

13 July 2026

To: Interested Parties

From: Voto Latino's Beatriz Lopez, Executive Director, and Ameer Patel, Deputy Director

Ref: **Democrats Must Seize Opening with Latino Voters on Economy and Immigration**

A graphic consisting of two stacked squares, the top one red and the bottom one blue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout all major battleground states and congressional districts, the path to victory for Democrats runs largely through the Latino electorate. At Voto Latino, we're focused on persuading, mobilizing and turning out young Latino voters and their families to secure Democratic wins that will ensure economic opportunity and relief from costly, chaotic and cruel unaffordable and anti-immigrant policies. Our goal: bring back critical blocs of Latinos to vote in favor of Democrats, and more importantly turn out Latino voters who stayed home in 2024 – particularly the 1.3 million young Latinos between the ages of 18-35.

A 2026 Opportunity: To Date, The Most Viable Opening for Democrats to Energize, Mobilize and Persuade Latinos in Their Favor.

The Latino electorate, especially young Latinos, are living the economic failures of Republican governance in real time. Voto Latino's polling from this spring reveals that Latino voters are under unprecedented economic stress, with 37% who have delayed paying a bill and 36% have had to skip meals. Additionally, with the most recent killings of two men with long-standing ties in the U.S. by Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) officers in Houston, Texas, and Biddeford, Maine, respectively, Latinos are increasingly concerned and opposed to the Trump administration's immigration enforcement policies.

Our new research reveals a clear two-part playbook for Democrats to respond and mobilize Latino voters in their favor:

- 1 An economic message focused on Republican failures is the persuasion tool: it moves swing voters and even conservative leaning Latinos toward Democrats.** Ultimately, the path to winning Latino voters in 2026 runs through **Republican brand damage, not Trump brand damage**. Ads that focus on Trump alone deepen existing negative feelings toward him but do little to move voters toward Democrats or away from the GOP. Holding the Republican Party accountable as a whole for Latino families' economic pain increases Democratic favorability rises, decreases GOP favorability, and enthusiasm to vote goes up.
- 2 Addressing the cruelty of Trump's immigration detention policies is a critical mobilization tool: it moves registered voters who sat out 2024 more than any other group,** firing them up to vote and lifting Democratic favorability among the very people Democrats most need to bring back into the fight. In 2024, nearly one third of Latinos sat out the election. **Without messaging on immigration, Democrats lose a valuable opportunity to mobilize this key bloc of Latino voters to the polls.**

Our social listening confirms the same opening in real time: voters are feeling the economic pain, increasingly disapprove of Trump's immigration policies, and they want an alternative. Democrats have one. The question is whether they make that case clearly and urgently enough to win.

Candidates who pair both arguments, accountability and an affirmative plan, have a real opening with (1) an eager young Latino bloc who can be fired up with the right message and (2) persuadable Latino voters, including many who currently lean Republican.



KEY FINDINGS

Voto Latino, in partnership with Swayable, tested a series of six ads on the economy and immigration among a national sample of 1,388 Latinos. Additionally, for a period of six months, Voto Latino and Vocal Media ran a generative AI social listening program, across TikTok, to better understand the overarching trends, themes, and dominant topics of conversation among millennial and Gen Z Latinos.

These combined findings stress the significance of an offense strategy to seize the Latino electorate's dissatisfaction with Republicans.

- **Ads focused on Trump alone deepened existing negative feelings toward him but did not move GOP favorability or Democratic favorability**, and did not increase vote enthusiasm. Only the ad focused on the Republican Party as a whole did all three. The path to winning Latino voters runs through Republican brand damage, not Trump brand damage.
- **The ad "Economy Under the GOP" addressed economic pain points under Republican governance without explicitly mentioning President Trump.** It increased Democratic favorability by 14 points, while decreasing Trump and Republican favorability by 8 and 7 points respectively. The ad particularly excelled at motivating voters, shifting vote likelihood by 7 points and increasing vote enthusiasm by 12 points.
- **Young Latino voters are the most persuadable and most energized audience available.** The same ad got Gen Z Latinos noticeably more fired up to vote, with enthusiasm jumping 17 points after seeing this message.
- **The message also moved conservative Latinos more than any other group, 13 points toward Democrats.** Financial discomfort crosses party lines: a Murmuration and Voto Latino survey of 6,559 adults found 57% of Democrats, 45% of Republicans, and 61% of independents describe themselves as financially uncomfortable.
- **The ad "Cruelty: Immigration Detention" increased Democratic favorability by 9 points and lifted vote likelihood by 8 points among voters who sat out 2024**, the same group the national poll finds is the most financially squeezed and least civically engaged in the country.
- **Independent social listening across four LatinTok personas spanning the ideological spectrum confirms this opening in real time.** Cost of living anxiety is the most consistent theme reaching every audience tracked, and opposition to ICE enforcement has broken into even the most apolitical, right leaning feeds since late 2025.

I. Get Past Trump: Solidify Blame on Republicans and Build Towards the “How” to Address Cost

Much like their voting counterparts, the Latino electorate is feeling the economic strain of the high cost of living in the U.S. A [Murmuration and Voto Latino](#) poll earlier this year found that over half of Latinos (56%) say it has become harder to afford everyday expenses in recent years, while just 15% say it has become easier. Latina women report even greater hardship, with 68% saying affordability has declined. **As much as they blame the government for economic hardships, 83% of Latinos believe that the government has a direct impact on whether families can afford everyday expenses.**

They are right. The financial pain Latino families are absorbing is the result of specific policy choices. Tariffs drove up the cost of imported goods that end up on grocery store shelves and in gas tanks. Congressional Republicans blocked price relief legislation. Tax cuts benefited corporations and the wealthy while working families absorbed rising costs. When voters understand that their financial stress is a policy choice, they have a reason to vote differently.

That is exactly what our ad testing confirmed. Among 1,388 Latino voters, the two highest performing ads centered on the rising costs of groceries and gas. **But it was "Economy under GOP" that made its case on rising costs without mentioning Trump by name that increased Democratic favorability by 14 points and decreased Trump and Republican favorability by 8 and 7 points respectively.** Ads that focused on Trump alone deepened existing negative feelings toward him but did not move GOP favorability, Democratic favorability, or vote enthusiasm.

The difference is critical: focusing on Trump gives voters another reason to dislike one person. Connecting economic pain to Republican governance gives voters a reason to reconsider the party and choose Democrats instead.

Notably, **this ad moved conservative Latinos more than any other group tested in favor of Democrats by 13 points.** And Gen Z Latinos, who are feeling the most economic pain, got noticeably more fired up to vote, with enthusiasm jumping 17 points after seeing this ad.

The winning ad reinforces what we're seeing across all of our research: Latinos want Democrats to acknowledge their economic pain, connect it to Republican policy choices, hold the party accountable, and start moving toward a vision forward.

II. Cruelty of Trump’s Immigration Policies is Still A Powerful Mobilization Message

Immigration has not lost its power as an argument, it has changed shape. The ad highlighting the harms of Trump detention policy, "Cruelty: Immigration Detention," should be understood primarily as a mobilization tool, not a persuasion one. **Its strongest performance was not among voters already in the fold: It was among registered voters who sat out 2024 entirely.**

Among that group, the ad increased vote likelihood by 7.7 points and vote enthusiasm by 8.4 points, outperforming both 2024 Trump voters and 2024 Harris voters on both measures. It also moved Democratic favorability more among 2024 non-voters than among any group that actually cast a ballot. In other words, the voters this ad moves most are the ones who have not yet been brought into the fight. **That is a turnout story.**

This matters strategically. The non-voter universe is the most financially squeezed and least civically engaged group in our national polling. They are disengaged, not disinterested. An ad on immigration cruelty cuts through in a way that pure economic messaging does not for this group, likely because the visceral, human stakes of detention and deportation are harder to dismiss than abstract policy arguments.

Bottom line: The strongest play is to lead with an argument against Republicans on the economy, use immigration cruelty to illustrate the human cost of Republican governance, and close with the economic plan that tells voters what changes under Democrats.

III. Real Time Listening Confirms the Window Is Open Now

Our social listening program, run with Vocal Media across four Latino TikTok personas representing different ages, genders, and political leanings, shows this opening forming in real time:

- Cost of living concern is the single most consistent theme reaching every persona we track, including a 20 year old Gen Z man in McAllen, TX, who distrusts mainstream media and a Philadelphia, PA, millennial focused on the economy and government overreach.
- Immigration enforcement followed the same path, growing from a limited theme in August 2025 into a defining feature of every feed by early 2026, including male and apolitical feeds.
- Persuadable and even right leaning Latino audiences are already absorbing content that favors Democrats.

The question is whether campaigns meet them there with a plan, or only with outrage.



CONCLUSION

- **Stop running against Trump.** Start running against the Republican Party. Ads focused on Trump alone do not move GOP favorability, Democratic favorability, or vote enthusiasm. Connecting economic pain to Republican governance does all three. That is the strategic shift this moment requires.
- **Lead with the pain, name the policy, offer the plan.** Democrats must make the case that the cost of living is the result of Republican policy choices. Then tell voters specifically what changes under Democratic leadership. Accountability without an alternative is not enough.
- **Do not write off conservative leaning Latinos.** The data shows they are the most persuadable group on the economy, not the least. A GOP-focused economic message moved them 13 points toward Democrats. They are reachable.
- **Gen Z Latino voters are the most fired up audience available.** They are feeling the most economic pain and they respond to this message more than any other group. Meet them where they are.
- **Use immigration as a mobilization tool.** The cruelty of detention and enforcement moves non-voters more than any other group. Recent killings such as the shooting of [a Houston father](#) and a [young man in Maine](#) by ICE officers and the over 50 deaths in ICE detention since January of 2025 are mobilizing voters to demand accountability. That is a turnout opportunity that cannot be left on the table.

Latino voters are not asking Democrats to relitigate the last election. They are done being angry and they are ready to move. The campaigns that give them somewhere to go, with a clear argument and a concrete plan, will win this opening.

