

# Memorandum:

## The Latino Vote: A Warning to Democrat and Republican Leaders

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**FROM:** The LIBRE Initiative's President Daniel Garza and Chief Executive Officer Jose Mallea

**TO:** Democrat and Republican elected officials, candidates, and party officials

**RE:** The Latino vote for the 2024 election

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### Executive Summary

In 2024, the Latino electorate is poised to play a decisive role in deciding the outcomes of the presidential and congressional elections. As the [youngest](#) and [fastest-growing](#) voting bloc, Latino voters will make up a significant share of eligible voters in some of the most contested states, including Pennsylvania, Georgia, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, and Wisconsin.

#### MEMO TOPLINES:

- Both parties face significant challenges in earning the support of Latinos.
- Without deliberate, strategic changes either party may inadvertently yield over support to the opposing party.
- Although Democrats have traditionally won majorities of the Latino vote in the past, [public polling](#) shows that their once-sizeable numerical advantage is narrowing. In 2024, Democrats must fight voter fatigue, disillusionment with progressive policies, and a deeply [unpopular incumbent president](#).
- Republicans must increase tactical investments, earlier and more often. It is essential that the GOP show up with a clear vision of how their ideas, mainly related to the economy and job creation, are a better alternative than the progressive policies enacted under the Biden administration and a Democrat-led U.S. Senate.

Both parties have significant work to do.

Democrats can overcome a weak economy by pivoting to the center in how they govern and in candidate selection to appeal to independents, moderates, and a large swath of undecided and unaffiliated voters, including many Latinos.

Republicans, meanwhile, need to view the growing share of Latino voters not as a threat and a liability but as an opportunity to connect on many aligned policy positions that can make of the Latino electorate an asset in an increasingly diverse political electorate – this must be reflected in their investments (early outreach, staff, polling, ad spending). Candidate selection, with an emphasize on how they message and communicate their ideas, will matter tremendously,

especially as Democrats and a sympathetic media will try and pull Republicans into divisive issues, and having to respond to every tweet and statement from former President Trump.

To do this, both political parties will have to make significant investments in 2024 that seek to emphasize their policy positions, connect on their vision for America and how these ideas will reverse the current trajectory - beyond paid media – while also taking risks and challenging members of their political party to win over Latino voters.

In the end, whichever party can best connect, communicate their vision, and demonstrate a plan to best address the community's policy priorities may have the Latino electorate to thank in deciding the outcome of the presidential and congressional elections in 2024.

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### **DEMOCRATS: LOSING GROUND WITH LATINOS**

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In the lead-up to 2024, President Biden and his team coined the term *Bidenomics* to remind the American people – and the American electorate – of what the administration was doing for the economy and job creation.

Unfortunately for Democrats, for much of the president's administration, reckless spending policies did not produce the desired economic outcomes and adversely impacted the lives of vulnerable Americans while disappointing a majority of Americans.

Specifically, inflation hit [historic highs](#). [Weak consumer confidence](#), [stagnant wages](#), and an increasingly high cost of living – particularly in urban areas (where many Latinos reside) – drove voter frustration and pessimism about the future.

The White House countered by pointing to their trillion-dollar spending in the form of the Build Back Better legislation and targeted student debt relief and infrastructure measures.

Polling shows that the American people – including Latinos who were reeling from the economic pain – were unmoved in their support for President Biden and Democratic leadership.

#### **The Disillusionment of Progressive Policies**

To help understand the ground-shifting that is occurring with the Latino-American electorate, it's instructive to look to Zapata County in Texas. In 2020, Zapata County – a county in the Rio Grande Valley with a [95 percent](#) Latino population– voted for the first time in [nearly 100 years](#) for the Republican presidential candidate.

At the time, Democratic pollsters and political pundits explained this as an anomaly unlikely to hold in future elections, especially with a change atop the presidential ticket. But in 2022, Republicans defied these predictions by [narrowly winning](#) Zapata County and electing Rep. Monica De La Cruz in neighboring Texas' 15<sup>th</sup> U.S. congressional district.

A migrant crisis disproportionately impacting Rio Grande Valley (RGV) voters certainly factored into voter calculus. Still, polling and news reports also reveal that Latinos in this part of the country are growing increasingly skeptical and disillusioned with one-party rule.

Additionally, election autopsies are also exposing a deep disconnect between national Democratic party priorities and working-class Latinos. In the RGV, [voters said](#) that calls to end fracking and reduce our dependency on fossil fuel factored into their decision-making in bucking their tendency to automatically vote for the Democratic Party like their parents and grandparents had voted for in previous elections.

Outside of Texas, Latino voters are increasingly open to voting Republican after years and years of voting for the Democratic Party and a progressive platform.

Crime, divisive social policies, and reflexive and intractable opposition to educational freedom help explain why some Latinos are questioning their allegiance to the Democratic Party.

In 2023, Kristy Marmorato, a Republican, defeated Democratic incumbent Marjorie Velasquez in the Bronx's solidly blue New York City Council District. According to [one voter](#): "...We've been neglected by the policies of the Democratic Party."

### **Jobs & the Economy are the #1 Concern for Most Latinos**

Despite the national media's laser-like focus on covering all things related to President Donald Trump and the national Democratic Party's desire to elevate cultural and social issues, public polling shows that Latinos are primarily concerned with jobs and the economy heading into the 2024 elections.

Recently, The LIBRE Institute [commissioned a poll](#) with Public Opinion Strategies to capture the pulse of 1,000 registered Latino voters. The poll found that not only were most Latinos deeply dissatisfied with the direction of the economy and the country. But perhaps most surprisingly, Latinos were also expressing pessimism about their children's future – a stark and ominous departure from previous national polling.

Latinos' concern for the bleak economy was confirmed by [recent polling](#) commissioned by UnidosUS, the left-leaning advocacy group, that found that "inflation and the rising cost of living were named by 54% of Latinos, jobs and the economy came in second (44%)" as the most pressing issues for Latinos polled.

Unless the economy dramatically recovers in 2024, it's fair to say that Latino voters will be most interested in hearing what both political parties will do to spur economic growth and generate jobs.

### **To Win Latino Voters in 2024, Democrats Should Pivot to the Center**

Despite the strong headwinds, Democrats are still positioned to win the Latino vote again. But to do this, Democrats will need to pivot to the center, especially on issues related to immigration and the economy. Democrats must accept that Latino voters are swing voters who require authentic and sustained engagement - including in non-election years.

On immigration, Democrats have made countless promises and failed to truly deliver - all while attempting to wipe their hands clean by blaming Republicans – Latinos are not buying these empty promises. Many Democrats have resisted calls to enact enhanced border security measures along the U.S.– Mexico border despite uncontrolled spikes in illegal immigration and apparent signs of an overwhelmed and inefficient immigration system.

Under the Trump administration, Democrats described attempts to control the migrant surge as unconstitutional, nativist, and inhumane.

But after taking the White House in 2020, Democrats have been forced to adopt some of these measures to stem the flow of undocumented immigration into the United States, despite strong opposition from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party that reads any compromise on immigration as tantamount to capitulation to the Right.

And on the economy, Democrats should resist calls to double down on growing the size of government and continue massive federal spending in the hopes of taming inflation and spurring job creation. Democrats could borrow a page from former President Bill Clinton, who worked with Republicans on welfare reform before the 1996 presidential election, showing the American electorate that he could work with the opposition party.

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## **GOP AND THE LATINO VOTE: AN OPPORTUNITY THAT REQUIRES MUCH WORK**

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### **Latino Voters Are Listening. Republicans Now Need to Make the Case to Latinos**

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Despite controlling the U.S. House of Representatives, Republicans have had few legislative victories they can point to.

In an election year, they must communicate the following: they don't have much to show because they are the minority party in Washington - operating as a blocking coalition against anti-growth, ill-advised policies and the reckless spending being proposed by Democrats - while casting a vision of what they would accomplish if they controlled the executive and legislative branches.

Still, it is insufficient to show they are playing defense by obstructing or pointing out the failures under President Biden and the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate, Republicans must take the offense. And when the number one priority for the American people – including the Latino community – is the economy, Republicans need to point to specific legislative proposals that would both spur job creation and reduce the high rate of inflation.

Instead of focusing on the theatrics, including spending political capital going after political enemies, Republicans should sell the American electorate on how enacting their pro-growth economic policies will expand opportunity and prosperity for all Americans.

When campaigning and when governing, Republicans should avoid doling out corporate welfare and craft legislation to benefit their pet causes, and instead create policies that will help all people.

And on immigration, Republicans should work with Democrats in crafting a legislative fix that not only enhances border security but also streamlines and improves legal immigration into the U.S.

### **Republicans Should See Latinos as an Opportunity, not as a Threat.**

In 2024, Republicans will need to reject the myth that Latinos are a voting bloc baked in to vote for progressive policies and progressive candidates running for elected office. Recent electoral results and public opinion polling should make clear that America's largest swing voting block (Latino voters) is up for grabs.

But to do this, Republicans will need to buck members of their political party, including influential voices in conservative circles, to see Latino voters not as a threat but as an opportunity to grow their base. The GOP can ill-afford to fritter away, or cede voters who align on issue after issue like the economy, spending, energy, and education.

Republicans cannot afford to be passive and only somewhat engage Latino voters.

Besides authentic and sustained voter engagement, Republicans should make themselves available to Spanish-language news and invest in social media platforms to make sure that their candidates and their ideas are being heard.

### **Sleeping Giant No More. Both Political Parties Are On Notice in 2024.**

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In 2024, Republicans have a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on a debilitated Democratic Party. The growing Latino electorate is hungry for change. They realize that our elected officials are failing to enact policies to create the economic opportunities that have made the United States a beacon for liberty and prosperity. Latinos are eager to support policies that will lift all Americans – not just the well-off and the well-connected.

Although jobs and the economy are the most important issues for Latino voters, Republicans should also talk about what they will do to improve our immigration and healthcare systems to demonstrate how they can be an effective governing party.

The Latino electorate is as eager to hear solutions than ever before, given their disillusion with the current administration's track record. Now is the time for both political parties to come to

the table and make their pitch to Latino voters in an effort to earn their support. Political parties cannot afford to ignore or take Latino voters for granted.

Whichever party makes the most compelling case may have Latino voters to thank for their party's success in 2024.

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## 2024 LATINO VOTER SNAPSHOT

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According to the [Pew Research Center](#), about 34.5 million Hispanic Americans were eligible to vote in the 2022 election – a number that is likely to rise in the 2024 election. Additionally, Latinos are "the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group in the U.S. electorate since the last midterm elections.

In the critical swing states of Pennsylvania, Georgia, Arizona, Nevada, and Wisconsin – Latino voters could make the difference.

### **Pennsylvania - 20 Electoral College Votes**

In Pennsylvania, according to [voter data compiled by Televisa Univision](#), [387,389 out of 7,629,411](#) people who voted in the Pennsylvania 2022 midterm election were Hispanic.

According to this same survey, fifty-nine percent of those voters were Democrats, 19% were Republicans, and 22% were independent or other.

In 2020, Democrats narrowly won the state by a margin of [50.01% to 48.84%](#) -or a difference of 80,555 votes.

### **Georgia - 16 Electoral College Votes**

According to the Georgia Association of Elected Officials, or GALEO, more than [400,000](#) Latino voters were eligible to vote in 2022, accounting for around [5 percent](#) of all Georgia voters.

Recently, NBC News reported that with a 1.1 million population, [Latinos are now the third-largest racial or ethnic group](#) in Georgia, according to the 2020 census.

In 2020, President Joe Biden won the state by a margin of [49.5% to 49.3%](#), or a vote difference of 11,779.

### **Arizona - 11 Electoral College Votes**

According to the National Association of Elected Officials, or NALEO, Arizona's Latino population is [nearly 2.2 million](#).

[Univision estimates](#) that in 2020, 18% of Arizona voters were Latino, or about 569,995. And in 2022, the same survey estimates that around 21% of all Arizona voters, or 825,232 voters, were Latino.

In 2020, Democrats narrowly won Arizona by a margin of 49.4% to 49.0% - or a vote difference of 10,457.

### **Nevada - 6 Electoral College Votes**

According to [NALEO](#), Nevada's Latino population is around [890,257](#), or around 18% of registered voters – according to a 2022 analysis.

In 2020, President Joe Biden won Nevada by a margin 50.01% percent to 47.7% - or 33,596.

### **Wisconsin - 10 Electoral College Votes**

In 2020, the Census Bureau estimates that around [447,290](#) Latinos live in Wisconsin - which is a [7.6% increase from 2010](#). According to one estimate, there are 180,000 eligible Latino voters in the state.

In the last presidential election, President Joe Biden won the state by a margin of 49.6% to 48.9%, or a difference of 20,682 votes.

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