denounce this rhetoric by joining him in a bipartisan letter, all 26 Republican members refused.

Representatives that have used the Great Replacement Theory



Senators that have used the Great Replacement Theory



THE THREAT OF DOMESTIC TERROR IS REAL AND LINKED TO WHITE NATIONALISM

The FBI, Attorney General, and Secretary of Homeland Security have all testified that the threat from violent domestic extremists is a leading terrorist concern. In November 2022 and again in December 2022, DHS issued memos warning about threats to migrants and infrastructure at the southern border in response to anti-immigrant-related concerns.

During testimony on Capitol Hill, Secretary Mayorkas repeatedly warned about the threat of domestic terrorism that could be inspired by great replacement “invasion” language. This concern has gone unheeded. He said in response to questioning under oath that when Members of Congress espouse the racist conspiracy theory, “It certainly fuels the threat landscape we encounter.”

A MAINSTAY IN CONGRESS AND ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Notably, Rep. Claudia Tenney, from New York’s 24th Congressional District, used official funds from her office to release a TV ad stating that “the invasion at our southern border is an existential threat.” Rep. Tenney spent over \$131,000 to air that ad in and around the Buffalo media market earlier this year. According to AdImact data, the ad garnered an estimated 5.3M impressions.

Not only have Congressional Republicans fully embraced the dangerous rhetoric that spurred and motivated the Buffalo domestic terrorism, but Republican Governors followed suit. Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared “an invasion under Article I, § 10, Clause 3 to invoke Texas’s constitutional authority to defend and protect itself” from the supposed “invasion taking place at the Texas-Mexico border.” As of 2024, at least sixteen other states including Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Montana, Virginia, South Dakota, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Nebraska, Florida, and Oklahoma have sent National Guards to the southern border under the guise of an “invasion.” A total of twenty-five Republican Governors signed a joint statement to support Texas’s efforts to use the conspiracy to implement draconian anti-immigrant policies, in defiance of long-standing legal precedent.

But Republican members were also peddling the same white nationalist and antisemitic conspiracy theory in the lead-up to the Buffalo attack. We found that in three months leading up to the domestic terrorist attack, there had been 127 tweets from Republican officials that circulated ideas or language rooted in the replacement theory. And in the weeks leading up to the attack, Republican Members of Congress lent the legitimacy of their office to the racist conspiracy from the halls of Congress.

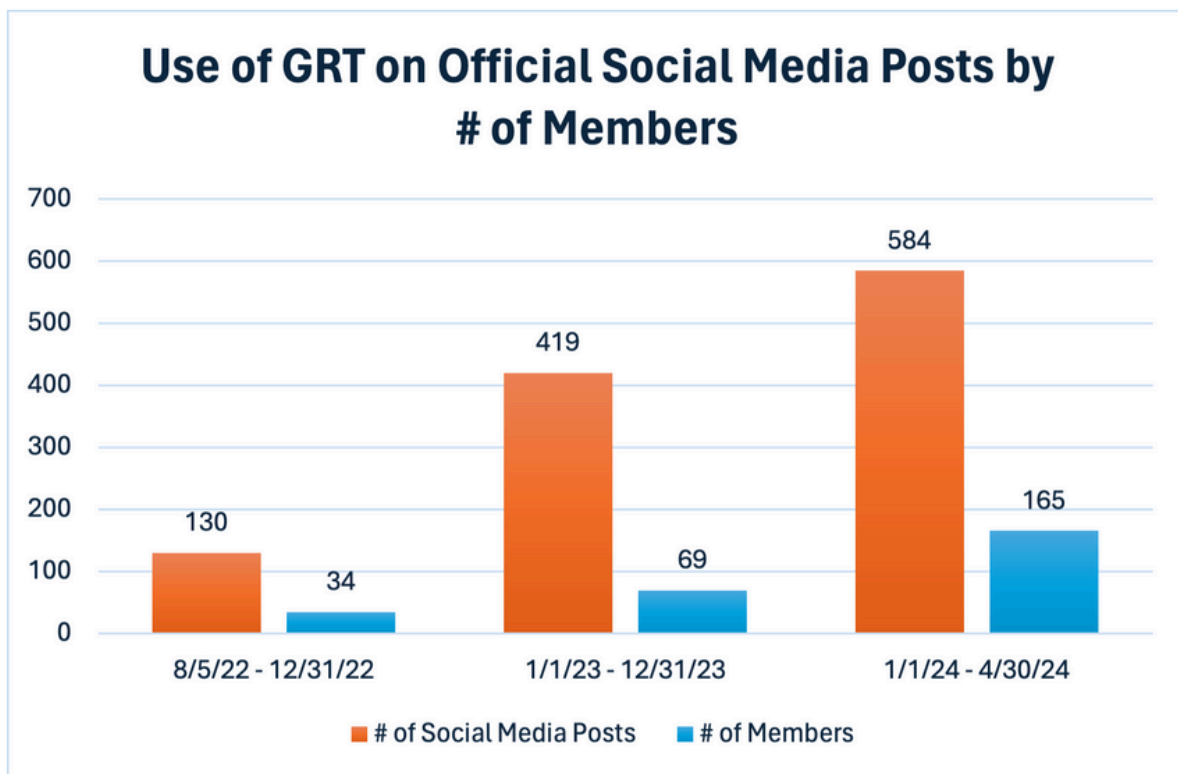
Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA), prior to becoming Speaker of the House, claimed that there was a “literal invasion of lawless masses flooding over our border” in late April 2022 in a Congressional hearing. That same April, third-ranking House Republican, Elise Stefanik took to the House floor saying, “this has been an invasion” of our southern border. Then in May, she appeared at a House GOP press conference and stated, “... and make no mistake, this is an invasion.” Just weeks later, a mass gunman would invoke that same conspiratorial rhetoric before carrying out his racist terror attack.

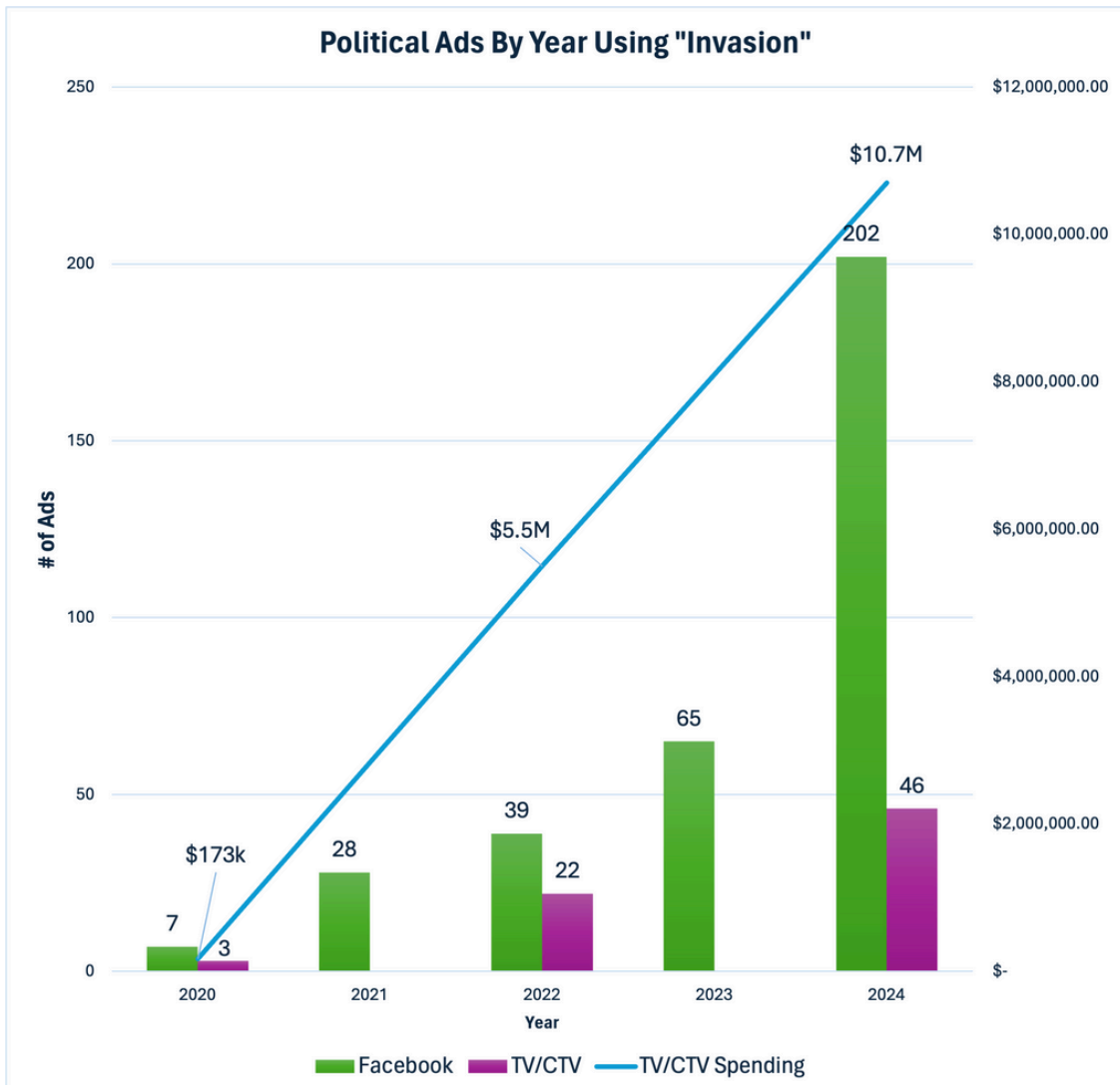
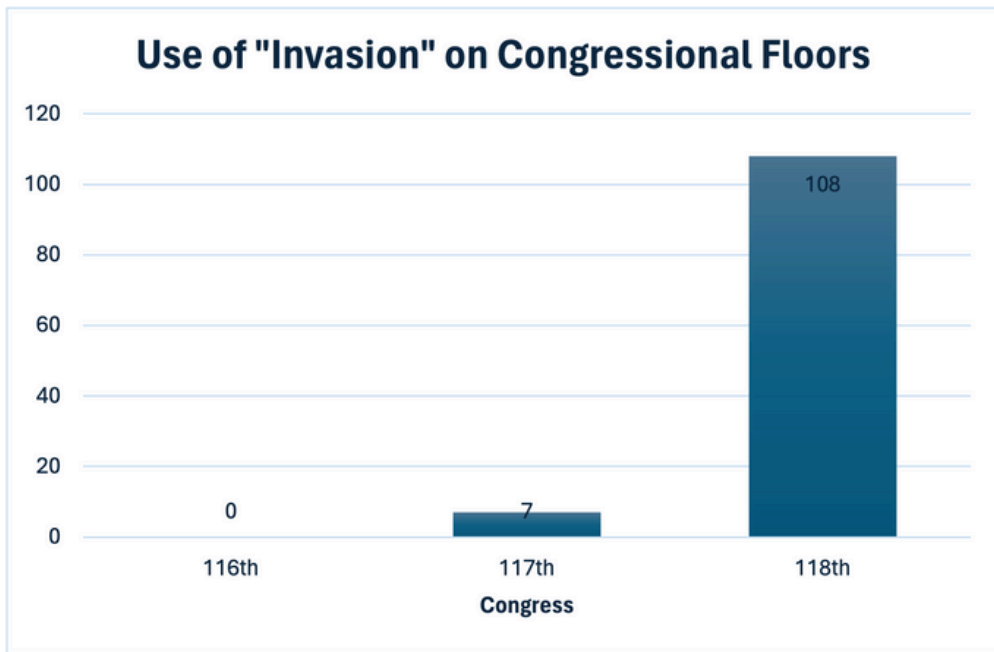
“We are experiencing an invasion on a level never seen before in history. Millions of people are pouring across our borders,” the Buffalo mass murderer wrote in his racist screed.

The replacement theory has also become a central campaign message with the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, invoking the invasion conspiracy in nearly every public rally and significant media appearance.

It has also become a central part of their paid political advertising. Meaning Republicans are spending millions of dollars to make sure the conspiracy theory is blaring on TV screens and social media feeds of Americans across the nation.

In the first four months of 2024 we have identified 202 Facebook ads that invoke the invasion conspiracy. There have also been 46 unique TV and CTV ads from Republican-aligned campaigns, which have spent a combined \$10.7M on these ads. This problem is only getting distinctly worse.





TV, CTV, and total spend compiled from AdImpact data



Left: Mooney for WV Senate



Right: House Franked Spending
(for Claudia Tenney)

CONCLUSION

As we mark the two years since the Buffalo massacre, we should remember that the widespread embrace of white nationalist conspiracy theories about a plot to replace white people is dangerous for every American. Talking about a plot to invade the country orchestrated by liberal or Jewish or coastal elites is getting people killed, yet that talk is escalating within the Republican Party, in their media channels and with millions of dollars in spending behind it.

Just this week, the Speaker of the House stood on the steps of the Capitol to justify new restrictions on voting that he based on the widely debunked fear that non-citizens are voting and will swing the November election. As we remember our ten fellow Americans who died in Buffalo two years ago, we should note that the message machine that is spreading these white nationalist fever dreams is at full volume and the risk that another well-armed constituent will take these fears seriously and act upon them remains a clear and present danger to all of us.