



See why Alberta is the answer →

Paid for by the Government of Alberta

Alber

AP SETS THE STANDARD FOR POLITICAL REPORTING.
SUPPORT INDEPENDENT, FACT-BASED JOURNALISM.

DONATE

POLITICS

Trump is putting mass deportations at the heart of his campaign. Some Republicans are worried



BY STEPHEN GROVES

Updated 12:20 AM EDT, August 10, 2024

WASHINGTON (AP) — “Mass Deportation Now!” declared the signs at the Republican National Convention, giving a full embrace to [Donald Trump's pledge to expel](#) millions of migrants in the largest deportation program in American history.

Some Republicans aren't quite ready for that.

Lauren B. Peña, a Republican activist from Texas, said that hearing Trump's calls for mass deportations, as well as terms like “illegals” and “invasion” thrown around at the convention, made her feel uncomfortable. Like some Republicans in Congress who have advanced balanced approaches to immigration, she hopes Trump is just blustering.

"He's not meaning to go and deport every family that crosses the border, he means deport the criminals and the sex offenders," Peña said.

But [Trump](#) and his advisers have other plans. He is putting [immigration at the heart of his campaign](#) to retake the White House and pushing the Republican Party towards [a bellicose strategy that harkens back to the 1950s](#) when former President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched a deportation policy known by a racial slur — "Operation Wetback."

RELATED COVERAGE



Democratic Party fractures in government shutdown fight, with anger running high



Trump administration moves to dismiss lawsuits against Iowa and Oklahoma over immigration laws



Romania's George Simion bids for the presidency, seeking to rally far-right votes in election rerun

Trump, when pressed for specifics on his plan in [an interview with Time Magazine](#) this year, suggested he would use the National Guard, and possibly even the military, to target between 15 million and 20 million people — though the government estimated in 2022 there were 11 million migrants living in the U.S. without permanent legal permission.

His plans have raised the stakes of this year's election beyond fortifying the southern border, a longtime conservative priority, to the question of whether America should make a fundamental change in its approach to immigration.

After the southern border saw a historic number of crossings during the Biden administration, Democrats have also [moved rightward on the issue](#), often leading with promises of border security before talking about relief for the immigrants who are already in the country.



FILE - Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally March 16, 2024, in Vandalia, Ohio. (AP Photo/Jeff Dean, File) [Read More](#)

And as the [November election](#) approaches, [both parties are trying to reach voters](#) like Peña, 33. Latino voters could be pivotal in many swing states.

Trump won 35% of Hispanic voters in 2020, according to [AP VoteCast](#), and support for stronger border enforcement measures has grown among Hispanic voters. But an AP analysis of two consecutive polls conducted in June by the [AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) shows that about half of Hispanic Americans have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of Trump.

Still, Peña, who described herself as a multiracial Hispanic person, has become a new and enthusiastic recruit for the GOP. She was drawn to Trump after seeing people debilitated by drugs in the public housing complex where she lives in Austin. She feels that government programs have failed low-income people and that the recent migration surge has put a pinch on public assistance like food stamps.

But Peña said she also feels concern when her fellow Republicans discuss ideas like barring children who don't have permanent legal status from public schooling.

“Being Hispanic, it’s a difficult topic,” she said. “I feel like we need to give these people a chance.”

What to know about the 2024 election:

- **Turning promises into policy:** Americans frustrated over high prices [await the change Trump has promised](#). Proponents of [school choice](#) will have an ally in the White House once again, but private schooling suffered high-profile defeats in several states.
- **Balance of power:** Republicans won control of the U.S. Senate, giving the GOP a major power center in Washington. Control over the [House of Representatives is still up for grabs](#).
- **AP VoteCast:** Democracy was a motivating factor for both Harris and Trump voters, [but for very different reasons](#).
- **Voto a voto:** [Sigue la cobertura de AP en español](#) de las elecciones en EEUU.

News outlets globally count on the AP for accurate U.S. election results. Since 1848, the AP has been calling races up and down the ballot. Support us. [Donate to the AP](#).

Still, [GOP lawmakers have largely embraced](#) Trump’s plans. “It’s needed,” House Speaker [Mike Johnson](#), R-La., said at a July interview at the conservative Hudson Institute.

Some, however, have shown tacit skepticism by suggesting more modest goals.

Sen. [James Lankford](#), an Oklahoma Republican, pointed to over 1 million people who have already received a final order of removal from an immigration judge and said, “There’s a difference between those that are in the process right now and those that are finished with the process.”

Lankford, who negotiated [a bipartisan border package](#) that Trump helped defeat earlier this year, added that it would be a “huge” task both logistically and financially just to target that group.

Other Republicans, including Floridians Sen. Marco Rubio and Rep. Mario Diaz Balart, suggested Trump in the White House would prioritize migrants with criminal backgrounds.

Indeed, Trump entered office in 2016 with similar promises of mass deportation but only succeeded in deporting about 1.5 million people.

This time, though, there's a plan.

Trump has worked closely with Stephen Miller, a former top aide who is expected to take a senior role in the White House if Trump wins. Miller describes a Trump administration that will work with "utter determination" to accomplish two goals: "Seal the border. Deport all the illegals."

To accomplish that, Trump would revive travel bans from countries deemed undesirable, such as majority-Muslim countries. He would launch a sweeping operation by deputizing the National Guard to round up immigrants, hold them in massive camps and put them on deportation flights before they could make legal appeals.

Beyond that, Trump has also pledged to end birthright citizenship — a 125-year-old right in the U.S. And several of his top advisers have laid out a sweeping policy vision through the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 that would choke off other forms of legal migration.

The Trump administration, under those plans, could also grind to a halt temporary programs for over 1 million migrants, including recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Ukrainians and Afghans who fled recent conflicts as well as others who receive temporary protection due to unrest in their home country.

The policies would have far-reaching disruptions in major industries like housing and agriculture, including in key battleground states.

"If the 75,000-plus immigrants who perform the hardest of work in Wisconsin's dairy and agriculture were gone tomorrow, the state economy would tank," said Jorge Franco, the CEO of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin.

Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar, a Florida Republican who has pushed legislation that would allow a path to citizenship for longtime residents, argued that large-scale deportations were now necessary because of recent surges in border crossings under President Joe Biden. But she also hoped that Trump could see the difference between recent arrivals and longtime residents.

"There is a group of congresspeople that will make sure that the new administration understands it because there's another aspect: the business community," she said. "The developers in construction ... and the farmers, what are they going to say? They need hands."

Meanwhile, Democrats feel that Trump's threats are now motivating Latino voters.

“The mass deportation put a lot of people on high alert,” said María Teresa Kumar, the CEO of Voto Latino, a leading voter registration organization that is backing Democrat [Kamala Harris](#).

Like many other groups aligned with Harris, Voto Latino has seen an outpouring of interest since she rose to the top of the Democratic ticket. Kumar said the organization has registered nearly 36,000 voters in the weeks since Biden left the race — almost matching its tally from the first six months of the year.

In a heavily Latino House district on the southern tip of Texas, Democratic Rep. Vicente Gonzalez said voters want to see better management of the border, but at the same time, many also have friends or family members who don’t have their immigration documentation in order.

“Much more could be done, in terms of good policy, that would help control surges at the border,” Gonzalez said. “But mass deportation, it just gives people heartburn.”



STEPHEN GROVES
Groves covers Congress for The Associated Press.
✕ ✉



ADVERTISEMENT

MOST READ



- 1 Man describes cruelty during his two decades of captivity at his family home in Connecticut
- 2 Trump administration asks Supreme Court to partly allow birthright citizenship restrictions
- 3 More than 50 universities face federal investigations as part of Trump's anti-DEI campaign
- 4 Trump overstepped his constitutional authority in freezing Congress' funding for USAID, judge says
- 5 Putin agrees in principle with proposal for Ukraine ceasefire and says more discussions are needed