

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## GOP ADS GO ON ATTACK OVER BORDER

By: Beth Reinhard  
August 10, 2014

New television ads by Republican Senate candidates in Arkansas and New Hampshire blame the recent surge of illegal immigration on Democratic support for "amnesty."

And in Maine, Republican Gov. Paul LePage is bashing his Democratic challenger for supporting government welfare for illegal immigrants.

The current immigration crisis is reaching parts of the campaign trail closer to the Canadian border than Mexico's. Republicans cite the arrival of tens of thousands of unaccompanied Central American children in recent months to argue that Democrats are supporting bad immigration policy. A recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found 64% disapprove of the U.S. response to the border crossings.

Democrats, fighting back, say the GOP is playing politics with a humanitarian crisis and seeking to drive up voter turnout in November. Maine's Mr. LePage "has chosen to focus on an extremely divisive issue in an election year to rally his conservative base," said Lizzy Reinholt, a spokeswoman for the governor's Democratic challenger, U.S. Rep. Mike Michaud.

Until recently, immigration had surfaced as an issue only in Republican primaries, and mostly in border states, said Elizabeth Wilner of Kantar Media's Campaign Media Analysis Group, which provides research on political ads.

Two weeks ago, New Hampshire Senate candidate Scott Brown became the first GOP candidate to raise the issue in general-election ads, Ms. Wilner said.

Another GOP Senate candidate, Terri Lynn Land of Michigan, joined in last week, airing grainy images of border crossings and accusing her Democratic rival of "playing Washington politics." And Arkansas Senate candidate Tom Cotton started running a TV spot attacking Democratic Sen. Mark Pryor over immigration. "Chaos and crime. Washington made the mess," declares the ad from Mr. Cotton.

Democrats say the ads are misleading, pointing out the Senate legislation they backed last year included \$40 billion for border security. "Pryor voted no amnesty. 20,000 agents. A 700-mile fence," says the counterattack ad aired by the senator Thursday.

But the bill also would have allowed undocumented workers to earn citizenship, and recent polls suggest the border crisis is boosting public support for tougher immigration policies.

In the recent Wall Street Journal poll, 51% said the children should be returned immediately to their home country because allowing them to stay will encourage more illegal immigration and burden public resources. Forty-three percent said the U.S. should let the children—who could be in danger if they return—to stay.

In a recent CNN/ORC International poll, some 51% said the government should focus on securing the border, while 45% said it was more important to allow illegal immigrants with jobs to become legal residents. That marked a shift from February, when 54% said illegal immigrants with jobs should be eligible for legal status, while 41% called for greater border security.

The GOP-led House voted two weeks ago to end President Barack Obama's program offering work permits to some immigrants brought illegally to the U.S. as children. A number of Republicans argue that program, along with the broad immigration overhaul that passed the Senate last year, encouraged the border influx.

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen Associated Press

But the Senate passed that legislation with GOP support, and the New Hampshire Democratic Party has seized on Mr. Brown's new ad to point out that the state's Republican senator, Kelly Ayotte, voted for the bipartisan bill along with Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen.

"This negative ad reeks of desperation," said Julie McClain, spokeswoman for the New Hampshire Democratic Party. Two recent polls show Mr. Brown trailing Ms. Shaheen by eight to 10 points.

In Maine, Mr. LePage has criticized the Obama administration for not notifying him about its placement of eight children in his state who illegally crossed the border. "It is wrong for the federal government to force a higher burden on the people of Maine to pay for those who come to our country illegally," he said.

He also has attacked Mr. Michaud for opposing his plan to ban illegal immigrants from receiving social services and other assistance from state government. Mr. Michaud said the proposal would unfairly affect victims of sex trafficking and refugees seeking asylum, and that municipalities don't have the resources to determine the legal status of every resident seeking assistance.

An independent candidate, Eliot Cutler, placed second in the 2010 race for governor and is running again this year.