

The Blue Wave

The 2018 Midterms and What They Mean for the 2020 Elections

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The Brown Tide and the Blue Wave in 2018

Matt Barreto, Albert Morales, and Gary Segura

In his groundbreaking book, *Brown Tide Rising*, Otto Santa Ana details how the media used negative and racist metaphors to describe immigrant and Latino population growth in the 1990s. Quoting a notorious media story, Santa Ana writes “. . . awash under a brown tide . . . the relentless flow of immigrants . . . like waves on a beach, these human flows are remaking the face of America. . . .”¹

In 2018, the relentless brown tide was indeed like waves on a beach, blue waves that crested in historically red enclaves from Orange County, California to the suburbs of Houston, Texas to rural Arizona to Miami, Florida. Across nearly 30 competitive congressional districts, significant growth in the Latino vote helped propel Democrats to victory and retake the U.S. House. Beyond these marquee House seats, Latinos also demonstrated boosts in turnout that provided the margin of victory for U.S. Senate races in Nevada (Jacky Rosen) and Arizona (Kyrsten Sinema). Even in statewide contests where Latino-preferred candidates did not prevail, such as Texas Senate candidate Beto O’Rourke, the large gains in Latino votes cast significantly influenced down-ballot contests and may have forever changed Texas’ electoral competitiveness.

Three main themes emerged in the Latino community in 2018 that we discuss in this chapter. First, voter anger was real: Latinos were tired of the relentless racialization of immigrants and attacks against Mexicans and Central Americans. Related to this, it became clear in 2018 that the Democrats—not President Trump—were winning on immigration, and not just with

Latinos. We argue that Trump and Republicans overplayed their hand, leading to record anger among Latinos, as well as the American electorate as a whole. Second, Latinos reported record high rates of participation for a midterm election, as a result of both campaign outreach as well as internal “self-mobilization” within the community. This participation was critical in swinging dozens of congressional seats to the Democrats and propelling the Blue Wave. Third, for the Latino community, the glass is only half-full, with even more potential for vote growth given the comparatively lower rate of voter registration of only 57 percent among those eligible. Leaving Latino votes on the table in Florida remains an issue for Democrats. As campaigns conduct outreach and invest in the Latino community, we expect to see further increases in voter registration and voter turnout across the country.

ANGER AND FRUSTRATION IN THE LATINO COMMUNITY: HOW THE DEMOCRATS STARTED WINNING ON IMMIGRATION

To no one’s surprise, almost immediately after being sworn in to office, President Trump doubled down on his anti-immigrant rhetoric. In his 2018 State of the Union address, he drew parallels between the Central American gang MS-13 and law-abiding immigrants in the United States. The next week, he reiterated that “MS-13 killers” are “pouring into our country.”²

This kind of language is a Trump trademark and has, for much of this last cycle, assumed the role of signature message for GOP candidates. This 2018 strategy was foreshadowed in 2017, in both Virginia and New Jersey, as GOP gubernatorial nominees Ed Gillespie and Kim Guadagno ran on explicitly anti-immigrant fearmongering. Despite the significant losses for both of those candidates, MS-13 and attempts to stir anti-immigrant fear and anger appeared early in the 2018 cycle and in diverse locations. This message had limited electoral effect, and polls of voters nationwide showed that immigration and its alleged dangers were not a significant driver of voter turnout or choice.

What has changed? For years, Democratic candidates chose to shy away from incorporating and welcoming immigrants into their own rhetoric. When Republicans embark on mean-spirited immigrant bashing, Democrats often retreated into silence or half-hearted defenses coupled with border-security votes.

Beginning, however, with then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid’s 2010 reelection victory in Nevada, and clearly demonstrated in the Democrats’ 2017 gubernatorial win in Virginia, it has become increasingly clear that

immigration is not an issue that largely cuts against Democrats. Part of this is the significant growth of the Latino electorate, about which we shall have more to say in a moment. And part of this is that the politics of immigration reform now clearly pits an outspoken and passionate minority—the immigration restrictionists—against a significant majority of Americans who don't find immigrants frightening and favor sensible reform to our processes.

Both Reid and Ralph Northam, the Democrat who won the Virginia governorship in 2017, rebuffed racially charged anti-immigrant campaigns, stood up for Dreamers, and in the process won over Latino voters alongside a coalition of progressive and moderate college-educated whites. Pro-immigration positions, and the willingness to call out racial scare tactics for what they are, has demonstrated the ability not just to mobilize growing Latino electorates, but also to appeal to the majority of non-Hispanic voters who overwhelmingly favor comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship.

In 2010, Reid made a strong stand for the Dream Act while competing against a Republican, Sharron Angle, who ran a nativist campaign equating immigrants with gang members. Reid defied the polls and won re-election on the strength of very high Latino turnout—and no signs of a white working-class backlash.

According to the exit polls, Reid ran 11 percentage points ahead of Angle among white voters who earn less than \$50,000 and, according to our data compiled by our firm, Latino Decisions, he won an estimated 90 percent of the Latino vote. In 2016, Nevada proved to be one of the bright spots for Democrats. Reid's strategy was embraced by his successor, Catherine Cortez Masto, who became the first Latina elected to the Senate.

In Virginia, polling data has made it clear that Gillespie's MS-13 rhetoric backfired among minority voters as well as, crucially, among many whites. Northam won a majority of white college-educated voters, who made up a larger share of the electorate in 2017 than they did in 2016. Gillespie matched Trump with non-college whites, but their turnout was down. And minority voters in 2017 matched their 2016 electorate share—for the first time ever there was no drop-off from the presidential to the gubernatorial election. The Democrats also expanded their margin of victory in Virginia from five percentage points in the 2016 presidential race to nine points in 2017's gubernatorial contest.

Majorities of voters of all races and ethnicities rejected anti-immigrant stereotypes as ugly and wrong. According to an election eve survey of voters by Latino Decisions, Latino voters said that Gillespie's MS-13 ads made them less enthusiastic about him by a 45-point margin. But it wasn't just Latino voters. By a 23-point margin (52 percent to 29 percent), whites in

Virginia also said the MS-13 ads turned them away from Gillespie, as did African-American and Asian-American voters by larger margins.³

Our data analysis of survey data paints a clear picture. Exposure to Gillespie's MS-13 ads actually helped drive white college-educated voters away from the Republicans. When we analyzed findings for white independents and Republicans, voters who were aware of the MS-13 ads were significantly more likely to vote for Gillespie's Democratic opponent. What should be alarming for Republicans is that this effect wasn't limited to the governor's race. The Gillespie campaign had coattail effects, but of the wrong stripe. Across all racial groups, those who were aware of Gillespie's MS-13 ads were significantly more likely to vote for Democratic candidates for Virginia's House of Delegates.

Pro-immigration issue positions are not merely consistent with Democratic ideology, rather, they are also a strategically sound position for winning votes. Simultaneously, it sends a clear, welcoming message to Latino, African-American, and Asian-American voters, while also winning over enough of the white voters who also oppose immigrant bashing.

HOW MIGRATION STRUCTURED THE LEAD-UP TO THE 2018 MIDTERMS

There is no question the role played by immigration in the GOP rhetorical strategy in 2018. President Trump made attacking immigrants the main thrust of his midterm message. At campaign rallies, he unleashed on immigrants, tweeting that "we cannot allow all of these people to invade our Country."⁴ In Nevada, he told a crowd that "illegal immigrants want to take over the control" of a California town.⁵ In their closing arguments, many Republican candidates echoed Trump's xenophobia and nativism.⁶

Latino Decisions' pre-election polling suggested, earlier in the cycle, that this strategy would not work that well in 2018. Immigration rhetoric was overtaken by several visible developments, including especially anti-asylum and child separations policies, leaving over 1,000 (and now, we understand, many more) children as young as 12 months old parentless and alone in a government detention cell.

In July, we ran a 2018 midterm survey of more than 2,000 registered voters in the 60 most competitive congressional districts.⁷ A majority of respondents opposed both the rhetoric and the policies. The administration's policy of separating children from their parents has defined this presidency on immigration. Among all registered voter respondents to our poll, 73 percent of voters said that the child separation policy made them angry. By a rate of 69

percent to 31 percent, white voters in swing districts also said that the policy made them angry. Not surprisingly, anger levels were higher still among minority communities, with 86 percent of Latino voters, 83 percent of black voters, and 79 percent of Asian-American voters saying that the child separations had made them angry.⁸

On balance, voters supported fixing our immigration system, not mass deportations. Seventy-seven percent of battleground districts voters supported the Dream Act, and by a two-to-one ratio these same voters reject spending billions on the border wall. Overall, 61 percent of whites in battleground congressional districts support a welcoming approach to immigration, with the highest marks coming from white college-educated women, a key group into which Democrats hoped to make inroads. Among this segment, there is overwhelming support for the idea that immigrants are just trying to provide a better life for their families.⁹

EFFECTS OF LATINOS IN THE 2018 MIDTERMS

Note: Latinos were overwhelmingly supportive of Democratic candidates nationwide, and especially in competitive districts and states with Senate elections, and the net effects were substantial. Figure 11.1 illustrates Latino vote by location and overall. Nearly three-quarters of Latinos voting in the

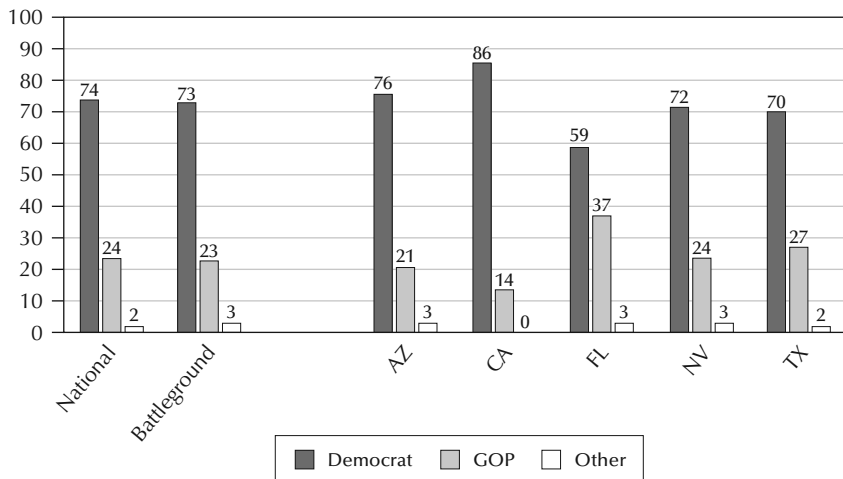


Figure 11.1 Latino Self-Reported Vote in U.S. House Elections, 2018.American Decisions 2018 Election Eve Poll.

2018 election reported voting Democratic in their House race, against 24 percent reporting voting GOP. Numbers in just the most competitive battleground districts were similar.

In high-concentration states with important contests, California tops the list with an 86 percent to 14 percent Democratic preference, a two-party result that likely had historic effects across the California ballot. Democrats emerged in California with 46 of 53 House seats, both Senate seats, enlarged super-majorities in both chambers of the state legislature, and control of every statewide office. At the other end, Florida stands out as it often does, given the historic association of Cuban Americans with the GOP. Nevertheless, Democratic underperformance in Florida may have had significant effects on both the gubernatorial and Senate races there, which we will examine more closely.

Results in competitive statewide contests are reported in Figure 11.2.¹⁰ Latino voters strongly preferred Democratic nominees in competitive gubernatorial and senate elections. In California, Democratic Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom topped the performance of all statewide candidates with 77 percent of the Latino vote against Republican John Cox. Successful Democratic Senate candidates Jacky Rosen of Nevada and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, both members of Congress, won 71 percent and 75 percent, respectively. Rosen's partner on the Nevada ballot, Democratic Clark County Commission Chairman Steve Sisolak, was elected governor with 69 percent of the Latino vote.

Despite strong Latino voter support, some candidates were not successful. This included Texas where, with 74 percent of the vote among Latinos, Representative Beto O'Rourke fell short in his bid for a Texas Senate seat. Similarly, Democrat David Garcia's strong Latino showing in the Arizona gubernatorial race was not sufficient to offset his relatively poorer performance among other constituencies as he fell short in his challenge to incumbent Republican Governor Doug Ducey.

Turnout: Had this two-party preference been reflected among a customary midterm electorate, the net effects would not have been as great. Specifically, this Democratic performance is consistent with Latino vote shares for Democrats in recent years, since the political environment has become so poisonous for Latinos and the issue of immigration. But these vote shares have greater impact because of the growth of the electorate. In short, in most important locations and nationally, the evidence suggests a substantial increase in Latino turnout when compared with past midterm elections.

A careful post-election analysis of precinct-level vote data make three things abundantly clear. First, Latino total turnout was up, substantially. Second, and more importantly, in an election in which political interest and

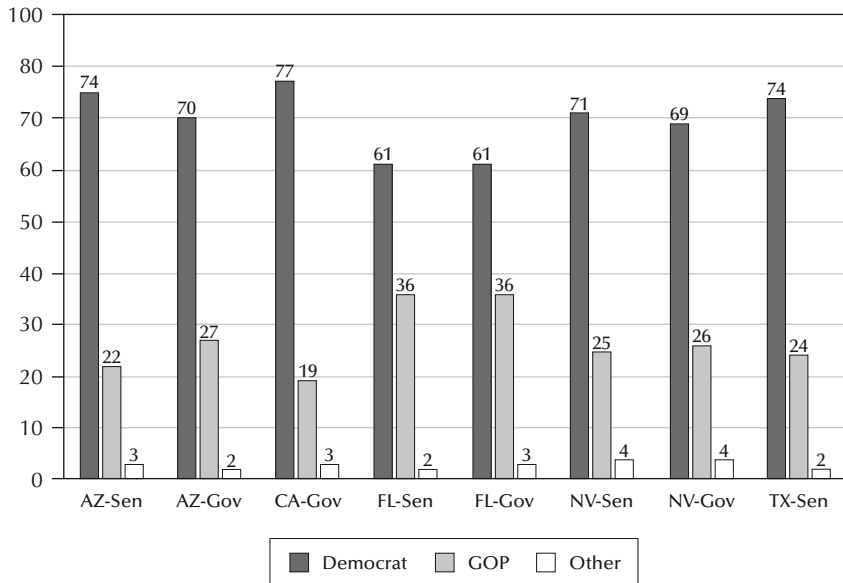


Figure 11.2 Latino Self-Reported Vote in Competitive Statewide Elections, 2018. American Decisions 2018 Election Eve Poll.

turnout was up in all portions of the electorate, Latino vote increase was substantially greater than among non-Hispanic whites. Had all groups increased proportionately, there would have been no Latino-specific effect. But the substantially greater increase among Latinos meant that Latino voters were a larger share of the electorate, amplifying the impact of their two-party tilt to the Democrats.

Figure 11.3 illustrates the turnout differential for each individual precinct from 2014 to 2018. The y-axis is the percent increase in total votes cast between 2014 and 2018, and the hashed line indicates a zero percent change—that is, total votes cast in the precinct was unchanged between the two midterms. For each panel, the x-axis represents the share of the precinct’s voters who are Latino. For the more than 20,000 precincts in these states, each dot represents a single precinct.

Two things are immediately clear. The first is that turnout was up for everyone. But more importantly, the turnout increase was uniformly greater in precincts with more Latinos. For each state, the line is a simple regression fit of y on x, the slope indicating the strength of the effect. The most pronounced effect was in Nevada, the least in Florida (where both Democratic statewide

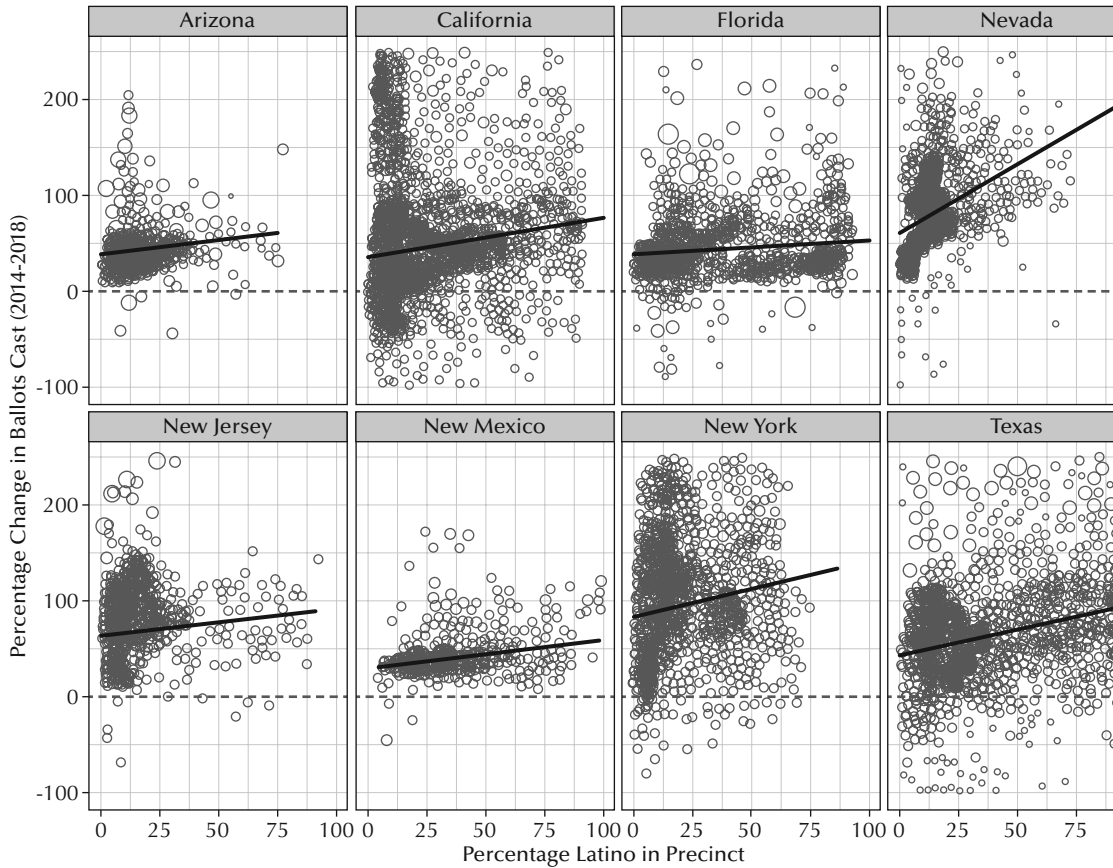


Figure 11.3 Precinct-Level Change in Turnout, 2014–2018. UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute Post-Election Study.

candidates ultimately failed in their bids), though even there, the slope is positive.

Of course, percentage increase does not tell us whether the effect in raw votes was meaningful. For example, a precinct with 50 voters in 2014 would score a 100 percent increase if they had 100 voters in 2018, while a precinct with 400 voters in 2014 would score only a 25 percent increase if they had 500 voters in 2018, though the net effect is the same. We need to look at raw votes cast, and there the results again reveal substantial increases in Latino total votes cast.

Table 11.1 reports the average net increase in raw votes by Latino density

Table 11.1 Change in Total Ballots Cast 2014–2018 by Latino Density

% Latino in Precinct	Avg. Votes		Raw Vote Growth	Growth Rate	Precinct (n)
	2014	Cast in 2018			
0–10%	422	636	214	51%	6209
10–20%	486	754	268	55%	4676
20–30%	431	683	252	58%	2541
30–40%	395	625	230	58%	1883
40–50%	355	574	219	62%	1497
50–60%	331	541	210	63%	1127
60–70%	360	578	218	61%	778
70–80%	386	630	244	63%	701
80–90%	443	746	303	68%	691
90–100%	294	550	256	87%	418

Source: UCLA LPPI analysis of precinct data in AZ, CA, FL, NJ, NM, NV, NY, and TX.

in the more than 20,000 precincts reported in Figure 11.3. The results do not suggest that Latino precincts' increase was a result of a smaller increase in total votes cast over a smaller 2014 base. In fact, the reverse appears to be the case. More heavily Latino precincts saw a greater increase in total raw votes cast than in precincts more heavily non-Hispanic. While turnout appeared to spike across all segments of the electorate in 2018, there is little question that Latino increases—in total vote and as a percentage—were larger and that the Latino share of the electorate increased vis-à-vis 2014.

WHY THE GROWTH?

On average Latinos have historically reported lower levels of outreach by presidential campaigns, with that number tending to decrease during midterm elections. In week one of the NALEO Weekly Tracking Poll taken the first week of September 2018, we began asking whether Latino voters had been asked to vote, or if they had been encouraged to register to vote. At the time, only 40 percent of voters reported being contacted by a campaign of either party. By Election Day, and as noted in Figure 11.4, that number had increased to more than 50 percent. Note that minorities expressed a higher level of engagement than that of whites, which was a sign that party committees were making good on their promise to engage minorities early and often.

Much of this can be attributed to robust efforts of the party committees, coupled with strong candidates who made Latino engagement a priority. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, for example, engaged with Latino Decisions well over a year in advance of the midterm election.

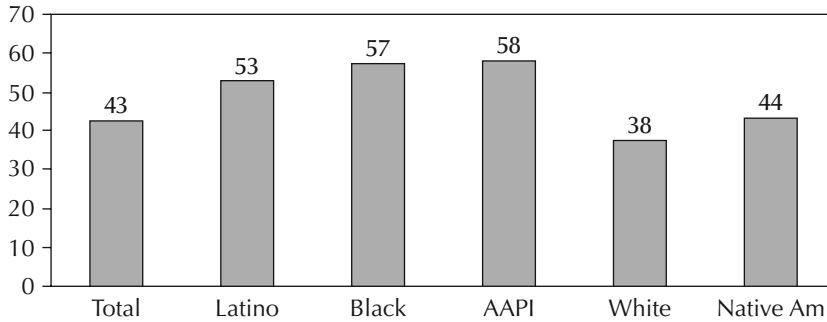


Figure 11.4 Reported Campaign Contact, By Race. American Decisions 2018 Election Eve Poll.

One other notable data point that caught our attention was the self-mobilization number in Figure 11.5. In our election eve poll, Latinos who reported encouraging their friends or family to register to vote or vote in the 2018 election was unusually high and at near parity with African-American voters. At 77 percent, that number was well above the average and over 10 points higher than that of white voters. In short, the stakes seemed higher for minorities.

Impact: What, if any, effect did this tilt in Latino vote and significant growth in Latino votes cast have on Democratic success in 2018? It is possible, for example, that the growth of Latino turnout was not sufficient to carry the day, as O’Rourke discovered in Texas. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the data suggest that Latino turnout was pivotal in a substantial number of races, which we report in Table 11.2.

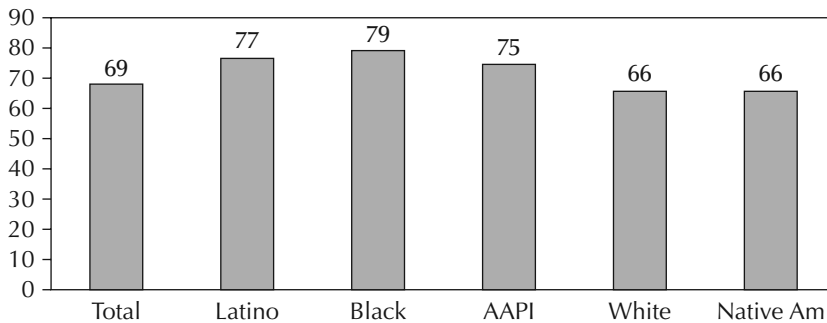


Figure 11.5 Self-Mobilization, by Race. American Decisions 2018 Election Eve Poll.

Table 11.2 43 House Seats Democrats Flipped Red-to-Blue in 2018

<i>State</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Margin</i>	<i>R %</i>	<i>D %</i>	<i>Latino</i>	<i>Lat > margin</i>
Florida	27	6.0	45.8	51.8	67%	YES
Florida	26	1.8	49.1	50.9	63%	YES
California	21	0.8	49.6	50.4	56%	YES
New Mexico	2	1.8	49.1	50.9	44%	YES
California	10	4.6	47.7	52.3	29%	YES
California	39	3.2	48.4	51.6	28%	YES
California	25	8.8	45.6	54.4	27%	YES
Arizona	2	9.4	45.3	54.7	21%	YES
Texas	7	5.0	47.5	52.5	20%	YES
California	49	12.8	43.6	56.4	17%	YES
New Jersey	11	14.7	42.1	56.8	16%	YES
California	45	4.2	47.9	52.1	15%	YES
California	48	7.2	46.4	53.6	15%	YES
Texas	32	6.3	45.9	52.2	14%	YES
New York	11	6.4	46.6	53.0	13%	YES
Colorado	6	11.2	42.9	54.1	12%	YES
New Jersey	2	7.7	45.2	52.9	10%	YES
Utah	4	0.2	49.9	50.1	10%	YES
New Jersey	7	5.0	46.7	51.7	8%	YES
Illinois	14	5.0	47.5	52.5	8%	YES
Virginia	10	12.4	43.8	56.2	7%	NO
Illinois	6	7.2	46.4	53.6	7%	NO
Oklahoma	5	1.4	49.3	50.7	6%	YES
Washington	8	4.8	47.6	52.4	6%	YES
Pennsylvania	17	12.6	43.7	56.3	6%	NO
Virginia	2	2.2	48.9	51.1	6%	YES
Kansas	3	9.7	43.9	53.6	5%	NO
New Jersey	3	1.3	48.7	50.0	5%	YES
Georgia	6	1.0	49.5	50.5	5%	YES
New York	19	5.2	46.2	51.4	5%	NO
Pennsylvania	6	17.8	41.1	58.9	4%	NO
Michigan	8	3.8	46.8	50.6	3%	NO
Iowa	3	2.1	47.2	49.3	3%	YES
South Carolina	1	1.4	49.3	50.7	3%	YES
Virginia	7	2.0	48.4	50.4	3%	YES
Minnesota	2	5.6	47.2	52.8	3%	NO
New York	22	1.8	49.1	50.9	3%	YES
Michigan	11	6.6	45.2	51.8	2%	NO
Pennsylvania	7	10.0	43.5	53.5	2%	NO
Minnesota	3	11.4	44.3	55.7	2%	NO
Iowa	1	5.1	45.9	51.0	2%	NO
Pennsylvania	5	30.4	34.8	65.2	1%	NO
Maine	2	1.0	49.5	50.5	1%	NO

Table 11.2 lists the 43 House seats that shifted from Republican to Democratic in this last election, the composition of the electorate, and whether the margin of victory among Latinos exceeded the total margin in the race. In 29 of the House districts that shifted from Republican to Democrat, the Latino vote share was substantial enough to have made the difference.

Of course, we would not and cannot claim that Latinos are solely responsible for those outcomes, and this is particularly true in parts of the country with low Latino population shares. But in the districts reflected in the first 18 rows of Table 11.2, where Latinos are 10 percent or more of the electorate, their impact is critical. Latino surges were particularly important in California, where seven House seats flipped, some by extremely narrow margins.

NEVADA: JACKY ROSEN MAKES HER MARK

There were several candidates, including party committees, we credit with running effective Latino engagement efforts in 2018. However, there was one candidate that went above and beyond, complimenting her efforts by utilizing every mode of communication afforded to her effectively. Not only did Democrat Jacky Rosen, who defeated incumbent Republican Dean Heller to flip a Senate seat in Nevada, employ unprecedented use of Spanish media, but she made it a centerpiece of her campaign, ceding no ground to Heller. Not surprisingly, her campaign was successful with healthy margins on Election Night and by effect, positioned herself in a way that could make her a household name through continued outreach efforts in the Latino community.

Rosen engaged Latinos early in her campaign and started out with very low name ID in our first poll. Recognizing the urgency of increasing that number, her campaign immediately sprang into action and started running biography ads in Spanish around June 2018. The task of defeating an entrenched Republican with strong bona fides in the Latino community was not going to be an easy one. Heller was known for having a constant presence in the Latino community and, prior to Trump's election, for being pragmatic. Rosen's ability to define him early within the Latino community proved to be a lethal blow.

In the end, constant campaigning in Latino neighborhoods, in addition to over \$2.5 million in Spanish advertising, proved enough to defeat Heller.

FLORIDA'S MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMOCRATS

Any case study on Florida detailing how Democratic Senator Bill Nelson fell short on Election Day must begin with his campaign's reluctance to invest in

Spanish language television. Then-Governor Rick Scott, Nelson’s Republican opponent, spent nearly \$5 million on Spanish television beginning in April 2018. This figure does not include third party spending by groups like LIBRE, the Koch brothers-funded initiative aimed at attracting Latino support for conservative causes. During the World Cup alone, we were able to track spending north of \$1 million on Scott’s behalf during the one-month stretch. In contrast, Nelson surrendered the ground and would not go up on Spanish television until late August. This was a strategic mistake that proved lethal given that the race was decided by only about a tenth of a percentage point.

Spending on Spanish television alone was not the only factor propelling Scott to victory. In fairness, he made countless trips to hurricane-damaged Puerto Rico, making appearances alongside Governor Ricardo Rosselló at every opportunity. Ron DeSantis’ decision to pick a Latina as his gubernatorial running mate also may have contributed to gains among Latinos.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton won 67 percent of the Latino vote in Florida, but in 2018 only 59 percent of Florida Latinos voted Democratic for Congress. That eight-point decline likely cost both Nelson and Democratic gubernatorial nominee Andrew Gillum in their very narrow statewide losses.

LATINOS ARE A BILINGUAL ELECTORATE

We just devoted a section to two Senate campaigns who maximized their reach into the Latino community by investing adequate resources into Spanish television advertising: Rosen, a Democrat, in Nevada and Scott, a Republican, in Florida. While we have precinct-level data as evidence of increased turnout where candidates invest in Spanish media, perhaps the strongest indication that investing in this medium pays dividends, lies in the headlines. Earlier this year, NBC Telemundo reported a 300 percent increase in political campaign ad revenue from their 2016 presidential cycle.

According to Google, the top trending Election Day search was “where to go vote” in Spanish. According to our research, a majority of Latino voters rely on Spanish language TV for news and information about politics. In fact, we’ve seen this in our qualitative research. In at least one focus group, when the question of who their most trusted media source is, participants overwhelmingly cited Spanish television networks and NPR.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHT

In the 2018 midterm elections, Trump and the Republican Party charted out a campaign strategy that focused heavily on stoking fears about immigrants.

Their closing argument couldn't have been clearer. Republicans were blaring racist statements and ominous images of immigrants, calling them murderers, rapists and invaders. They hoped these ads, run by Republican candidates up and down the ticket, would resonate with white Americans who would save their House majority.

But it didn't work. Enough whites did not feel motivated by Trump's immigrant bashing to vote for Republicans. On the other hand, millions of Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans were motivated by it to vote for Democrats.

This was the second major defeat during the Trump presidency for a campaign strategy centered on racism and attacking immigrants, even after it helped propel Trump to victory in 2016. In the 2017 election for governor of Virginia, the Republican candidate, Ed Gillespie, tried this same playbook, and it resulted in backlash from Latino and black voters, and no net gain in turnout or Republican votes from whites.

According to the 2018 American Election Eve poll of voters in the 70 most competitive House districts, which our firm, Latino Decisions, helped conduct, this is precisely what happened in the midterms too.¹¹ The Republican Party's anti-immigrant campaign failed to produce a white boost for its candidates.

Most political science research, including our own, concludes that in 2016, Trump did mobilize white voters who felt left behind and angry at immigrants, blacks, and Muslims. But in 2018, voters had had enough: in the Election Eve poll, 57 percent of white voters in swing districts said Trump's words and deeds made them angry. The net gain that Republicans thought they could count on from whites disappeared, with 50 percent now agreeing that Trump and the Republicans were using toxic rhetoric to divide Americans.

Likewise, no real evidence emerged in 2018 of a white base mobilized by attacks on immigrants. This is not to say that millions of white voters do not enthusiastically support Trump's anti-immigrant agenda; they do (49 percent said immigrants were a threat to America). But after two years of Trump's anti-immigrant policies, their numbers are getting smaller. Nationally, there was no evidence of a surge in white Republican votes for anti-immigrant candidates.

As Trump continues his anti-immigrant agenda in his fight with Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, it is important not to lose sight of just how thorough the defeat of anti-immigrant candidates was in the midterms. Sure, some anti-immigrant candidates won, but those were mainly in very heavily Republican districts, and even some supposedly safe Republicans lost. Prominent Republicans who championed Trump's immigrant bashing

lost their election bids, from Kris Kobach in Kansas to Lou Barletta in Pennsylvania, and from Corey Stewart in Virginia to Dana Rohrabacher in California.

In Arizona, Republicans had high hopes for Martha McSally to hold Jeff Flake's Senate seat, but she ended up supporting Trump's full immigration agenda, and she lost, in part, because of Trump's anti-immigrant message. Although Ron DeSantis, an anti-immigrant Republican, won the governor's race in Florida, he was one of the few successes among a string of defeats. In Nevada, the incumbent Republican, Dean Heller, invited the president to stump for him. Trump railed against immigrant gang members. Heller lost to a proponent of immigration reform, Jacky Rosen.

So, did Republican attacks on immigrants mobilize any voters in 2018? Yes, but it came in the form of Latino voters who reversed their record-low midterm turnout in 2014 with record-high turnout in 2018. In the Election Eve poll, 73 percent of Latinos said Trump made them angry, while 72 percent said that they felt disrespected.

In 2001, the political scientists Adrian Pantoja, Ricardo Ramirez and Gary Segura established that perceived immigrant attacks have a strong mobilizing effect among Latino voters. In 2018, Latino voters once again proved that thesis correct.¹²

In California, Latino voters increased their turnout enough to defeat six Republican incumbents and help Democrats pick up all of the seats in historically Republican Orange County. In Texas, Democrats won two House seats where Latino turnout was up. In New Jersey, Democrats gained four seats. Next door in New York, Democrats picked up three seats. There were two more Democratic pickups in Latino-majority districts in Florida, and one each in New Mexico and Arizona, while Democrats held on to two hotly contested seats in Nevada.

A recent analysis by the Latino Policy and Politics Initiative, a research center at UCLA Gary Segura and Matt Barreto helped found, revealed that across eight states with sizable Latino communities, the Latino vote grew by 96 percent from 2014 to 2018, compared with a more modest 37 percent in growth in the votes cast by non-Latinos.¹³ In a postelection analysis, Latino Victory Project and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee noted that early voting among Latinos increased by 174 percent. The UCLA study also concluded that higher Latino turnout was influential in flipping 20 of the 40 House seats that Democrats gained.

As we noted earlier, when asked how they engaged were by the 2018 election, 77 percent of Latino voters in the 70 swing districts identified by the Cook Political Report said that they actively encouraged their friends and family to vote. But it was not just self-mobilization; campaign outreach

mobilized Latinos. In these 70 competitive districts, 53 percent of Latinos said someone contacted them and asked them to register or vote, thanks in part to efforts by the DCCC, which invested \$30 million in targeting minority voters in battleground districts. (Our firm, Latino Decisions, worked with the DCCC, although we did not work on any direct campaign efforts for individual candidates.)

So what does this mean for 2020? First, it's going to be much harder for Trump and Republicans to persuade Americans that immigrants are ruining our country. Before Trump took office, Republicans were more trusted than Democrats on immigration, but now it's Democrats who are more trusted.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Trump will continue attacking immigrants in 2019 and 2020. Indeed, he vowed to shut down the federal government to get his border wall. But as states like Texas begin to show signs of electoral shifts, Republicans will have to reassess their strategy. If their political dam in the Lone Star State ever gives, their path to 270 electoral votes is all but impossible.

NOTES

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2. Matt A. Barreto, "Democrats Can Win on Immigration," *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/11/opinion/democrats-win-immigration.html>.

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