IMMIGRATION HUB

2020 ELECTION ANALYSIS

Battle Over Immigration Will Play Significant Role in Persuading and Turning Out Key Bloc of Voters in Tipping-Point States

Deep-Dive Analysis of Trump Campaign Spending, Battleground Polling, and Newly Identified Must-Get Voters by the Immigration Hub Reveals Vulnerability in the Trump Campaign's Highly Targeted Anti-Immigrant Messaging Strategy to Win Swing Voters Again in 2020

__TOPLINE:__ While media coverage of the 2020 presidential election cycle has been dominated by issues including the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism/racial division, and most recently the future of the Supreme Court, the Immigration Hub's research - a deep-dive analysis of Trump campaign spending, polling of voters in battleground states, and new voter modeling - reveals __immigration continues to be a critical tactic to Trump's reelection strategy in battleground states like Pennsylvania and Michigan__, where Trump narrowly eked out a victory in 2016 and where the electoral outcomes once again will decide the election in 2020. While base turnout, especially among Latinos who strongly oppose Trump on immigration, will be key for a Biden-Harris victory, this memo focuses on moderate, swing voters.

ANALYSIS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Immigration is again a critical motivating issue this election. Trump is weaponizing the issue to win suburban, swing votes.** The Trump campaign has retooled its 2016 and 2018 strategy: this cycle, the campaign has [fully integrated](#) anti-immigrant messages into their [economic and "law and order" messaging](#) to reach key blocs of battleground swing voters -- many of whom can be moved towards Democrats with values-based, pro-immigration messaging, as found by the Immigration Hub's [voter study](#) in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Colorado and Wisconsin. See the Hub's analysis of Trump's Facebook ads [we've tracked](#) (updated on a weekly basis).

- **Swing voters support fair and humane solutions to the immigration system.** Recent Immigration Hub [digital research](#) and [polling](#) have found that voters support citizenship for Dreamers and undocumented immigrants, ending family separation and other pro-immigration solutions. By pushing forward the Democratic vision on immigration in contrast to Trump's cruel agenda, critical swing voters - '[family patriots](#)' who are mostly white, male, not college educated, suburban voters - that Trump is banking on align with Democrats over the president.

ANALYSIS SEQUENCE

Below is an overview of the data, research, and polling used by the Immigration Hub in its analysis, which reveals an electoral environment whereby immigration has flown under the mainstream media radar screen, but is being wielded by Trump in a strategy that seeks to move battleground voters by (1) bucketing immigration with wild claims about the 'radical left' to scare suburban voters and claim he is the president of 'law and order' (2) while simultaneously serving up overt anti-immigrant messaging to his Republican base.

1. **Trump's Updated Electoral Playbook: Anti-Immigrant Tactics Meet "Law and Order" and the "Radical Left":** While Trump's overt anti-immigrant rhetoric isn't dominating his Twitter feed like in 2016 and 2018, President Trump is still weaponizing immigration on the ground with ICE billboards of immigrants and planned raids as the campaign deploys a retooled ad strategy: (1) continue to target anti-immigrant ads to his base and (2) launch ads that bundle anti-immigration with "law and order" and economic attacks against Joe Biden and the "radical left" to swing voters.

   ● It's no coincidence that ICE has placed billboards of "WANTED" immigrants in the battleground state of Pennsylvania and announced a new policy allowing for expedited deportations, less than 30 days before Election Day. The ploy is part of the Trump campaign's playbook -- scapegoat immigrants to distract from the administration's failures on top issues, such as health care and the economy, and their cruel immigration agenda (i.e. family separation, terminating DACA, and diverting funds to build the border wall) that polls badly for the president.

   ● The Trump campaign has reserved more than $95 million in digital and TV time this fall. The Trump campaign has spent over $7 million since March 30 on anti-immigrant Facebook ads alone. This does not fully include expenditures for the new ad tactic, such as the $10 million-plus YouTube ad campaign - featuring Trump's "Radical, Extreme, Left" ad that bundles claims against Joe Biden on taxes, citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and the radical left - mailers (i.e. highlighting the radical left, taxes and "amnesty" together), and the millions more spent by anti-immigrant PACs (i.e. America First Action Super PAC's ad).

   ● The campaign's new tactics allow his recent anti-immigrant ads to evade keyword searches and will likely not be accurately categorized; thus, the amount spent on ads with anti-immigrant messaging is likely greater than what is tracked. For instance, since June, the campaign has spent $11.3 million on Facebook ads warning voters about "far left" (i.e. the Squad) and "antifa". These same ads often include divisive calls against legal immigration.

   ● Read our analysis of Trump's Facebook ad strategy, see ads we've tracked (updated on a weekly basis).

2. **Battleground Voters:** *Despite voters increasingly moving away from Trump on immigration — and poised to move toward Democrats when presented with counter-messaging — Trump is banking on the issue being ignored by Democrats.*

   ● **Trump's Coveted Swing Voters Can Be Moved Against Him with Pro-Immigration Messaging**: The Immigration Hub identified 6 million voters - 'family patriots' - across Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Colorado - who can be persuaded by pro-immigration messaging to move towards Democrats. These are the same voters Trump is going after and needs: **primarily suburban, white, not college-educated, and male.** Read more about the Immigration Hub's study on who these voters are, how they can be persuaded and how they were identified.

   ● **Battleground Polling Consistently Shows Voter Backlash of Trump's Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric and Policies**: Since 2018, the Immigration Hub has been conducting polling in

swing states, finding that battleground voters increasingly support pro-immigration policies but often don't know where Democrats stand on the issue. The latest 2020 polling, conducted this month, cement the trends: (1) voters view Trump's anti-immigrant strategy as a bigger reason to vote against him than for him, (2) Trump's family separation policy remains a major vulnerability for him, and (3) Republican arguments are losing to Democratic arguments, including on sanctuary cities, the border wall, financial relief during the pandemic, and citizenship for the undocumented. Read the full memo here.

3. **Swing States Will Be Consequential:** *Swing states will once again play a consequential role in 2020 and could decide the outcome of the presidency. In Michigan, Trump won the state by 10,704 votes over Hillary Clinton while in Pennsylvania he won by 44,292 votes.*

    ● **The 2018 Backlash to Trump's Anti-Immigrant Ploys**: In 2018, President Trump made immigration the focal point of the midterms and made clear that he believes "it is going to be an election about the caravan." From Lou Barletta and Scott Wagner in Pennsylvania, to Walker Stapleton in Colorado, and a whole host of House and legislative races, the Immigration Hub and Global Strategy Group polled voters in Pennsylvania and Colorado, finding that the majority of voters roundly rejected Trump's playbook of anti-immigrant political stunts and rhetoric. The Hub also conducted ad tests, including Trump's anti-immigrant "caravan" ad, in both states and found that the majority of moderate voters were turned off by Trump and the GOP's extreme immigration rhetoric and policies.

    ● **Immigration is Key to Winning:** While immigration isn't a top issue for the majority of voters, Trump is weaponizing the issue to win votes. In 2018, he and Republican candidates banked on the 2016 playbook of overt anti-immigrant dog whistles, using "caravans" of "illegal immigrants" and calls for a bigger and longer border wall to move voters. The strategy failed: the Immigration Hub's 2018 research found a significant backlash among voters. Today, the Trump campaign has retooled the strategy, combining Nixon's suburban play - fear of the 'radical left' and protesters - with anti-immigrant, xenophobic claims. But by contrasting Trump's position and rhetoric on immigration with values-based immigration messaging and solutions already supported by the majority of voters (i.e. citizenship for Dreamers and undocumented immigrants, ending family separation), critical blocs of voters in battleground states can be persuaded towards Democrats.