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ARTICLE

How Your News Source Completely Changes What You Believe About Immigration



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BY BRENT BUCHANAN/DAILY SIGNAL JANUARY 28, 2026

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Texas has accounted for 25% of all ICE arrests since enforcement ramped up. The state has processed thousands upon thousands of deportations. No riots. No mob violence against federal officers. No churches stormed during worship services.

Minnesota represents less than 1% of ICE arrests. And Minneapolis is on fire.

How do you explain that gap?

The answer has nothing to do with immigration policy and everything to do with where Americans get their information.

What the Polling Actually Shows

At Cygnal, we recently surveyed voters on whether the Trump administration's deportation efforts have gone too far, are about right, or haven't gone far enough.

The results: 50% said too far, 48% said about right or not far enough. That's a statistical tie. A country split down the middle.

But if you only consumed legacy media coverage, you'd assume 80% of Americans are horrified by what's happening. You'd think the deportation efforts represent some unprecedented crisis of conscience for the nation.

They don't.

Nearly half the country supports the policy or wants it to go further. You just wouldn't know that from watching the evening news.

The real divide isn't about what Americans believe. It's about where they get the information that shapes those beliefs.



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Inside the Information Bubbles

The data gets interesting when you cross-reference policy views with media consumption patterns.

Among voters who believe deportation efforts have gone "too far," 51% get their news primarily from national broadcast television: NBC, ABC, CBS. Compare that to 36% of all voters and just 14% of those who think enforcement hasn't gone far enough.

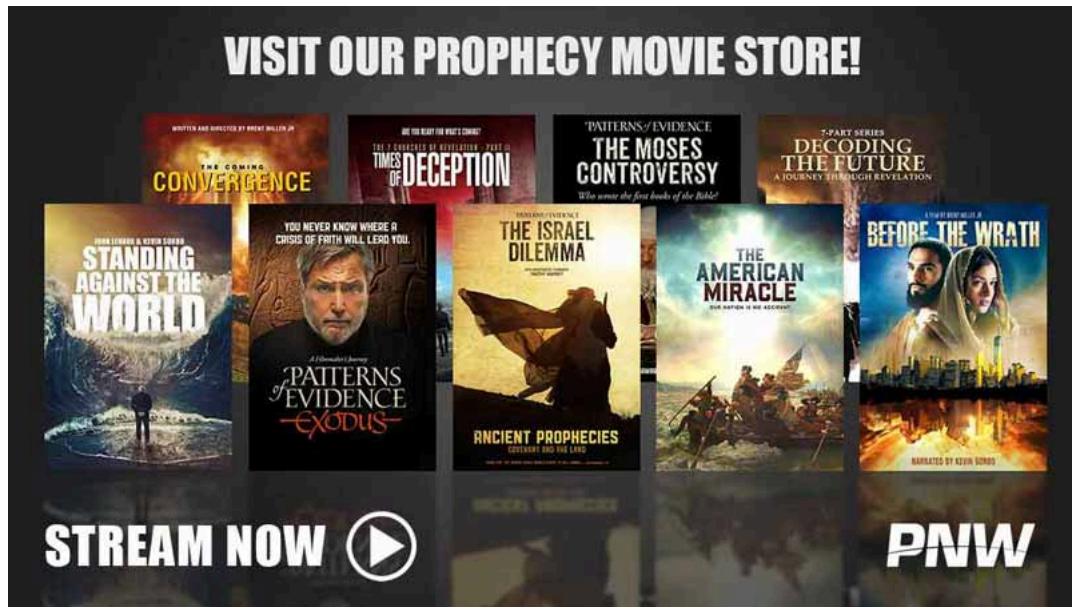
The "too far" crowd also over-indexes on newspaper consumption compared to the general voter population. These are the legacy media institutions, the ones that dominated American information for decades.

On the flip side, voters who believe deportation efforts haven't gone far enough slightly over-index on cable news (45% vs. 40% overall) and dramatically over-index on X, formerly Twitter (16% vs. 9% overall).

The "about right" middle? They're slightly more likely to get news from cable and Facebook than the average voter. No real drastic differences outside the fact they also don't get as much of their news from legacy media.

What emerges is a clear pattern: liberals cluster heavily around broadcast television and print newspapers, while conservatives spread across cable, social media, and newer digital platforms.

These groups are consuming different facts, different story selections, different framings of what matters ... and what doesn't.



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The Amplification Machine

As said at the beginning, Minnesota represents less than 1% of ICE enforcement activity, but it's receiving wall-to-wall national coverage. Every confrontation, every protest, every dramatic standoff gets the full treatment--helicopter shots, breathless correspondents, the works.

Texas is processing 25 times the enforcement activity with minimal national attention. Why? Because compliance doesn't generate clicks. Orderly deportations don't drive ratings. A state that implements federal policy without mass unrest isn't a story anyone wants to tell.

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And the consequences are tangible. When broadcast networks run continuous coverage of "resistance" to immigration enforcement, they're sending a signal to activists in other cities: this is how you get attention. This is how you become part of the story. This is how you "fight Trump."

The coverage doesn't just reflect the violence. It incentivizes it.

The Death of Shared Reality

For most of American history, we argued about policy while agreeing on basic facts. Democrats and Republicans watched the same evening news, read the same wire service reports, saw the same footage. They disagreed about what to do, not about what was happening.

That's over.

And I wrote about in "America's Emotional Divide," we've entered an era where Americans increasingly inhabit separate factual universes. The "too far" voter and the "not far enough" voter are watching different incidents, hearing different statistics, encountering different human-interest stories designed to trigger different emotional responses.

When I conduct focus groups, I see this constantly. Voters will cite "facts" that are genuinely news to voters on the other side--not because anyone is lying, but because their individual media ecosystems simply never surfaced that information.

This is what called tribal epistemology. Your tribe determines not just your values but your evidence. What counts as a credible source, a significant event, a representative example--all of it filters through group identity before it reaches individual judgment.

What's Actually at Stake

The Minneapolis situation illustrates the real danger. You have a city tearing itself apart over enforcement activity that represents a statistical rounding error nationally. You have activists storming churches, attacking federal officers, setting fires. And the coverage of that chaos generates more chaos elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the state handling a quarter of all enforcement activity does so with minimal drama. But nobody's running prime-time specials on "How Texas Implemented Immigration Policy without Burning Down."

The question for us is straightforward: Are you going to let your media diet determine your reality? Or are you going to actively seek out primary data, diverse sources, and information that challenges your existing beliefs?

Democracy requires a shared factual foundation. When half the country thinks we're in a humanitarian crisis and half thinks we're finally enforcing laws that went ignored for decades--and both sides can cite "evidence" for their position--we have a collective epistemological breakdown.

The information bubble doesn't just distort immigration. Everything is distorted. And the only people who can pop it are the ones willing to step outside their comfortable media habits and ask what they might be missing.



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