

EL OBSERVADOR

Alienated by Anti-immigration Tone

Latino voting bloc could decide who wins key states

(AP) — The Republican Party is beefing up its minority outreach nationwide and preparing to put its rising Latino stars on the campaign trail amid concerns that tough immigration rhetoric in the presidential primary is taking on an increasingly anti-Hispanic tone.

But immigrant-rights groups and some political watchers say the damage may be irreversible. They argue that the GOP has severely hampered itself as it looks to woo the critical Latino voting bloc that could decide who wins key states like New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado and Florida next fall.

Mitt Romney "is done," said DeeDee Blase, founder of Somos Republicans in Arizona. "He'll be lucky to get eight percent of the Hispanic vote" after saying he would veto legislation that would create a path to citizenship for some illegal immigrants and accepting the endorsement of anti-immigration activist Kris Kobach, architect of two of the strongest immigration crack-down laws in the country.

The GOP front-runner, Romney has referred to the legislation — called the DREAM Act — as a hand-out. The measure would allow some young illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to earn legal

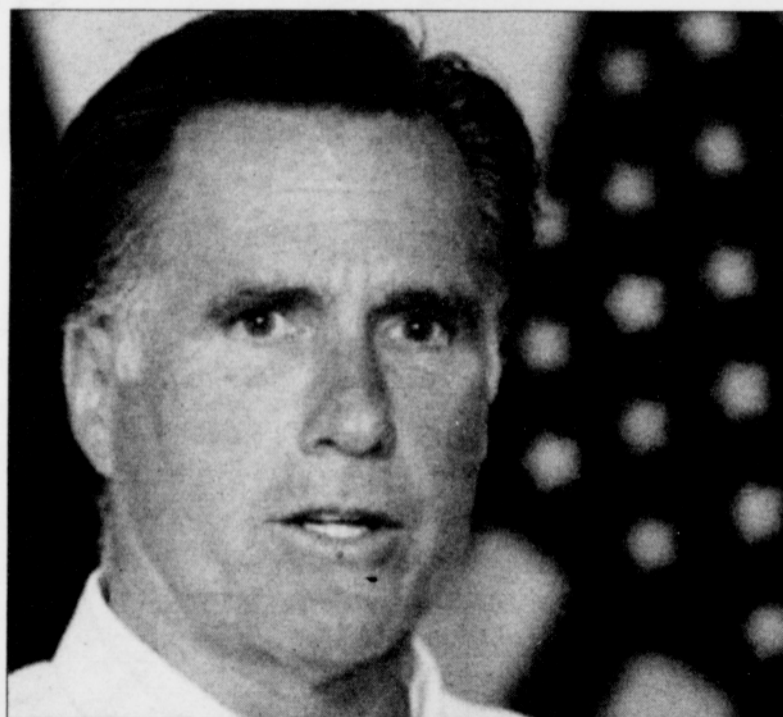


A group of Latino voters show their support for the DREAM Act during a rally last September in Rhode Island. (AP photo)

status if they went to college or joined the military. Challengers, including Texas Gov. Perry, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum and Ron Paul, have also taken tough anti-immigration stances in the campaign.

Language from them has been so sharp that even New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez, a Republican, has warned the candidates to watch their tongues.

"What we have to do is this: We have to tone down the rhetoric, and we have to have a sincere, honest conversation with the voters," Martinez said Wednesday, shortly



Mitt Romney's immigration rhetoric could hurt Republicans among Latino voters

after the Republican National Committee announced that it had hired a director of Hispanic outreach and was expanding its Latino-focused efforts. She's among the popular Hispanic politicians Republicans will deploy to battleground states in the coming months.

There's a reason for the urgent tone coming from Republican leaders on this matter.

The government projects Hispanics will account for roughly 30 percent of the population by 2050, doubling in size and boosting their political power. Overall, Hispanics traditionally tilt Democrat, meaning the Republican Party is looking at a threat to their future power if they don't work to make inroads with this politically pivotal group now.

Democrats have strengthened their standing with Hispanics in the most recent presidential election years. While much was made during the Democratic primary of 2008 of President Barack Obama's perceived weakness among Hispanics, he won 67 percent of their vote in the general election to 31 percent for Republican John McCain. It was a huge jump from 2004 when Democratic nominee John Kerry won Hispanics by 53 percent to 44 percent for Bush, a Texan who focused heavily on Hispanics.

Some worry that this year's eventual GOP nominee won't fare much better than McCain four years ago — and may fare worse — if candidates don't soften the way they talk about immigration.

Facing the Consequences

Play touches on Mayan calendar prophecies

Swept up in an immigration raid and deported to Mexico, Rio, Luz and Sal are suddenly immersed into indigenous prophecies surrounding B'aktun 13, the final era in the Mayan calendar.

In the Yucatán, they encounter Mayan deities Ixchel, goddess of water and moon, and Ahpuch, god of death, who lead the trio deeper into a mythological universe. Time revolves like a Mayan calendar as each must face the consequences of their pasts. When the end of the era of B'aktun 13 arrives on Dec. 21, 2012, will the world change? Or will they?



Tricia Castañeda-Gonzales (from left), Daniel Moreno and Ajai Terrazas-Tripathi in the world premiere bilingual production of "B'aktun 13," now playing at the Milagro Theatre, 525 S.E. Stark St.

B'aktun 13 is one of the new works of the Portland Fertile Ground Festival. Written by Dañel Malán and directed by Matthew B. Zrebski, the production plays Thursday at 7:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.; and Saturday, Jan. 21 at 2 p.m. at Milagro Theatre, 525 S.E. Stark St.

Admission is \$14 to \$24. Tickets can be purchased from milagro.org or by calling 503-236-7253.

The matinee on Saturday will be accompanied by a free resource fair featuring an open mic readers theatre (from 1 to 2 p.m.). Plus, a special selection of books for purchase from Powell's related to community and environmental responsibility, immigration issues and Mayan culture will be available.

PHOTO BY RUSSELL YOUNG