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Border separations ripple through midterm campaigns

By Bill Barrow

Wrenching scenes of migrant children being separated from their parents at the southern border are roiling campaigns ahead of midterm elections, emboldening Democrats on the often-fraught issue of immigration while forcing an increasing number of Republicans to break from President Donald Trump on an issue important to the GOP's most ardent supporters.

Kim Schrier, a Democrat running for a House seat outside of Seattle, said Trump is pushing an "absolutely unethical, inhumane" policy.

"We are talking about American values, not Democratic values or Republican values, and this is something that will flip people to a Democrat in this election," Schrier said.

That prospect was enough for House Republicans' national campaign chairman, Ohio Rep. Steve Stivers, to offer cover Monday to vulnerable GOP members. Stivers said in a statement that he's asking "the administration to stop needlessly separating children from their parents" and suggested he'd examine legislative options if Trump doesn't budge.

Republican Rep. Mike Coffman, whose suburban Denver district is often a battleground, took the cover Stivers provided. He didn't mention Trump, but said the border policy "is antithetical to the America I grew up in." He said he's willing to co-sponsor a House version of a Senate proposal from Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., that would halt the family separations, and he echoed claims Democrats had made for days: "History won't remember well those who support the continuation of this policy."

Democrat Jason Crow, a leading candidate to unseat Coffman, said the congressman can't run from his previous support for "zero-tolerance" border security. "This is what that looks like," Crow said, adding that as "an American and as a father" he finds the border situation "immoral."

With control of the House - and potentially the Senate - up for grabs, the searing images coming from the border have the potential to scramble midterm politics. Though controversy has dominated Trump's presidency, the growing furor over the separations struck a deeply emotional chord in both parties that may not calm anytime soon - even in districts that don't have large immigrant or Hispanic populations.

Pennsylvania's Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, another vulnerable Republican, said he plans to visit the border "to see what's going on down there with my own eyes." He called the detainees "our planet's children" and said they shouldn't be punished "for things that their parents do or don't do."

The political reverberations from the separations could last well beyond the midterms. Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., a potential 2020 presidential candidate, said June 18 that Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen should resign.

Trump along with most Republicans have long believed that they have held the upper hand on immigration. While Democrats have argued that most Americans support granting a path to citizenship for children who were brought to the U.S. illegally, the Republican base is fervently opposed to such measures - and votes accordingly. That's why some political observers say this moment is so unique.

"It's been tough for Democrats to bring the issue of compassion out on a national scale" when talking about immigration, said James Aldrete, a Democratic campaign consultant in Texas. But now, Aldrete said, "Trump has done it for us."

Democrats are hoping the issue will encourage more Latino voters to show up on Election Day, while also providing an opening for non-Hispanic independents in other swing districts.

At the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, spokesman Tyler Law said candidates can now frame "a potent issue" by "being authentic and talking about your own families, your own children."

Democrats also are buoyed by Trump drawing criticism from typically GOP friendly territory: the religious community. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which often wades into politics with its opposition to abortion rights and same-sex marriage, has decried the administration, as have mainline Protestant churches, the Mormon Church and evangelical leaders.

At least one Democrat running in a conservative-leaning House district in North Carolina combined Law's advice with the words of another Republican critic: former first lady Laura Bush. "As a young parent, I can't imagine the thought of my children being taken away from me, into the hands of strangers who aren't allowed to comfort my crying toddler," Dan McCready posted on his Facebook page alongside an op-ed that Mrs. Bush penned for the Washington Post.

In a Texas district that includes about a third of the southern border, Democratic candidate Gina Ortiz Jones hasn't had to be timid. She talked about immigration before family separation came to the forefront. But she said the matter allows her to highlight the priorities of the Republican administration and Congress, even as her opponent, Republican Rep. Will Hurd, also decries the Trump administration policy.

"What we are seeing is a pattern of using children as political pawns," she said, referring to Republican maneuvering on health care before approving funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program and the GOP's failure to secure any kind of fix for the young "Dreamer" immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

"We can't have folks doing the right thing only when they realize they are in a vulnerable seat," she said.

Still, Democratic pollster Paul Maslin offered a caveat to members of his party sensing a new opening: the public's short attention span. "In Trump world, the stories change daily, if not hourly," he said. "It



Museum of History to Feature 'The North Carolina Roots of Artist Ernie Barnes' June 29 through March 3, 2019. See story on page 9.

Birthplace of singer, activist Nina Simone to be preserved

TRYON, (AP) - The dilapidated wooden cottage in North Carolina that was the birthplace of singer and civil rights activist Nina Simone now has the protection of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The trust said in a news release June 19 find a new use for the house in Tryon where Simone was born in 1933. Last year, four African-American artists purchased the home.

National Trust President and Chief Executive Officer Stephanie Meeks says the trust will work with the home's new owners and the community to honor Simone's contributions to society and to "inspire new generations of artists and activists."

The three-room, 660-square-foot (60-square-meter) home went on the market in 2016.

Simone's original name was Eunice Waymon. She died in 2003 at the age of 70.

SC historically black school gets new trustees next month

ORANGEBURG, S.C. (AP) - South Carolina State University next board of trustees will have mostly new members, who follow a board installed in 2015 to stabilize the historically black school.

The Times and Democrat of Orangeburg reports eight new people will serve on the 12-member board beginning July 1. The S.C. General Assembly elected the new trustees in May.

Sen. John Matthews says the board "brings a diversity of experiences and background."

The temporary board was installed amid concerns about finances and accreditation at the university.

Legislators agreed in 2016 that the school wouldn't have to repay \$12 million in loans from the state. The move helped the school retain its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges after being on probation for two years.

Thwarted before, North Carolina GOP wants photo ID mandate

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina legislative Republicans on Thursday June 21, advanced their goal of permanently requiring voters to show photo identification - a proposal previously thwarted this decade by veto and federal judges who declared a similar mandate racially discriminatory.

Legislation to allow the state's voters to decide whether to place a photo identification directive in their state's constitution cleared a General Assembly committee on party lines.

By taking the route of enshrining it the North Carolina Constitution, Republicans believe the idea would get permanent legal backing while putting an idea popular with their base on the November ballots in what's expected to be a challenging political campaign for them. The bill's next stop is the House floor in the final days of this year's legislative session.

While more than 30 states require some form of identification to vote, only Mississippi and Missouri have constitutional provisions addressing photo ID. Arkansas will have a similar proposed constitutional amendment on ballots this fall.

"Election integrity must be one of our top priorities as legislators," House Speaker Tim Moore said while pitching the amendment to House committee members prior to their 21-9 vote. "This constitutional amendment for voter ID achieves that."

The proposed amendment would have to get support from 72 House members and 30 senators next week for it to get on this November's ballot. Republican members in both chambers exceed those thresholds.

A simple majority of voter support then would be needed in the referendum to change the constitution, but details of how the mandate would be carried out still would have to be implemented in a separate state law. Those details could be approved by the end of the year, especially if Republicans lose their veto-proof majorities in November and seek changes before the next session in January.

North Carolina required photo ID briefly for the 2016 primary elections based on a 2013 elections law, which also reduced the number of early-voting days and eliminated same-day registration during early voting. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck those restrictions down in July 2016, finding they targeted "African Americans with almost surgical precision," citing legislative documents.

Voting rights advocates contend black voters, who historically are more likely to lack a qualifying ID card, would be harmed disproportionately by any future requirement, too.

"This bill has one motivation: eliminate and chill the votes of certain voters," said the Rev. T. Anthony Spearman, president of the North Carolina NAACP chapter.

The number of actual confirmed cases of voter fraud - what Republicans say photo identification is designed to address - remains extremely low. An audit of the November 2016 elections by the state election board found 24 substantiated cases of people illegally voting multiple times among 4.8 million ballots cast. And instances of voter impersonation potentially occurred in only one case, said Kim Strach, the elections board's executive director.

The amendment "does nothing to improve the state of our voting machines. This does nothing to improve security of our voting system," Tomas Lopez, executive director of advocacy group Democracy North Carolina, told the committee.

Republicans and their allies offered anecdotal incidents in local precincts where poll observers have seen fraud or double-voting occur.

"Voter impersonation fraud is easy to commit, but yet very difficult to prove and prosecute," said Jerry Reinoehl of Fayetteville, who said he's been a formal poll observer. State Republican Party Executive Director Dallas Woodhouse said polls over the years have shown strong bipartisan support for voter ID.

"Many, many people in the public question why they don't present an ID and if their vote can be disallowed or somebody else can vote in their place," Woodhouse said.

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