

IMMIGRATION A TOP ISSUE AGAIN AHEAD OF THE MIDTERMS

Carl Golden, September 21, 2022



Immigration has muscled its way into the top four issues in the midterm elections, joining inflation, cost of living, violent crime and abortion rights as potential turning points in the control of Congress. Its emergence has come amid accusations of hypocrisy and inhumane treatment, as well as threats of criminal investigations.

The arrival on Martha's Vineyard of 50 immigrants on planes sent by Florida's Republican governor Ron DeSantis ignited all-out war on social and traditional media, momentarily eclipsing the more dominant issues of the past several months and undercutting President Biden's increasingly favorable public approval numbers.

In sending the migrants to the island off the Massachusetts coast, DeSantis joined Republican governors of Texas and Arizona, who have sent 13,000 immigrants since April on buses to New York City, Washington, D.C. and Chicago - all self-declared sanctuary cities led by Democrats - to

protest the administrations' failure to control illegal border crossings.

While the governors have routinely been criticized by Democrats for their immigrant relocation policies, it was the migrants' arrival on Martha's Vineyard that exploded across the country and produced the rancorous response, including demands that criminal charges be lodged against the chief executives.

The governors and their supporters accused opponents of the rankest sort of hypocrisy for boasting their cities were sanctuaries and welcoming to immigrants, only to demand millions in federal assistance to meet the cost of accommodating them, contending they were ill equipped to manage the influx or by sending them to neighboring communities.

The Republican governors' message couldn't have been more direct: The noble motives and virtue signaling of elitist Democrats existed only while illegal immigration was confined to the border states, collapsing quickly when it came to their cities.

While the White House was quick to join the condemnation of the governors' actions, it drew increased focus to its record in dealing with the crisis at the southern border.

The administration was not helped by the demonstrably false assertion by Vice President Kamala Harris that the border was secure. Within days of her comment, U. S. Customs and Border Protection announced 2.1 million border encounters in the last year - the highest number in history.

Undaunted, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre repeated Harris' claim and - like Harris - argued the previous administration was responsible.

Democrats were nearly unanimous in condemning the governors, accusing them of cruelty, guilty of human trafficking and using innocent individuals fleeing violence and official corruption in their native countries as political pawns.

No evidence to support trafficking allegations has surfaced yet and there is little Democrats can do to block further transporting migrants to northern cities. The governors have insisted coercion has not been used, that migrants voluntarily board buses or planes to be re-located and that no laws have been broken.

The impact on the financial and social welfare resources of border communities has been crushing according to the governors, forced to bear the burden of caring for and accommodating thousands of migrants but lacking the wherewithal to do so adequately.

The rise in the flow of illegal drugs across the border has added significantly to the difficulties faced by the border towns and elsewhere by narcotics distribution networks.

Partisan politics are certainly at play in the governors' actions but engaging in it is a practice familiar to both parties and on a great many conflicting issues.

If the issue of immigration reform is to be addressed comprehensively and fairly, though, Democrats and Republicans must lay down their rhetorical weapons and actions and commit to finding a solution.

Packing families in buses or planes and sending them to distant parts of the nation to score political points accomplishes nothing toward an answer.

At the same time, embracing a policy of denial robs the administration of credibility and suggests it is indifferent to the plight of migrants and unable to offer a viable solution.

The emergence of immigration as a factor in an election only seven weeks off should be sufficient incentive to deal with it in a manner it deserves.

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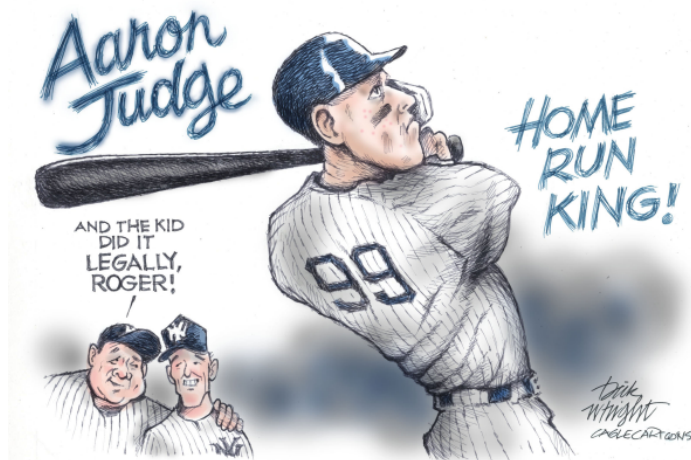
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