



BACKGROUND

To embrace and uphold our tradition as a nation of immigrants.

Restrictionist Efforts to Influence the 2004 Elections

Setting aside the ballot initiative in Arizona, restrictionists had a pretty tough go of it in the 2004 election. Two political action committees established to elect anti-immigration candidates were active in 16 (2 Senate, 14 House) races. Other races where the immigration issue was raised showed mixed results, at best. Many races saw advertisements and direct mail pieces taking a hard-line against immigration, immigrants, and “rewards for illegal immigrants.” These messages were mostly, but not exclusively, supporting Republican candidates. However, given the evidence available, no candidates were either elected or defeated based solely or even largely on their stance on immigration reform.

In general, immigration as an electoral issue behaved as one might expect. It was not a top issue in voters’ minds and was not a decisive issue in voters’ evaluations of candidates. Neither presidential candidate embraced the issue as a central theme, and while each spoke about the issue when speaking before Latino audiences (and when questioned in the third and final debate), it was an issue that each campaign seemed interested in side-stepping to the extent possible.

Restrictionist PACs

Based on available evidence, Americans for Legal Immigration PAC (ALI-PAC) and Tom Tancredo’s Team America PAC (TTTA-PAC) were active in 16 races in the general election. In each case, pro-immigrant incumbents targeted for defeat were victorious, most with increased margins of victory.

For example, both ALI-PAC and TTTA-PAC targeted the Kansas 3rd District House race that pitted incumbent Rep. Dennis Moore against ultra-restrictionist Kris Kobach, a law professor and former aide to Attorney General John Ashcroft who was the architect of many of the Justice Department’s most egregious post-9/11 policies broadly targeting immigrants. Despite the influx of restrictionist cash, and despite a district that is increasingly Republican, Moore, the Democrat, beat his opponent comfortably, by a 55-43% margin, increasing his margin of victory by 5 percentage points compared to 2002.

In total, restrictionist PACs went after one Senate incumbent and eight House incumbents, losing in each race. All but two of the incumbents (Rep. David Dreier, (R-CA) and Joe Baca (D-CA)) won by increased margins over their previous races.

ALI-PAC and TTTA-PAC supported three incumbents, but each of the three House incumbents they supported won by a smaller margin than in their previous election.

Restrictionist PACs supported four candidates in open-seat or unopposed races to replace Republicans with Republicans and were victorious in each. These candidates will likely feel somewhat beholden to the anti-immigration movement when they take office,

including Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), who won the seat vacated by retiring Sen. Don Nickles (R).

Restrictionists went after several pro-immigration Republican incumbents in primary races, causing them to spend additional money to fend off candidates from their party, but causing no lasting impact on the outcome of the general election. House Republican incumbents Chris Cannon (UT), Jim Kolbe (AZ), and Jeff Flake (AZ) each won their general elections by comfortable margins.

In short, restrictionists make a lot of noise, but they don't seem to deliver votes.

Incumbents targeted for defeat by ALLI-PAC and/or TTTA-PAC:

State	Incumbent	Victory % 2004	Previous Victory %
<u>Arkansas</u>	Blanche Lincoln (D-Senate)	56	55
<u>California</u>	Anna Eshoo (D-14)	70	68
	David Dreier (R-26)	54	64
	Linda Sanchez (D-39)	61	55
	Joe Baca (D-43)	66	67
<u>Kansas</u>	Dennis Moore (D-3)	55	50
<u>N. Carolina</u>	Melvin Watt (D-12)	67	65
<u>Tennessee</u>	Lincoln Davis (D-4)	55	52
<u>Utah</u>	Jim Matheson (D-2)	56	50

Incumbents supported by ALLI-PAC and/or TTTA-PAC:

State	Incumbent/Open	Victory % 2004	Previous Victory %
<u>Colorado</u>	Tom Tancredo (R-6)	60	67
<u>N. Carolina</u>	Walter Jones (R-3)	71	84
	Sue Myrick (R-9)	70	72

Open-Seat or Unopposed Races won by Candidates Supported by Restrictionist PACs

Oklahoma Senate: Tom Coburn (R-OK), a former House member defeated Brad Carson (D), 53-41%, to replace retiring Sen. Don Nickles (R).

Georgia House 6: Tom Price (R), a physician, ran unopposed to replace Rep. Johnny Isakson (R).

N. Carolina House 5: Virginia Foxx (R) defeated Jim Harrell (D), 59-41%, to replace retiring Rep. Richard Burr (R). (Foxx earlier defeated Vernon Robinson, a more rabidly anti-immigration candidate supported by TTTA-PAC, in the Republican primary).

N. Carolina House 10: Patrick McHenry (R) defeated Anne Fischer (D), 64-36%, to replace retiring Rep. Cass Ballenger (R).

Advertisements

It would be hard to argue that advertising on strongly anti-immigration themes paid off for anyone this election cycle. Most notable was dairy magnate Jim Oberweis' Republican primary campaign for the Senate nomination, in which he made a tough

stand against “illegal aliens” a cornerstone of his rhetoric and advertising. He was defeated soundly for his party’s nomination and when the nominee was later forced to withdraw, Oberweis was passed over repeatedly by the Republican Party, which eventually settled on Alan Keyes as their candidate.

The Coalition for the Future of the American Worker (CFAW), one of several advertising front groups for the restrictionists closely tied to the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), and 9-11 Families for a Secure America, run by FAIR Advisory Board member Peter Gadiel, ran ads in several districts with little discernable impact. Among the ads run by CFAW were ads targeting Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) for introducing bipartisan immigration reform legislation. Daschle lost his race, but it would be a tremendous stretch for FAIR to say they played a major role.

One of the most unusual incidents occurred in Utah, where direct mail pieces in support of a Republican Congressional candidate and paid for by the Republican Party, criticized a Democratic candidate for supporting the DREAM Act. They forgot that the DREAM Act was introduced and vociferously supported by Utah Republicans Sen. Orrin Hatch and Rep. Chris Cannon. Oops. This left the state party and the National Republican Committee pointing fingers at each other in the mix-up.

The most troubling fact about anti-immigration rhetoric and advertising in the 2004 cycle is that political consultants still think it is a successful strategy and a soft-spot in an opponent’s voting record to criticize. Even the Republican National Committee produced and paid for anti-immigration ads in some races, despite the President’s stated support for immigrants and immigration.

There remains precious little evidence that attacks on immigration pay off.

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