

Romney consistent on views of immigration

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

February 7, 2012 Tuesday, Main Edition

Copyright 2012 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
ajc.com

Section: METRO NEWS; Pg. 1B

Length: 871 words

Byline: Eric Sturgus

Staff

Body

Georgians will soon have an opportunity to choose which Republican they want to see battle President Barack Obama for the White House.

The Georgia Democratic Party isn't waiting for the March 6 state primary to weigh in on one GOP candidate, Mitt **Romney**.

A Jan. 27 statement from the state party claimed **Romney** wasn't truthful on 10 subjects during a recent debate. The subject that caught our attention was **immigration**.

"**Romney** claimed that he opposed 'rounding people up and deporting them,' " that section began. "But just last month, he stated emphatically that people who come to the United States without documentation should 'go back home and get in line with everyone else' --- and he has previously made clear that includes even grandparents who have been here for decades and served in their community or in the military."

The former Massachusetts governor has faced criticism that he constantly shifts his stance on issues to appeal to conservative Republican voters. We wondered whether the Georgia Democratic Party was accusing **Romney** of changing his position on deporting illegal immigrants.

So do the Democrats have a point about **Romney** on **immigration**?

They base their claim on a recent interview **Romney** did with the Spanish-language television network Telemundo before the Florida primary, saying it's inconsistent with statements he's made in other interviews and on the campaign stump.

"[**Romney**] panders to Telemundo, and when he's in front of Fox News, he says get in line with everyone else," party spokesman Eric Gray said.

By some federal estimates, there are as many as 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States. The Republican candidates have accused Obama of not being aggressive on patrolling the U.S.-Mexican border. Obama has countered that he has put more agents there than any president in U.S. history.

Romney consistent on views of immigration

Romney has proposed efforts that would make it increasingly difficult for illegal immigrants to find work in the U.S. and encourage them to return to their homeland. During one December speech in Iowa, **Romney** used the language the Democrats quoted in their critique, but he did not mention deportation.

"For those who came here illegally, they might have a transition time to set their affairs in order and then go back home and get in line with everyone else," he said.

A **Romney** spokeswoman forwarded us two statements by the candidate, one made in 2007 and the other last month, that propose similar ideas on **immigration**.

In 2007, **Romney** referred to what he described as a "realistic attrition program."

"If they, for instance, have a child in school, we may let them complete the school year, and then they return home. When they are home, they're able to apply for permanent residency or for citizenship or anything else they'd like to apply for," he said.

During a debate last month in Jacksonville, **Romney** twice talked about self-deportation.

"I don't think anyone is interested in going around and rounding up people around the country and deporting 11 million Americans --- or, excuse me, 11 million illegal immigrants into America," he said.

To strengthen his argument, Gray directed us to **Romney's** comments during a January debate in South Carolina. In that debate, **Romney** said he did not support the DREAM Act, a proposal by two U.S. senators to give qualifying young people here illegally a six-year path to citizenship that must include the completion of a college degree or two years of military service.

Romney then went on to talk about the broader topic of illegal **immigration**: "I think we have to follow the law and insist those who come here illegally ultimately return home, apply and get in line with everyone else."

Now, does **Romney** mean when he said "insist" illegal immigrants return home that he would round them up and deport them?

"That's deportation," Gray said. "What he does instead of saying deport them, he uses weasel words to say one thing to Telemundo and another thing to Fox News."

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the nonpartisan Washington-based Center for **Immigration** Studies, called it "implausible" to say **Romney** has flip-flopped. Krikorian calls **Romney's** position "attrition through enforcement."

"**Romney** has been pretty clear in describing a self-deportation policy," he told us.

A spokesman for the Federation for American **Immigration** Reform, an organization that wants the federal government to stop illegal **immigration** and seeks stronger border patrols, said he hasn't heard **Romney** talk about deportation.

"Nobody who has seriously looked at the issue has said the answer is round everybody up and deport them," said the spokesman, Ira Mehlman.

PolitiFact Georgia found articles dating to 2006 in which **Romney** was quoted as saying he didn't believe "in rounding up 11 million people and forcing them at gunpoint from our country." He has consistently talked about an **immigration** approach of supporting policies that encourage illegal immigrants to return to their homeland. We don't see any recent change in his position and rate this one as a No Flip.

Comment on a ruling

Want to comment on a Truth-O-Meter ruling? You can. Just go to Facebook and search for PolitiFact Georgia. Once our page appears, hit the "Like" button. And let the commenting commence.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspapers

Subject: US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (90%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (90%); INTERVIEWS (89%); POLITICAL CANDIDATES (89%); POLITICAL PARTIES (89%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (89%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); **IMMIGRATION** (89%); DEPORTATION (88%); NEGATIVE PERSONAL NEWS (73%); VOTERS & VOTING (70%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (62%); HISTORY (50%)

Company: FOX ENTERTAINMENT GROUP INC (82%)

Industry: TELEVISION INDUSTRY (67%)

Person: BARACK OBAMA (79%); MITT **ROMNEY** (79%)

Geographic: MASSACHUSETTS, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (94%); MEXICO (79%)

Load-Date: February 7, 2012