

# [***Dubious claims about voting flyers at a migrant camp show how the border is inflaming US politics***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BTP-G801-DYMD-63DB-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** VALERIE GONZALEZ and ALI SWENSON, Associated Press

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**Body**

McALLEN, Texas — A humanitarian organization in northeastern Mexico said it did not create flyers urging migrants to vote for President Joe Biden that were filmed at its shelter in a viral video that sparked a firestorm of conservative outrage this week.

Accusations that Resource Center Matamoros was encouraging noncitizens to vote gained momentum after online posts displayed Spanish-language flyers instructing migrants to vote illegally for Biden once they arrived in the U.S. The flyers contained the logo of the organization, but it was not clear who created or posted them. Videos showed them on the interior walls of portable toilets at the center's shelter near Mexico's border with Texas.

Resource Center Matamoros founder Gaby Zavala told The Associated Press the organization doesn't know who made the flyers and said her group “does not encourage immigrants to register to vote or cast ballots in the U.S.”

The provenance of the flyers was still unknown Wednesday. They contained errors in spelling and grammar, and appeared to include verbatim paragraphs from the organization's English-language website that were translated into Spanish using online translation software.

Despite the flyers' uncertain origin, unverified claims about them have proliferated online this week and came up during a congressional hearing Tuesday, when House Republicans raised them in their questioning of Homeland Security Secretary [*Alejandro Mayorkas*](https://apnews.com/hub/alejandro-mayorkas).

The episode reflects how rapidly claims related to the [*migrant surge at the border*](https://apnews.com/article/border-immigration-biden-trump-42c945d02742b169bde40601a27fde02) can spread and influence the political debate as the presidential election approaches. Former President Donald Trump and his allies [*have used the surge*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-migrants-border-voter-fraud-campaign-40bbf5748615a3b1f6087ff920f59278) to say, without evidence, that Democrats are allowing migrants into country as a way to boost Biden's re-election chances. [*Only U.S. citizens are permitted to vote*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-immigrant-voting-noncitizens-elections-explained-cf4c73b336147b5f5d9c2a22b2564994) in federal elections and historically the number of noncitizens caught attempting to cast a ballot illegally is extremely small.

Images and videos of the flyers at the Matamoros center erupted online after the Heritage Foundation's oversight arm posted them on the social platform X on Monday evening.

The conservative think tank shared an image of one of the flyers, which was labeled as coming from Zavala and contained both the Resource Center Matamoros logo and another logo in Spanish reading, “all with Biden.” It also shared a video that showed multiple flyers posted inside portable toilets where migrants might see them.

The letter misspelled the Spanish word for welcome, “bienvenidos,” as “bienvedinos.” It also contained minor grammatical errors in Spanish, including an incorrect tense (“mientras esperan” should be “mientras esperen”) and the United States in lower case (“estados unidos”).

The text appeared to lift a paragraph from Resource Center Matamoros’ English-language website, reciting the first two sentences verbatim, but translated to Spanish. The flyer added two sentences — which do not appear on the group’s website — saying migrants need to vote for Biden.

“This flyer obviously seeks to prey on unsophisticated illegals and encourages them to illegally vote,” the Heritage Foundation wrote on one of its social posts.

Heritage also published a short audio clip of Zavala having a conversation with an unidentified male. After the male says he is trying to help as many people as possible before Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, gets re-elected, Zavala can be heard saying, “Believe me, we're in the same boat.” The nine-second exchange did not include any further mention of voting or elections.

Zavala did not answer detailed questions about the exchange and told the AP that her organization does not support political campaigns for or against candidates. She said such activity would be “outside the scope of our mission.”

The Heritage Foundation did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

As of Wednesday it was not clear when the video was shot, who created and posted the flyers, how long they remained inside the portable toilets or whether any migrants saw them. The think-tank credited the discovery of the flyers to a website that frequently posts about border issues, and whose founder regularly appears on streaming programs that promote conspiracy theories.

The claims that Resource Center Matamoros was behind the flyers were shared far and wide online, amassing millions of views across social media platforms. Threats appeared on a pro-Trump website, calling for Zavala's neck to be snapped and for members of her organization to be hanged.

A flurry of partisan researchers online dug into the group's background, trying to identify potential links to a variety of U.S. and left-wing campaigns and causes. The flyers briefly mentioned the Jewish humanitarian organization HIAS, on whose board Mayorkas once sat. That connection drove additional claims that both HIAS and the Biden administration were using the flyers to try to rig the election.

HIAS told AP it did not produce the flyers, does not support their message and has not rented space from or had any ties to Resource Center Matamoros since 2022.

“These flyers are a clear attempt to spread misinformation about HIAS’ work to support refugees,” its statement read.

Biden campaign spokesperson Ammar Moussa called the flyers disinformation and said they should be labeled that way on social platforms and websites.

Republican Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Dan Bishop of North Carolina brought up the flyers during a congressional hearing with Mayorkas on Tuesday, the same day as the House sent [*articles of impeachment*](https://apnews.com/article/mayorkas-senate-impeachment-trial-democrats-29aa775c0e866f4160f320583f261a72) against him to the Senate.

Greene accused Mayorkas of “aiding NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to steal our elections through your budget." She didn't pause to allow him to respond.

Mayorkas didn't immediately respond on Wednesday to the AP's request for comment.

The claims exploded online as Trump and other Republicans are claiming that the surge of migrants at the country's southern border increases the risk that some of them living in the country without documentation will vote illegally.

When people in the U.S. register to vote, [*they confirm under penalty of perjury*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-immigrant-voting-noncitizens-elections-explained-cf4c73b336147b5f5d9c2a22b2564994) that they are U.S. citizens. Several states also verify that registration against federal and state databases.

While there have been anecdotal instances of noncitizens casting ballots, various states have examined their voter rolls and found no indication of significant numbers of noncitizens voting in federal elections. Studies also have shown the incidence is exceedingly rare.

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Associated Press immigration writer Elliot Spagat contributed to this report.

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