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DAILY BULLETIN

Will Latinos lead an electoral reckoning against GOP?

Growing numbers are gravitating to Democratic party

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Now that the calendar has turned to 2026, the nation's midterm elections are fast approaching. What can we expect from these high-stakes contests? National public opinion polls and other indicators suggest President Trump and the MAGA-aligned Republican Party may face an electoral reckoning this fall. The warnings are also clearly visible in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

This sprawling Inland Empire is one of California's most politically competitive areas, regularly hosting closely contested congressional, state legislative, and local elections. In recent decades, Democrats have held a slight electoral edge in the region, but [Republicans gained ground](#) in the 2022 midterms and, more dramatically, in 2024.

In 2022, Inland Empire voters opposed the reelection of Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, and in 2024, both counties voted for Donald Trump over Kamala Harris — the first time in 20 years [the region supported a Republican for president](#). In that latter election, the Inland Empire also backed Republican Steve Garvey over Democrat Adam Schiff in the contest for U.S. Senate. At the end of 2024, the GOP's prospects in the Inland Empire seemed bright.

But just one year later, the region shifted back toward the Democrats. In California's November 2025 special election, [Inland Empire voters embraced Proposition 50](#), the measure that redrew the state's congressional districts mid-decade. The plan was designed to switch five congressional districts in California from Republican to Democratic control. Among other changes, Proposition 50 wiped out the current 41st Congressional District in Riverside County long held by Republican Ken Calvert and replaced it with district lines that favor Democrats.

Newsom and other proponents explicitly framed Proposition 50 as a referendum on the MAGA Republican president. Trump presents an existential threat to the nation, they said, and a "Yes" vote on Proposition 50 was necessary to resist him. A decisive majority of Inland Empire voters agreed. The measure won by 12.6 points in Riverside County and 14.6 points in San Bernardino County.

What explains the region's political reversals in recent years?

One important factor has been the shifting attitudes of Latino voters. According to the Census Bureau, Hispanics are a majority of the Inland Empire's population (52.5% of Riverside County and 69.6% of San Bernardino County), and a smaller but growing share of the region's electorate.

In California, Latinos have historically supported Democrats by large margins. However, an increasing number have drifted away from the Democratic Party, and in 2024 Latino support for Trump spiked, especially among Latino males.

The Latino movement toward Trump in 2024 was evident in parts of the Inland Empire with high percentages of Hispanic voters. We can see this shift through precinct-level analysis of voting data in recent elections by focusing on precincts where the voting age population is 70% or more Hispanic. About 20% of the Inland Empire's 2,667 precincts have 70%+ Hispanic voting age population. These precincts are concentrated in cities such as San Bernardino, Rialto, Fontana, Perris, and Jurupa Valley.

In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton outpolled Trump in these heavily Latino Inland Empire precincts by a whopping 54 points in the two-party vote (77% to 23%).

In subsequent elections, however, the Democratic Party's dominance in these communities began to erode. The party increasingly struggled to hold younger, less politically engaged Latino voters and more socially conservative Latinos, whose policy preferences often align with the GOP. Moreover, in 2024, polls showed that many Latinos, like other Americans, were angry about inflation and other threats to their economic well-being and tended to blame the Biden administration.

That year's Democratic presidential nominee, Kamala Harris, managed to defeat Trump in these highly Hispanic Inland Empire precincts by 18 points — still a substantial win, but only one-third of Hillary Clinton's margin in 2016. Trump's gains among Latinos, replicated across the country, helped him recapture the White House.

Yet, in 2025, Latino voters across the nation turned decisively against Trump. In the Inland Empire, precincts with the highest Latino concentrations "stood up to Trump" by backing Proposition 50 by a wide 49% margin (74.5% to 25.5%), far exceeding their support for Harris over Trump in 2024.

Why have many Latino voters so quickly soured on Donald Trump?

In 2024, Trump had the advantage of challenging an unpopular Democratic administration and could credibly argue that Latinos were better off under his leadership than under Biden's. By contrast, a year later, Latinos were able to judge Trump's recent record in office — and most found it wanting.

In November 2025, the Pew Research Center released a national poll of nearly 5,000 Latino Americans that surveyed their views of the second Trump administration. Among other results, the poll found that 70% of respondents disapproved of Trump's job performance; 65% disapproved of Trump's approach to immigration; and 61% concluded that Trump's policies had made economic conditions worse. More than two-thirds (68%) said the situation of U.S. Hispanics was now worse than a year ago, while about 80% said Trump's policies had been harmful to Hispanics.

These and other responses highlight how Trump quickly squandered an opportunity to build a broader and more durable Latino alignment with the GOP by alienating a group that in 2024 provided him more support than any Republican presidential nominee in recent history.

The Latino backlash against Trump in the Inland Empire and elsewhere helps explain why California's anti-Trump ballot measure exceeded expectations in 2025, and why Republicans may well face a larger electoral reckoning later this year.

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The [Inland Empire Economic Partnership](#)'s mission is to help create a regional voice for business and quality of life in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Its membership includes organizations in the private and public sector.