



To: Interested Parties

Fr: Transgender Freedom Alliance Action

Re: Why Republicans Are Closing with Anti-Transgender Attacks

Date: 10/31/24

Republicans Bet on Anti-Transgender Attacks

As reported in multiple media outlets, the 2024 election cycle has seen a [massive uptick](#) in spending on [anti-transgender attacks](#) up and down the ballot. The latest numbers from AdHawk add up to over \$200M in paid ads in the Presidential and key Senate races. Further, about one-third of all TV and digital ads in key Senate races include attacks on transgender people. Attacks have also been ubiquitous on digital streaming platforms, in social media, and on radio - and in down ballot races across the country, suggesting the total spend from Republicans on this issue is likely significantly higher.

These attacks are extremely harmful to transgender individuals, including transgender young people and their families. They are also being used to falsely characterize Democratic candidates as extreme and out of touch—particularly when it comes to concerns around cultural change and lack of control, and often target Black and Latino men and white suburban women. They are often paired with attacks on crime and immigration and are part of the Right's strategy to demonize those they consider "other." The tagline at the end of these ads says it all: "[Democratic candidate] is for they/them, [Republican candidate] is for us/you."

Voters Not Focused on Transgender Issues

While these attacks were prevalent this cycle, polling also indicates that this issue is not at the forefront of voters' minds.

- [Data for Progress](#): Found that the overwhelming majority of voters (80%) agree that "both Democrats and Republicans should spend less time talking about transgender issues and more time talking about voters' priority issues like the economy and inflation."
- [Ground Media](#): Found "no statistically significant shift" in voter choice, mobilization or likelihood to vote. It did, however, reduce public acceptance of trans people across nearly all demographics.
- [Gallup](#): Found the economy is a significant factor to nine in 10 voters while 18% say transgender rights are of the utmost importance to their vote.

Will the Attacks Work?

Issues around transgender people are not top of mind for the vast majority of voters when it comes to choosing a candidate in this election. However, the intensity of targeted attacks not only impact voters' views and perceptions of transgender people, but also provide a gateway for policy-based attacks at the federal and state levels.

As we saw with the myriad attacks on reproductive rights and abortion access over decades, not responding to attacks ultimately results in policies that insert politicians into personal lives. Those candidates and campaigns who responded to anti-transgender attacks both blunted the impact of the attacks and connected with voters on the issues they care about most, such as the economy, education, and affordable healthcare.

The most effective responses, like [Christina Bohanan's in IA-1](#), blunt the attack by highlighting the motivation behind the attack, which is to divide and distract voters, are clear on what the candidate stands for, and recenter voters on the issues they care most about such as the economy, education, and healthcare.

Effective Response Message Framework

- These attacks are designed to tear us apart.
- More than ever, Americans are working hard to make ends meet. We need leaders who are focused on the problems everyday Americans are facing--not politicians stirring up divisions for their own political gain.
- So while my opponent is trying to divide us, I'm focused on raising incomes, lowering everyday costs, making sure our schools are funded, and ensuring access to affordable healthcare.
- Everyone is tired of the petty destructive politics. Let's turn the page and chart a new way forward that lifts up all Americans.

Impact

Attacks against Democratic candidates around issues relating to transgender people are part of a broader strategy to not only divide and distract voters, but to erode the rights of transgender people. While transgender rights may not rise to the level of saliency as the economy or other issues like healthcare and education, the attacks speak to Republican's desire for control and to insert politicians into personal and private decisions. While the rights of transgender people may not be at the forefront of voters' minds, responding by calling out the motives of the Right, identifying shared values, and raising issues that all voters care about is essential.

For more information, please contact Adrienne Kimmell; akimmell@sparksolutions.us