

**Subject:** Backlash Building to Trump's Immigration Rhetoric and Actions  
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**From:** The Immigration Hub  
**To:** Ted Hesson

To: Editorial Boards, Reporters, Columnists, and Interested Parties  
From: Beatriz Lopez, The Immigration Hub, [beatriz@theimmigrationhub.org](mailto:beatriz@theimmigrationhub.org)  
Re: What to Look for on Election Night  
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## **Backlash Building to Trump's Immigration Rhetoric and Actions**

*Pennsylvania & Colorado are two key States to watch for the Trump backlash*

### 2018 Election Preview

*"I'm not on the ticket, but I am on the ticket...I want you to vote. Pretend I'm on the ballot." -- [Trump](#)*

One day before elections, early polling and reports are reflecting a growing backlash to Trump's immigration rhetoric and actions. This is not just bad news for anti-immigrant Republicans in 2018 – it should be a worrying preview of what their elected leaders, candidates, and Trump himself, are going to face in the run up to 2020.

### **How the Trump and Republican Strategy of Divide and Distract is Playing Out:**

- Trump has made immigration the [focal point](#) of the midterms and [made clear](#) that he believes "it is going to be an election about the caravan."
- Trump's attempts to divide and distract Americans on immigration are largely being echoed by Republican candidates. They have run almost 300,000 anti-immigrant ads, spending over one hundred million dollars. [Republican operatives](#) are going on background saying immigration is hurting them.
- White women in the suburbs are turned off by these attacks as numbers so far show increasing support for Democrats. The Democratic base is being fired up by their attacks and having high turnout for a midterm election.
- While Republican primary voters see immigration as the most important issue, the general public does not, and when the average voter saw the actual results of these policies – like separating families and Trump's desire to end the constitutional guarantee of birthright citizenship – they were turned off.
- From Keith Rothfus in Pennsylvania to Walker Stapleton in Colorado, some Republicans, belatedly, saw the danger of going too hard on immigration and tried to rebrand themselves as more moderate on the issue. However, their past positions and failure to denounce Trump attacks, left them vulnerable.

### **Key States to Watch:**

**Why Pennsylvania?** President Trump desperately wanted to win Pennsylvania, as indicated by the eight trips he and Vice President Mike Pence made to the state, but heading into election night it looks Trump-endorsed candidates Lou Barletta, Scott Wagner, Scott Perry, Keith Rothfus, John Chrin, Lloyd Smucker and Mike Kelly may either lose or face a much tougher race than was anticipated.

**Why Colorado?** In Colorado, the Republican nominee for governor, Walker Stapleton, started his run in the primaries with a series of anti-sanctuary ads and then attempted to tack to the middle in the general election. Meanwhile, the Republican incumbent Mike Coffman has attempted to run from his record and play both fields.

"In suburbs across the country, and especially in Pennsylvania and Colorado where the Hub has invested, it is clear that suburban voters are rejecting Trump extreme immigration rhetoric and are looking for a check on the Republican

party. If Trump and Republicans don't heed the warning from these elections, and proceed with their divisive and hateful immigration policies, they are going to further energize voters and face even greater electoral losses in 2020." said **Tyler Moran, Executive Director of The Immigration Hub**.

A deeper preview dive into Pennsylvania and Colorado follows below.

### **A Deeper Look at Pennsylvania**

A day before the election, it's becoming increasingly clear that Trump's anti-immigrant agenda, and the Republican politicians who have followed his hateful rhetoric could come up short. In a state that Trump flipped in 2016, Pennsylvania Republicans have woven a tapestry of hate and division that may have turned off one of the most influential electorates in the state - suburban women.

The Republican Party of Pennsylvania itself has welcomed Trump's xenophobic attacks with open arms. As the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* [John Baer reports](#): State GOP chairman Val DiGiorgio says that since the Democratic Party is a "full-throttle open-borders party," Trump's blitz of border talk is good for state Republican candidates.

"I can tell you, anecdotally, it is helping energize people," DiGiorgio says, "To the extent we believe Democratic intensity has been high all year, it helps our turnout. And anything that helps Republican intensity helps all Republican candidates.

**Below are some races to watch where immigration played a role in the campaigns:**

#### **SENATE: BOB CASEY (D) | LOU BARLETTA (R)**

- **Lou Barletta has voted with Trump 97.8% of the time and has proudly echoed Trump's anti-immigrant policy and rhetoric.** On his campaign website, Barletta revs up his fear-mongering, calling sanctuary cities "[an American nightmare](#)" and vowing to continue his fight to cut off all federal funding. Barletta has also proudly [defended](#) Trump's cruel and failed family separation policy, even going as far as to say he wouldn't change it.
- Senator Bob Casey has been a leading voice in opposing the Muslim ban, family detention and separating children from their parents at the border. Throughout his campaign, the Senator has not run away from issue, but instead he has publicly called out Barletta and Trump's attacks on immigration.

#### **GUBERNATORIAL: SCOTT WAGNER (R) | TOM WOLF (D)**

- In the closing days of the race, Scott Wagner, who has faced a double digit polling deficit throughout the campaign, decided to follow Trump's lead by releasing an [ad titled "Caravan"](#) as his closing statement. This ad took a page from the Trump playbook, and was a desperate last ditch to gin up fears in hopes of cashing in on votes.
- **Governor Tom Wolf stood up to Trump.** When Trump announced plans to send the national guard to assist in implementing his family separation policy, Governor Wolf publicly stated that [no Pennsylvania troops would be used](#) for such a purpose.

#### **PA-10: SCOTT PERRY (R) | GEORGE SCOTT (D)**

- **In a district Trump won by 9 points, Scott Perry, who has never faced a credible challenge in his career, suddenly finds himself in a fight for his political life.** On the eve of the election, Cook Political Report changed the PA-10 race from "[Lean R](#)" to "[Toss Up](#)." He [lied to the Pennlive editorial board](#) about the Trump administration's [diversion of FEMA funds](#) for Trump's family separation policy, even though thousands of Puerto Ricans displaced by Hurricane Maria, [including some in his district](#), recently lost FEMA housing funds.
- **George Scott has opposed family separation, supported DACA, and favors bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform.**

#### **PA-17: KEITH ROTHFUS (R) | CONOR LAMB (D)**

- **Keith Rothfus, in a Trump +3 district** under the new map, placed an [attack ad](#) in an attempt to scare voters by highlighting “sanctuary” cities. Rothfus has also made no secret of his support of Trump’s termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and building a southern border wall that would require billions of taxpayer dollars. The Republican congressman has also remained [silent](#) and unwilling to hold the administration accountable as families seeking asylum have been separated and thousands of children remain in custody.
- **Conor Lamb**, in a district Trump won, has stated that “We can enforce the law without breaking up families and forcing kids to live in detention camps and tent cities.”

#### PA-08: JOHN CHRIN (R) | MATT CARTWRIGHT (D)

- John Chrin [ran a despicable ad](#) attempting to pin a horrific crime committed against a young girl on sanctuary policies. This was an attempt to distract from his [plans to cut social security](#). A recent poll from a Republican leaning polling firm [shows him down 17 points](#) to Rep. Cartwright.
- Matt Cartwright has stated that he does not favor deporting “12 million souls”.

#### PA-16: MIKE KELLY (R) | RON DINICOLA (D)

- **Mike Kelly running in a district that went for Trump by 20 points**, and described by the Weekly Standard as [“The Tea Party’s voice,”](#) suddenly [finds himself in a dead heat](#) against Ron DiNicola. Kelly is a staunch supporter of the president, and [lamented last year](#) that his fellow Republicans were not supportive enough of Trump. At a rally in Erie this October, Trump praised Kelly as being [“tough as hell on borders.”](#) This race should have been a GOP lock and it is neck and neck as it comes down to the wire.
- **Ron DiNicola has promoted a message of unity and compassion.** “I believe wholeheartedly in the promise of America. The separation of children from their families at the border does not live up to that promise. We can secure our borders and still show compassion at the same time. This is not what America is about and not who we are as a people.”

#### PA-11: LLOYD SMUCKER (R) | JESS KING (D)

- Freshman Congressman Lloyd Smucker, who outperformed Trump in 2016, [winning by 11 points](#) in a district the [president carried by 7](#), was given a gift during Pennsylvania’s unexpected redistricting this year--a district that went +26 for Trump. Out of desperation, Smucker, who as a PA state legislator [sponsored legislation that would offer in-state tuition](#) to undocumented immigrants at PA colleges and universities, has abandoned his previously moderate stances on the issue, saying at a recent debate that the asylum-seeking migrants in the so-called “caravan,” are [“coming to harm us.”](#)
- Jess King has [significantly narrowed the race](#) while running on an [unabashedly pro-immigrant platform](#).

#### CHRISSE HOULAHAN (PA-06) and SUSAN WILD (PA-07)

In district formerly held by Republicans, candidates Chrissy Houlahan and Susan Wild are embracing a pro-immigrant narrative while also focusing on issues that voters care about, including health care and jobs.

#### A Deeper Look at Colorado

A day before the midterm election results pour in, it’s already clear that the backlash to Trump’s immigration rhetoric and actions have fallen flat in Colorado.

As President Trump [rips](#) children from their parents’ arms, wastes military’s resources by deploying [5,000+ troops](#) to shut down the border, and robs migrants at ports of entry of their legal right to apply for asylum, Coloradans are being turned off by these xenophobic Trump attacks and not fooled gubernatorial candidate Stapleton’s rhetoric and Congressman Mike Coffman’s nice words.

As [Jon Murray](#) explained in the *Denver Post*, “Pollsters say concerns about illegal immigration still motivate the Republican base, but hard-line stances on most immigration issues risk alienating the unaffiliated voters Stapleton and Coffman are courting to win next Tuesday.”

### WHAT TO WATCH: Backlash to Mike Coffman's two-faced strategy on immigration.

- On December 5, 2017, Coffman claimed his heart went out to DACA recipients and he has said that he opposes family separation, yet he [voted](#) to continue allowing the government to separate families, including jailing children for up to 30 days. According to the Cato Institute, the bill also would exclude [82% of DACA recipients](#) from citizenship.
- Coffman, who has voted with Trump 96% of the time, has failed to denounce a [new bill](#) from his Republican colleague, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, which would cost taxpayers \$24 billion to build a wasteful wall, incarcerate families and children, and incarcerate people seeking asylum at the border. Coffman also opposed the [2010 DREAM Act](#) and [broke his promise to support](#) the 2018 Dream Act.
- Jason Crow has been clear about his [position](#) on these issues. "We need leaders who are willing to fight for the people they were elected to represent, and take action to end family separation and protect Dreamers. The heart of our country is at stake." CO-06 will be a district to watch on election night. Have voters had enough of Coffman's nice words in Colorado that don't match up to his voting record in Washington, D.C.?

### WHAT TO WATCH: Republican gubernatorial candidate Walter Stapleton couldn't run from his primary positions on immigration or Trump's endorsement.

President Trump gave a "[complete and total endorsement](#)" of the Colorado gubernatorial candidate - and Stapleton has kept his wagon firmly hitched to the Trump train.

- Instead of supporting policies that adhere to the Colorado constitution and make our cities safer, Stapleton demonized immigrants and made cracking down on [sanctuary cities](#) a key pillar of his primary campaign.
- Stapleton released a campaign [ad](#) painting undocumented immigrants as murderers and criminals.
- Stapleton refused to call for a repeal of Trump's disastrous [family separation](#) policy, went on to [blame](#) the Democrats for the administration's concocted crisis.
- Jared Polis has a solid pro-immigrant voting record and [made clear](#) that "As Governor of Colorado, I'll prevent President Trump or any president from commandeering local law enforcement to enforce their Washington D.C. priorities." Polis has also stated that he would continue Gov. Hickenlooper's executive order to not give any state taxpayer dollars to support family separation.

**WHAT TO WATCH: Local Legislative Candidates attempted to use immigration to scare Colorado voters, and failed.** State legislative candidates and committee's took their cues from Trump and sent a barrage of anti-immigrant mail to Colorado voters in a desperate attempt to create a "wedge" issue in their campaigns.

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*The [Immigration Hub](#) is a national organization dedicated to providing strategic support to a broad spectrum of organizations seeking to enact progressive immigration policies at the federal and state level.*

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