



Selling Xenophobia Packaged in Disinformation

The GOP is spending record amounts on anti-immigrant ads and disinformation, whether Americans will buy into it remains to be seen.

**AMERICA'S
VOICE**

America's Voice Analysis of Anti-Immigrant Political Messaging so far in 2024

America's Voice has been closely monitoring paid and earned media regarding immigration. Over the last several years, we have been paying particularly close attention to the proliferation and radicalization of xenophobic and nationalist messaging on the American right. In 2024, Republicans have spent record-breaking numbers on anti-immigrant television ads and at the same time, their policy ideas have become more extreme and their rhetoric has gotten exponentially worse. The GOP's signature campaign promise is a mass deportation plan they are trying to keep hidden from public view that would rip apart American families, deport Dreamers, and wreck the economy for working families. The bigoted conspiratorial ideas that were once confined to the fringes of neo-Nazis and white nationalists are the beating heart of the GOP's electoral message this cycle. While demagoguing immigrants for political gain is nothing new, the GOP's campaign rhetoric actively courts racist political violence and threatens to undermine confidence in American democracy.

We have analyzed thousands upon thousands of TV and digital ads, social media posts, campaign emails, press releases, and earned media appearances for Republicans and their major allies up and down the ticket around themes of immigration, immigrants, and the border. Heading into the heart of the 2024 election cycle we have compiled an analysis of the major components of what has become the GOP's cornerstone issue this cycle.

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Republicans are doubling down on a strategy of xenophobia that has failed in recent general elections:** Republicans have spent more on anti-immigrant political attacks this year than ever before, even as the [number of border crossers has dwindled](#) to numbers below where Trump had them. While Republicans have tried in cycle after cycle to drive majorities to the polls to vote for them because of these xenophobic fears, that strategy has repeatedly failed to deliver at the ballot box in general elections since 2016 despite their massive investment.
- 2. Mass family separation is the key to the GOP's signature policy, mass deportation, but Republicans are trying to keep the details secret:** Republicans have been running away from the details of the core policy promise from the top of the ticket. Refusing to answer basic follow-ups on a policy proposal that amounts to a wartime mobilization and disruption of regular people's lives should be a glaring warning sign. Republicans have not only dodged the questions of their signature policy, but the details of the plan are largely absent from their TV ads.

3. Republicans have fully embraced a conspiratorial white nationalist vision: The GOP has fully embraced the deadly so-called great replacement conspiracy theory this cycle. This white nationalist and antisemitic conspiracy has inspired multiple deadly terrorist attacks in recent years and the GOP's normalization of the racist lie creates a climate for more political violence and threatens to undermine confidence in American democracy.

4. Their strategy is fully reliant on disinformation: The massive investment around immigration and the border this cycle is not about providing real solutions to the real challenges of managing forced global migration in the best interest of the American people. Instead, almost all of the time and treasure is spent on advancing strategic xenophobia, which seeks to weaponize coded xenophobic appeals in disinformation narratives to win political power.

Topline Numbers:

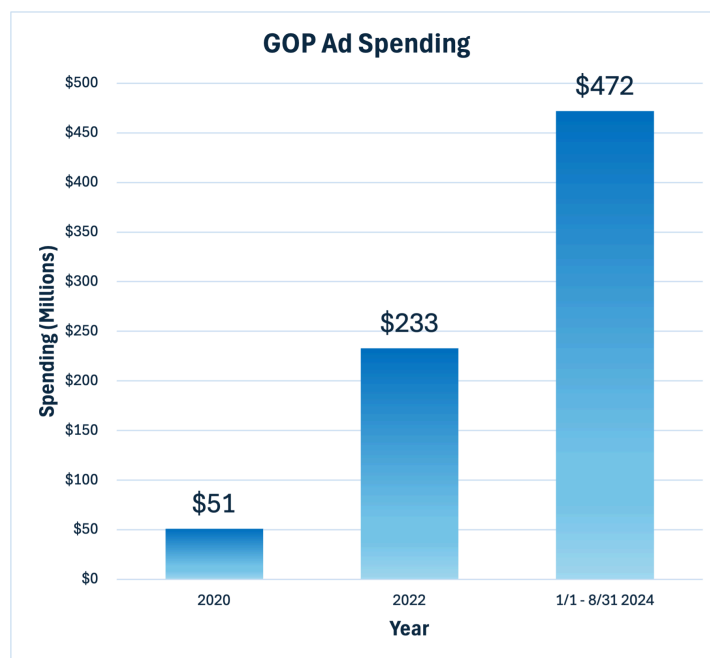
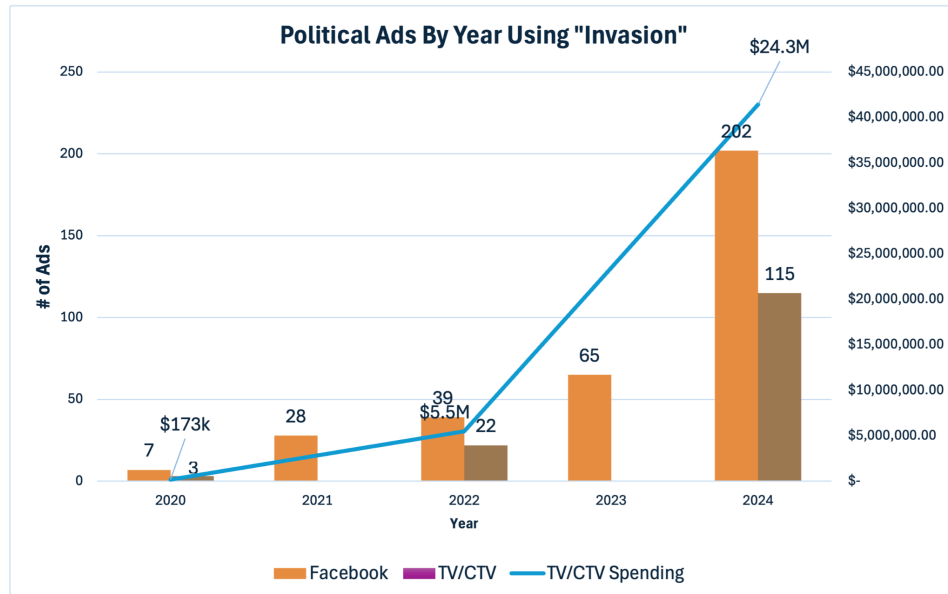
- In the first eight months of 2024, Republicans spent over \$472M on 1,321 unique anti-immigrant TV ads in 2024, according to data assembled from AdImpact. America's Voice has tracked 1,855 unique Facebook ads with anti-immigrant messaging and 1,717 campaign emails.
- America's Voice has identified 175 Republican members of Congress who have promoted a version of the so-called great replacement conspiracy theory. America's Voice has tracked over 1,118 paid political communications from this cycle which are pushing the deadly, bigoted conspiracy theory from major statewide and federal candidates and campaign committees.

Republicans are doubling down on a strategy of xenophobia that has failed in recent general elections.

In the first eight months of 2024 Republican-aligned campaigns have spent over \$472.6 million on 1,315 unique TV and CTV ads that have negative mentions about immigration, according to data compiled from AdImpact. That is \$200 million more than was spent in all of the last midterm elections in 2022 and up more than \$400 million from the last presidential cycle in 2020. This massive increase was despite an extremely quick and barely competitive presidential primary and few competitive Republican Senate primaries across the battleground states, which normally would hyper-inflate these numbers. The TV ad data is also just an indication of the overall investment from the campaigns' paid and organic communications.

America's Voice has tracked over 1,855 unique Facebook ads with anti-immigrant messaging from federal races including major statewide, federal candidates or political action committees. (Note

that ours is not an exhaustive account and there are likely many more Facebook ads that are not counted here.) This is up from the 1,048 that America's Voice Tracked in 2022. We have also identified over 1,717 campaign emails from Republican campaigns that are pushing anti-immigrant messaging and disinformation to their supporters. Across 452 accounts on X from statewide and federal elected Republicans and candidates, along with major GOP committees and officials, America's Voice has analyzed over 27,299 anti-immigrant posts, averaging around 3,412 a month across the first eight months of 2024.



Despite this increased investment into nativist attacks, the electoral strategy of aggressive, xenophobic demagoguery has failed at the ballot box for Republicans in cycle after cycle in recent years. It failed to deliver in [2017](#), [2018](#), [2020](#), and [2022](#). Following Trump's 2016 election, Republicans believed they had found the winning issue: bashing immigrants. But, the reality is that it hasn't delivered. For example:

- In 2017, Trump campaign advisor Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller's close ally and leading proponent of the nativist election strategy, [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.
- 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 2020, 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 2022, after [again increasing the investment into nativism](#), the ‘red wave’ failed to materialize. Miller appeared on his fellow white nationalist's show, Tucker Carlson Tonight, to lay out what he believed was the winning [GOP message for 2022](#): “I'm for deporting illegal aliens and you're not, so I win and you lose.” Miller then ran a super PAC that spent over \$50 million on ads to back that up. His candidates lost in AZ, PA, and NV.

Nor does it appear that the massive investment is a persuasive message for voters outside of the MAGA base this cycle. All the immigrant-bashing has not moved the American people commensurate to their massive investment. As detailed in the next sections, the GOP's policy and rhetoric is increasingly extreme, and the American people don't appear to be buying it. While it is clear there has been some movement in public sentiment towards an openness to harsher crackdowns, there hasn't been anything matching the scale of the investment. This increasingly

extreme messaging does, however, appear to be radicalizing the GOP base.

Media often reports that immigration is a top concern for voters. But, looking at the numbers, immigration is what is driving Republican voters, not voters across the board. For example, on April 30, Gallup ran a headline, [Immigration Named Top U.S. Problem for Third Straight Month](#). But, a few paragraphs into their analysis, we learn, “Republicans are far more likely than Democrats and independents to name immigration as the most important issue. In the latest poll, 48% of Republicans, compared with 8% of Democrats, mention immigration.” Take a look at the *New York Times/Siena* polling that constantly found a similar disparity in the driving issue across partisan lines. In the poll from early [August](#), for voters choosing the “most important in deciding your vote this November?” Republicans’ second most frequent choice (27%) was immigration, just behind the economy (34%). For Democrats, it was the eleventh most frequent choice, at only three percent. Immigration is a top issue for Republican voters who have been targeted with hundreds of millions in anti-immigrant ads, often in GOP primaries, and non-stop demagoguing on right wing media. It is a priority in their world, but that’s it. Yes, voters have concerns about the issue, and they want to hear about solutions, but for the vast majority of voters outside the MAGA base, the GOP fearmongering isn’t driving voters’ concerns.

Mass family separation is the outcome of the GOP’s signature policy of mass deportation, but Republicans are trying to keep the details secret.

Mass deportation is the signature issue for the Trump/Vance campaign and the Republican Party. Look no further than the Republican Convention, where delegates gleefully waved “Mass Deportation Now” signs. It’s a top item in the GOP platform. Top Republican Senators have adopted the agenda, as has the Republican Speaker of the House and the leaders of Project 2025. And unlike similar sounding campaign promises in the past from Republicans, this time [there is a plan](#), a willingness to carry it out, and there will be little in the way of institutional checks to slow them down. However, their signature issue is far from a winner.

While Trump has eagerly pushed his promise to carry out “the largest deportation in American history,” he, like many other Republicans, have been dodgy about sharing the details with the broader public. The promise of mass deportations has also largely been absent from political advertising, red flags that indicate that their promise will not rally much support. The data suggests there may be the potential for a backlash effect if the toxic reality of their signature campaign promise is more widely understood. Not only is the GOP doubling down on a nativist strategy that has failed to deliver, but the GOP is trying to run from, or dodge, their signature policy campaign promise.

Both Trump and Vance have been asked repeatedly about their signature plan but dodged an answer. At the first debate on June 27, CNN's Jake Tapper asked Trump a very clear question:

"President Trump, staying on the topic of immigration, you've said that you're going to carry out, quote, 'the largest domestic deportation operation in American history' unquote. Does that mean that you will deport every undocumented immigrant in America, including those who have jobs, including those whose spouses are citizens, and including those who have lived here for decades? And if so, how will you do it?"

Despite spending most of the debate demagoguing immigrants regardless of the question he was asked, Trump notably pivoted from answering this direct question.

Not to be outdone, on the August 25 airing of [Meet The Press](#), host Kristen Welker asked J.D. Vance three separate times about how his ticket's mass deportation plan would be a massive expansion of family separation, including of long-settled American families. "This fundamental question: will families be separated under your mass deportation?" Welker asked. Vance's response was to give the Democratic Party's position on deportations for the last few decades – prioritizing violent criminals. "You start with the most violent criminals in our country," Vance responded, outlining a prioritization of resources that is at odds with the mass deportation agenda he is campaigning on. Plus, that's already happening in the United States. It was the Obama policy and Biden policy. Vance filibustered and wouldn't directly answer the question. As Welker noted, "But I don't hear you denying that families will be separated."



Meanwhile, [some Republicans](#) have raised serious concerns about the agenda. Others, like [Sen. James Lankford](#) (R-OK) and [Rep. María Elvira Salazar](#) (R-FL), would like us to buy into their comforting fantasy that the central campaign promise of their Party is all for show. This deeply cynical plea, combined with hesitation to talk about details, is quite a tell.

An examination of the data indicates why the GOP might be afraid to talk about their own policy. While a [CBS/YouGov](#) poll from June of this year might be a high water mark for the policy's support, there is much more evidence of it eroding quickly with Republicans holding the bag for a deeply unpopular promise. Polling that America's Voice commissioned for our internal use indicates that the GOP mass deportation policy has two major vulnerabilities: triggering a reminder of Trump's family separation policies, and raising fears about the impact on the economy. [Marquette University polling](#) from May found something similar, seeing a 16-point flip (from 64% support to 48% support) when the long-settled undocumented community was mentioned as part of the mass deportation agenda.

Equis Research, a leading firm on understanding Latino voters, finds detailing mass deportation specifics could have a backlash effect moving Latino voters away from Republicans. Equis wrote in their new Latino messaging playbook: "Specifically, calling out Trump's plans to deport 'millions of immigrants who have been living and working here for decades' is an effective persuasion strategy."

While there has been some movement in public sentiment on the openness to mass deportation outside the context of what it would entail in practical terms, a much sharper picture comes into focus when we look at the ongoing radicalization of the Republican Party. Examining the comparison of a [CNN poll](#) from 2016 to a [YouGov/CBS poll](#) from June of this year, as Nicole Narea [recently did at Vox](#), there is a 26-point swing for mass deportation of all the undocumented 66% opposed to 62% support, but we can see the biggest swing, 45-points coming from self-identified Republicans moving from 43% in favor in 2016 to 88% in favor in 2024. A 45-point flip on an issue is notable. These numbers suggest the story here is more one of Republican radicalization than one of persuasion.

Moreover, the radicalization is still leaving a significant chunk of the Republican base behind. During the [presidential primaries](#) at the beginning of the year, there was a notable split on the issue. When the choice was put to these Republican Primary voters across several states between mass deportation and paths to legalization, there was a consistent 30 percent who were in opposition to the GOP's signature policy. Looking outside just the GOP base voters overwhelmingly support legalization and pathways to citizenship over mass deportation. A recent

[Gallup poll](#) found that voters supported citizenship at 23 points higher than mass deportations, with support jumping another 11 points to 81% when it was citizenship for Dreamers. Another recent poll by [GSG of battleground](#) states found 69-31% support for legalization over mass deportation.

Support for the core of the Republican's 2024 electoral immigration agenda may erode much further as the enormously detrimental impact on the economy - both for families and communities and for the country surfaces. Mass deportation is a kitchen table issue. But there would be a stark hole in the homes of those immigrants who are taken away. There will be empty seats at kitchen tables. There will be a loss of paychecks. There will be a loss of family. Kids will come from school to homes without their parents.

The number of families directly impacted is staggering. Immigrants, both undocumented and those with some protections like TPS, are [deeply rooted](#) in our communities. That includes at least [one million](#) farm workers, more than [205,000 food production workers](#) and [1.6 million workers in the construction industry](#) and an [estimated 142,000 undocumented immigrants](#) who work as childcare workers, personal care, and home health workers. All would be targets for the GOP's mass deportation.

Recession, inflation, and massive job loss resulting from Trump's scheme will hit the kitchen table hard for all working families all across the country. Businesses would lose workers, some would just shutter. Crops would rot in the fields.

"The idea that deportation helps US citizens has always been an illusion. It's never worked before and it wouldn't work this time," concludes Michael Ettlinger in a recent [Boston Globe](#) op-ed. The senior fellow - and founding director - at the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire, [reviewed the economic data](#) on prior mass deportation attempts in U.S. history and found that the impact on American workers would be devastating. A finding consistent with many other prominent experts. Ettlinger wrote, "it's not surprising economists project grim outcomes from future mass deportations. Estimates of how much the economy would shrink, which vary according to what the researchers assume about the levels of deportation and other economic factors, range from [2.6 percent](#) to [6.2 percent](#) - roughly between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion." Other [expert analysis](#) has concluded that "For every one million immigrants seized and deported from the U.S., roughly 88,000 native-born workers were driven out of employment due to businesses adjusting capital and operations to account for the reduction of labor."

In a May 2024 Washington Monthly column, "[Trump's Plans for Mass Deportation Would Be an](#)

[Economic Disaster.](#)” Robert Shapiro, former Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, focused on the economic catastrophe Trump’s plans would inflict on all Americans. “For example, the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants have deep ties to their communities and the country, with 79 percent having lived here for at least 12 years and 44 percent for 20 to 40 years,” wrote Shapiro. “Some also work for businesses, which is the equivalent of 4.5 percent of all employment today. Removing them from the workforce could, at once, bring on a recession while reigniting inflation.”

Republicans have fully embraced a conspiratorial white nationalist vision.

For many, the infamous chants of “Jews will not replace us, you will not replace us,” by the tiki torch-wielding bigots on the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 was their first introduction to the antisemitic and white nationalists conspiracy theory. Previously, this bigoted fantasy was contained to the farthest political fringes until Donald Trump flung open the door for these racist conspiracies to march in and occupy the mainstream of the Republican Party. The embrace of the replacement theory by the GOP has been building over the last several years despite inspiring a pattern of deadly terrorist attacks over that same period. This year marked the complete adoption of the replacement theory as a core doctrine of the GOP.

America’s Voice has [identified](#) over 175 current Republican Members of Congress who have employed a version of the white nationalist conspiracy in their official capacity. The lie is also a [regular part](#) of both Donald Trump and J.D. Vance’s stump speeches. It also shaped the very first bullet point of the Republican Party platform this year.



The replacement theory is a conspiratorial lie about a cabal of Jews, globalists, elites, or

Democrats who are intentionally facilitating an invasion of non-white migrants as part of a plot to replace White people using immigrants as pawns to corrupt American democracy and the true will of “real” Americans. A lie through and through, but it has become a central organizing principle for the GOP this cycle. Its normalization creates a climate for political violence and actively threatens to undermine confidence in American democracy.



In the first eight months of the year, Republican-aligned campaigns have spent over \$40.7 million across 115 different TV/CTV ads that employ the racist replacement theory “invasion” rhetoric, which is over an eight-fold increase from all of 2022. While Trump employed the white nationalist “invasion” rhetoric in 2020, it did not show up in the ads in any meaningful way. Here are just a few examples of these ads:

- MAGA Inc. the super PAC aligned with Trump, is running an [ad](#) attacking Harris with the claim, “look what she got done, a border invasion”
- The Republican Leadership Fund is running an [ad](#) in the Nevada Senate race asserting that Republican Sam Brown “will take the fight to Washington liberals and stop the invasion at our southern border to win the border chaos.
- In the open MI-08 race, Republican Paul Junge is running an [ad](#) against his Democratic opponent with the white nationalist lie that “she invites the invasion”
- In the Missouri State Senate District 23, Republican Phil Cristofanelli [warns](#) viewers about “an invasion of illegals.”

The widespread adoption of this rhetoric comes after the white nationalist mass murderer who attacked Jews in [Pittsburgh](#) in 2018, the white nationalist mass murderer who attacked Hispanics

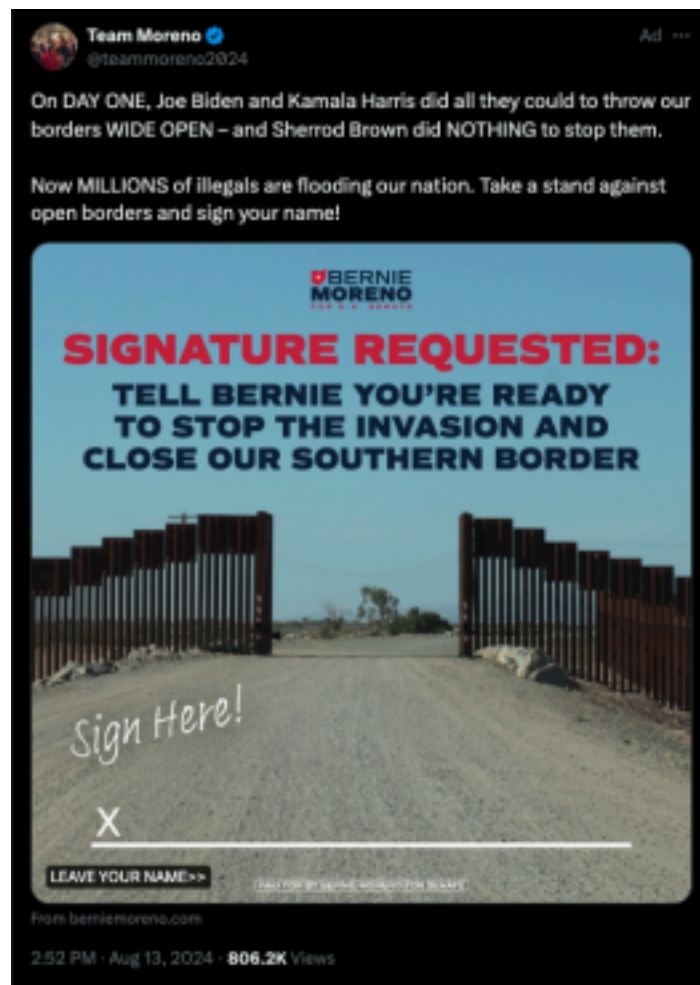
in [El Paso](#) in 2019, and the white nationalist mass murderer who attacked Black people in [Buffalo](#) all invoked the replacement theory lie about an invasion as part of their twisted justification for their attacks.

In a recent speech in North Carolina, Vance echoed the exact white nationalist conspiracy theory that inspired the mass murderer to travel to a Walmart in El Paso to murder 23 people, believing this racist lie that there is a "literal invasion" at the southern border. "As Border Czar, Kamala Harris has allowed a literal invasion of this country," Vance lied. "If we give Kamala Harris a promotion and make her the president, the southern border is going to look like Walmart on Black Friday." The month prior, Trump [made](#) this white nationalist attack shockingly clear at his appearance at the National Association of Black Journalists when he attempted to use the invasion conspiracy as an appeal to Black voters despite it inspiring a deadly anti-Black terror attack in Buffalo in 2022. But this white nationalist rhetoric has become commonplace across the GOP.



There has also been a shift where Republicans have made it explicit that they mean a literal military-style invasion, not just dangerous figurative hyperbole. Take Texas Senator Ted Cruz' major National Republican Party Convention speech: "We are facing an invasion on our southern border. Not figuratively. A literal invasion ... It happened because Democrats cynically decided they wanted votes from illegals more than they wanted to protect our children." Beyond the immediate downstream threats of political violence and to American democracy from the amplification of the replacement theory from a prominent political leader, the assertion of a literal invasion is key to their larger political project for two distinct reasons. (1) As Texas Governor Greg Abbott [has shown](#), Republicans are citing the white nationalist conspiracy as a means to make a constitutional

argument that states can usurp federal supremacy over immigration matters by invoking war powers to repeal an “invasion.” As [Abbott is arguing](#), this allows both for draconian immigration crackdowns inside the state and a means to challenge federal mandates like providing public [education for all children](#) regardless of immigration status that stem from [Supreme Court decisions like Plyer V. Doe](#). (2) The assertion of a literal invasion also creates the justification for deploying U.S. troops into U.S. cities that [Stephen Miller and many other Republicans have made clear](#) will be necessary to carry out the massive logistical undertaking of their mass deportation and family separation agenda. It will help to create the pretext to push back on any legal challenges of the invocation of the Insurrection Act that will be needed to deploy the National Guard on U.S. soil. If it is a literal invasion, then literal troops will need to be deployed to repeal it, or so goes the logic of this white nationalist fantasy.



On the digital advertising front, America’s Voice has identified over 614 unique Facebook ads that push versions of the replacement theory so far this cycle. And at least 248 Republican campaign emails that have pushed this conspiracy to their subscribers. Under the ownership of Elon Musk, X

has resumed political ad spending on the platform, and Republicans have also been running replacement theory ads on the platform as well. The far less transparent system makes quantifying the total ads prohibitively labor-intensive, but we have [identified](#) numerous examples that indicate a similar, if not worse, pattern of distribution of the racist conspiracy on the platform with paid advertisements from Republicans.

- The National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), the main organization tied to Senate leadership tasked with electing Republican candidates, has been running replacement theory ads on X for months. One of their ads shows a misleading image of a migrant wearing a Biden campaign shirt with text on the graphic that reads, "Should illegals be allowed to vote for Democrats?" The two different ads from the NRSC use this image with different versions of a replacement theory message. One reads, "Democrats know they can't win at the ballot box so they IMPORTED millions of ILLEGALS to vote in our elections." The other says, "Do you support illegal immigrants INVADING our border to vote for Democrats?"
- In a more coded version, the Speaker of the House is running ads on X that push the replacement theory [lie that the issue of non-citizen voting](#) is widespread and requires national legislation to further restrict voting rights, which would also hit eligible voters.
- Republican Ohio Senate candidate Bernie Moreno, himself an immigrant, is using the platform to promote the deadly anti-immigrant conspiracy theory with an ad that read "Bernie Moreno will fight to STOP the invasion and keep illegals AWAY from our elections."

The dog-whistles for the replacement theory, like lies about noncitizen voting or conspiracies about importing voters, are playing in surround sound for a significant segment of the American public, creating a self-reinforcing loop to convince them to distrust American democracy and blame a nonexistent mass of fraudulent immigrant votes for any Republican loss. It's not just the tens of millions of dollars pumping out the replacement theory lie nor just the presidential ticket that is trying to convince the American people that they should abandon confidence in American democracy based on an antisemitic and white nationalist conspiracy theory. It's also being pushed in a legislative figleaf by the Republican Speaker of the House. The lie is being affirmed by the Republican majority in the United States Supreme Court, as they affirm barriers to U.S. citizens' access to the ballot box. Meanwhile, the Attorney General of Texas is using it as the pretext for raids and harassment of an 87-year-old great-grandmother and other civic-minded Texans looking to help the community register to vote. Those with massive platforms like Elon Musk regularly promote the lie, while right-wing media helps to reinforce the notion that the conspiracy theory isn't an outlandish lie but a common sense concern. And on the ground, a massive network of right-wing nonprofits are organizing around the lie, led by those who led the assault on the democratic process after Trump lost in 2020. Those like [Cleta Mitchell](#), [Stephen Miller](#), [Ken](#)

[Cuccinelli](#), and those behind the Only Citizens Can Vote Coalition.



The centrality of the replacement theory for Republicans in this cycle is concerning for its courting of political violence. It's a serious problem that in and of itself threatens American democracy. But its widespread adoption also reveals the GOP to be less concerned about providing real solutions to manage the challenges of forced global migration and more interested in using immigrants as the villain in a conspiratorial story that can popularize a justification for undermining American democracy in favor of authoritarian designs. All the demagoguing of immigrants isn't just about trying to win political power but creating the myth for why they shouldn't participate in a democratic process in the future.

Their strategy is fully reliant on disinformation:

The massive investment around immigration and the border this cycle is not about providing real solutions to the real challenges of managing forced global migration in the best interest of the American people. Instead, almost all of the time and treasure is wasted on advancing strategic xenophobia, which seeks to weaponize coded xenophobic appeals in disinformation narratives to win political power.

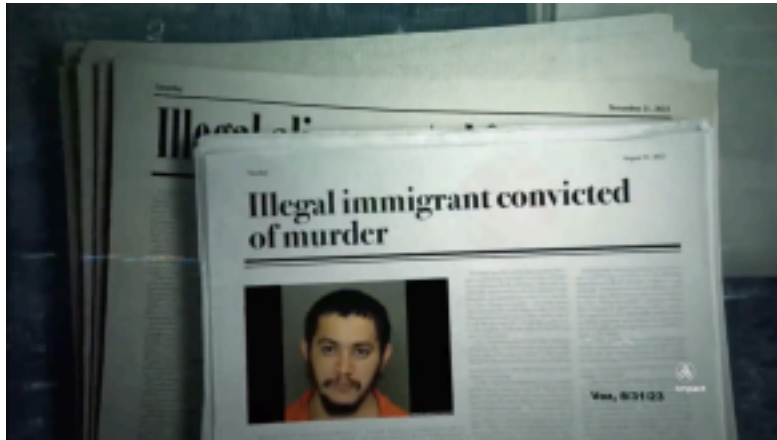


At the beginning of the year, Republicans undeniably demonstrated their hostility to engaging in negotiations around the issue they have made the cornerstone of their 2024 electoral appeal. After months of bipartisan Senate negotiations produced a harsh immigration crackdown measure that was a straight giveaway to Republicans' stated policy priorities, Trump swooped in and told Congress to kill the deal. At the time, Republicans were frank about the process including [Senator Minority Leader Mitch McConnell](#), [Senator Lindsey Graham](#), and [Rep. Dan Crenshaw](#), admitting that Trump killed their border bill on camera. Trump's reasoning along with the GOP Congress who acquiesced to Trump's demands, were clear – this was all about keeping the issue alive for the hundreds of millions of dollars in attack ads there were to follow. *Punchbowl's* Jake Sherman [reported](#) at the time about a closed-door meeting where "McConnell referred to Trump as 'the nominee' and noted the former president wants to run his 2024 campaign centered on immigration. And the GOP leader said, 'We don't want to do anything to undermine him.'" The bill would have added restrictions on asylum, produced funding for the wall, and continued to dump massive amounts of resources to hire more border patrol agents. The very sort of ideas that litter the political messaging we have analyzed.

While Republicans are still running ads in support of the policies they voted against, the political messaging is focused on agitating Americans' real anxieties around personal and community safety, economic stability, and identity with disinformation narratives that activate these anxieties with coded xenophobic ideas. Beyond the replacement and invasion lies, the major themes include disinformation about crime, fentanyl, open borders, and the economy and government benefits.

The false correlation between immigration and crime is not new to this cycle. It has also been repeatedly debunked in [study after study, year after year](#), but Republicans continue to use

strategic xenophobia to advance the disinformation. This year, Trump tried to claim credit for a rebrand, calling it a [“migrant crime” wave](#), and one which has been widely debunked. The fact of the matter is that crime is down overall. But, Republicans have spent \$119.9 million to run over 221 unique TV/CTV ads that mention immigration and crime in the same ad, according to data assembled from AdImpact. America’s Voice identified over 422 Facebook ads that push the disinformation around immigration and crime alongside 325 campaign emails.



The synthetic fentanyl fueling the massive spike in overdose deaths has made dealing with the opioid crisis as urgent as ever. The issue is complex and is in desperate need of policy solutions from elected leaders. The one thing that fentanyl is not is an immigration issue. The illicit fentanyl that enters the country comes through legal ports of entry alongside commercial traffic, smuggled by U.S. citizens for U.S. citizen customers. Harsh immigration crackdowns will do nothing to address the opioid crisis or to halt the supply of illicit fentanyl. Nevertheless, disinformation that puts the blame on immigrant communities has been a major focus of the Republicans' campaign message, presenting extremist ideas that are likely only to make the problem worse. Republicans have spent \$34.8 million to run over 132 unique TV/CTV ads that

peddle disinformation about fentanyl and another \$26.1 million on border nativist disinformation around illicit drugs, according to data assembled from AdImpact. America's Voice identified over 632 Facebook ads that push the disinformation around fentanyl and another 232 that push a nativist narrative about illicit drugs in general. We have also identified 137 campaign emails and 798 posts on X from elected Republicans, campaigns, and Party outfits that push the fentanyl disinformation.



There is only one political party screaming the border is open and it is not the Democrats. -Nor do Democrats support "open border" policies. This disinformation is a consistent refrain in the paid ads from Republicans. They have spent \$69.3 million to run over 195 unique TV/CTV ads pushing the open borders disinformation, according to data assembled from AdImpact. America's Voice identified over 848 Facebook ads that push the open borders disinformation, alongside 599 campaign emails and over 3,899 posts on X from elected Republicans, campaigns, and Party outfits. This is all despite research conducted last year to suggest that the amplification of the open border disinformation may double the likelihood of those considering making the harrowing journey north from Central America.



The contradictory nativist lies that immigrants ‘take our jobs’ and are ‘a drain on public benefits’ continue to be a core part of the GOP messages this cycle. Immigrants are [essential](#) to a [thriving economy](#) and are [not](#) “taking jobs.” They boost the economy, pay taxes, help keep Social Security and Medicare solvent, and [reduce inflation](#). The country has always relied on immigrants. [Pro-immigrant policies](#) are [pro-worker policies](#); the only ones who benefit from our broken immigration system that keeps our neighbors in the shadows are unscrupulous employers like Donald Trump and J.D. Vance. The varying disinformation attacks on this issue about hotel rooms and stimulus checks make it difficult to quantify the total spend, but this narrative has a similar frequency as the others mentioned in this section.



Finally, it is worth noting that the circumstances around immigration have changed significantly since earlier in the year. The number of people seeking asylum [has declined](#) steadily and is now below the level of the end of the Trump administration. Reality does not often restrict the Republican messaging machine, but the fact that the reality on the ground has changed may make it more difficult to keep the fever pitch of doom predictions at the same full boil through election day.

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