



# Operation Midway Blitz

## Impact of Federal Immigration Surge on Chicago

Presented to Fortnightly on February 16, 2026

**Robert Pape, PhD**

Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago  
Director, Chicago Project on Security and Threats



**The University of Chicago**

**Division of the Social Sciences**

5828 S University Ave Suite 418, Chicago, IL 60637

☎ (773) 914-1371

✉ [cpost@uchicago.edu](mailto:cpost@uchicago.edu)

# WHY CHICAGO, WHY NOW

- Chicago is not just another city experiencing immigration enforcement.
- Under **Operation Midway Blitz**, it has become a **testing ground for a new model of federal power**—one that blurs the line between law enforcement and political control.
- Minneapolis shows where this dynamic can lead when legitimacy collapses.
- Chicago is where we can still decide **whether it does**



Photo: Joshua Lott/The Washington Post via Getty Images

# TRAGIC AND PREDICTABLE

Warned in June of US on the Brink...



A screenshot from a live broadcast on Fox News. On the left, a man in a dark suit and glasses, identified as Robert Pape, is speaking. A "LIVE" banner is positioned above him. To his right, a video inset shows a large crowd of people walking on a green lawn in front of a modern building. A text box above the inset reads "▶ TITAN WILLIAMS VIA STORYFUL OREM, UT/WEDNESDAY". At the bottom of the screen, a red banner identifies the speaker as "▶ ROBERT PAPE | UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PROFESSOR". Below this, a large white banner reads "PROFESSOR: U.S. IN ERA OF 'VIOLENT POPULISM'". The Fox News logo is in the bottom left corner, and a box in the bottom right corner promotes "CHARLIE KIRK AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL AVAILABLE NOW FOX NATION". A URL "cpost.uchicago.edu" is visible at the bottom center.

# WHERE WE ARE

**LA -> Chicago -> Minneapolis**

# WHERE WE MAY BE HEADING

**LA -> Chicago -> Minneapolis**

**+**

**Midterms**

# THIS TALK IS...



1. **Not a prediction**
2. **Not anti-immigration enforcement**
3. **Not anti-border control**
4. **Not minimizing the impacts or extent of crime**

# THIS TALK IS...



1. How we got here
2. What happened to Chicago during Operation Midway Blitz
3. Why the Impact Happened
4. What Renewed Enforcement during the Midterms Means

**Not a Prediction**

**Assessment of Risk**



## Prof. Robert A. Pape

*Professor*

Political Science Department  
University of Chicago

*Director*

Chicago Project on Security and Threats



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO

## Political violence

30 years studying political violence

20 years focused on terrorism and propaganda

Studied **major democratic “occupation-like” deployments**

- Internal (Northern Ireland)
- Foreign (Iraq, Afghanistan)

Focus: **how communities interpret coercive power**

Core Insight:

**Legitimacy** is not a moral add-on — it is a **strategic asset**



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*Director*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

### Data Driven Research that Gets Out In Front of Problems

Advisor to...

U.S. military on defeating adversaries without fueling escalation

FBI to improve disruption and sting operations



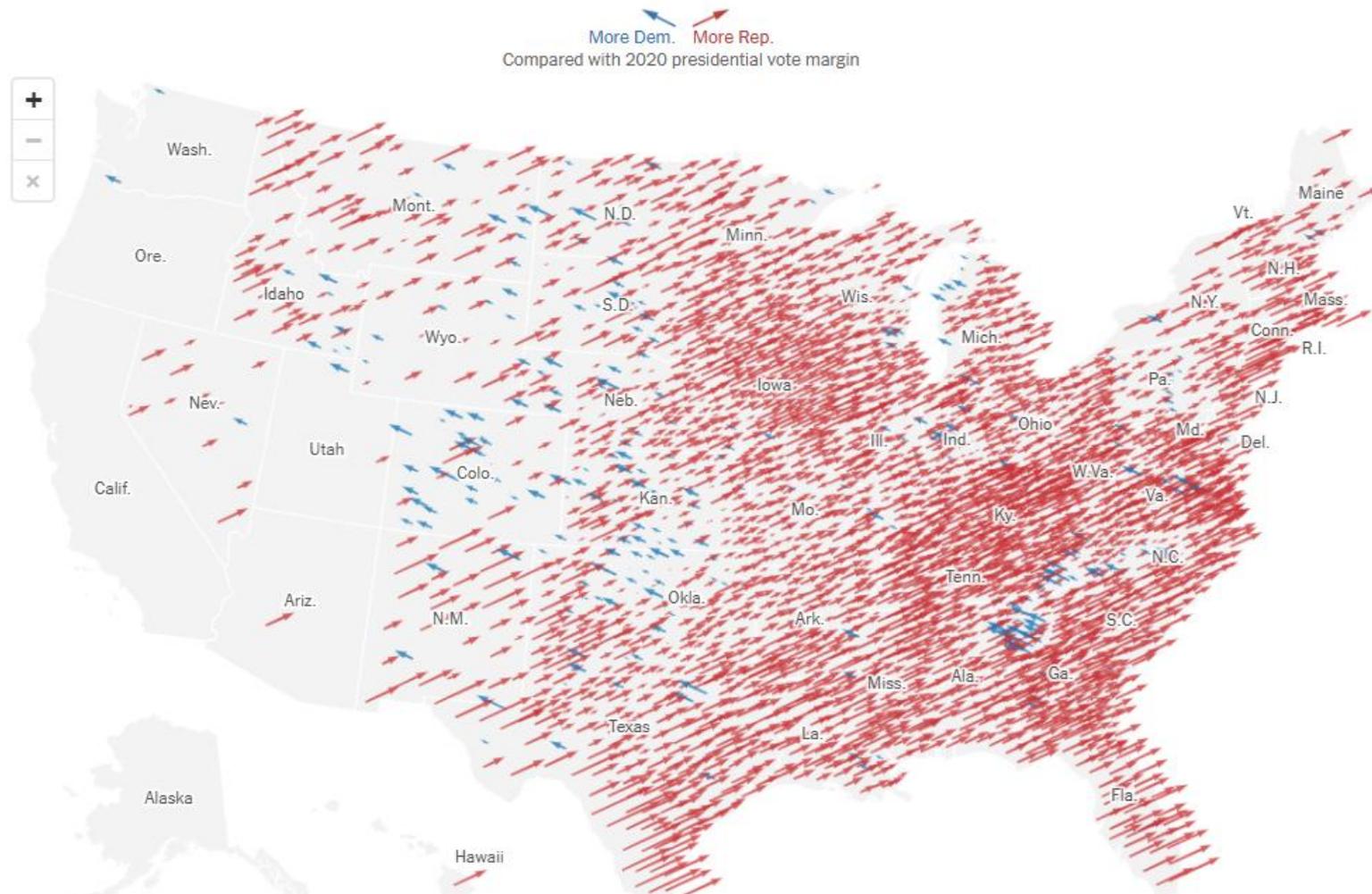
# HOW WE GOT HERE

# 2024 ELECTION

# MASSIVE RED WAVE

The New York Times

presidential election, according to a Times analysis of [election results](#) reported as of early Wednesday.



# DEPORTATIONS OBVIOUS FLASHPOINT



## Massive Republican Support vs Massive Democrat Opposition

### Most undocumented immigrants in the U.S. should be:

22,914 total respondents

Offered chance at legal status

56%

Deported

40%

● Harris

75%

11%

● Trump

22%

87%

Updated 2:34 p.m. ET, Nov. 6

# TRUMP TELLS MILLER

Goal is Deport 1 Million a Year (May 21, 2025)



**ICE/National Guard Deployed to Los Angeles on June 7, 2025**

**DHS: \$10-75 Billion/Yr**

**Mass Detention Centers Built**

**Goal is 2.5X Normal Deportations (400k/yr)**

## 20 U.S. metropolitan areas with largest number of immigrants in 2023



Note: Each metropolitan area has more than 500,000 immigrants. Circles are scaled to size of population.  
 Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**At 1 Million a year:**

**Chicago Unavoidable**

**LA, DC too**

**Notice:**

**NYC, Boston, Atlanta, Detroit**

■ **All pivotal for goal of 1 million a year**

■ **All Blue Cities**

**Today's Era of Violent Populism also Characterized  
by High Support for Political Violence  
on *BOTH* the Right and the Left**

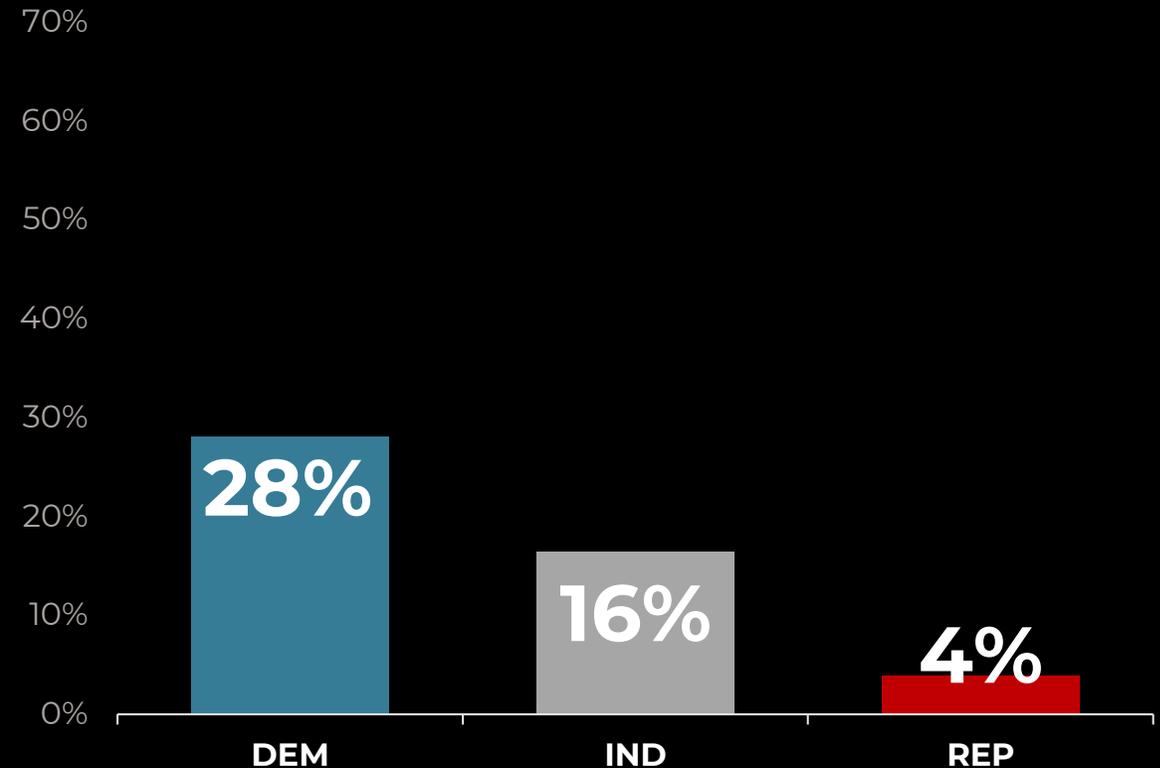
# VIOLENT POPULISM

## Support for Political Violence on the Left

**Agree: “The use of force is justified to remove Donald Trump from the presidency.”**

**16%**  
**41**  
**Million**

### Agree as Percent Party



*SOURCE: CPOST/NORC Sept 2025, N=2,131. Margin of Error = ±2.92%. Population size based on US Census population estimate of 258 million US adults.  
NOTE: Proportions based on entire sample. Skipped/Don't Know <1%*

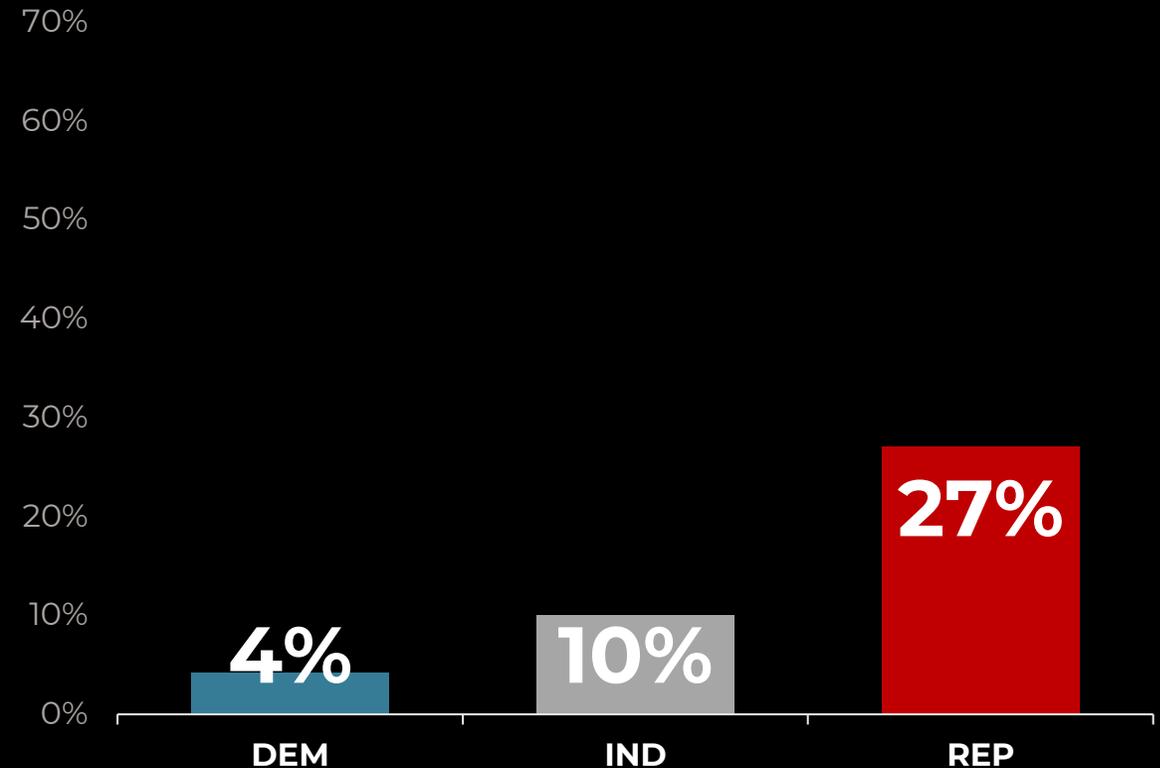
# VIOLENT POPULISM

## Support for Political Violence on the Right

**Agree: “Donald Trump is justified using the U.S. military to stop protests against the Trump agenda.”**

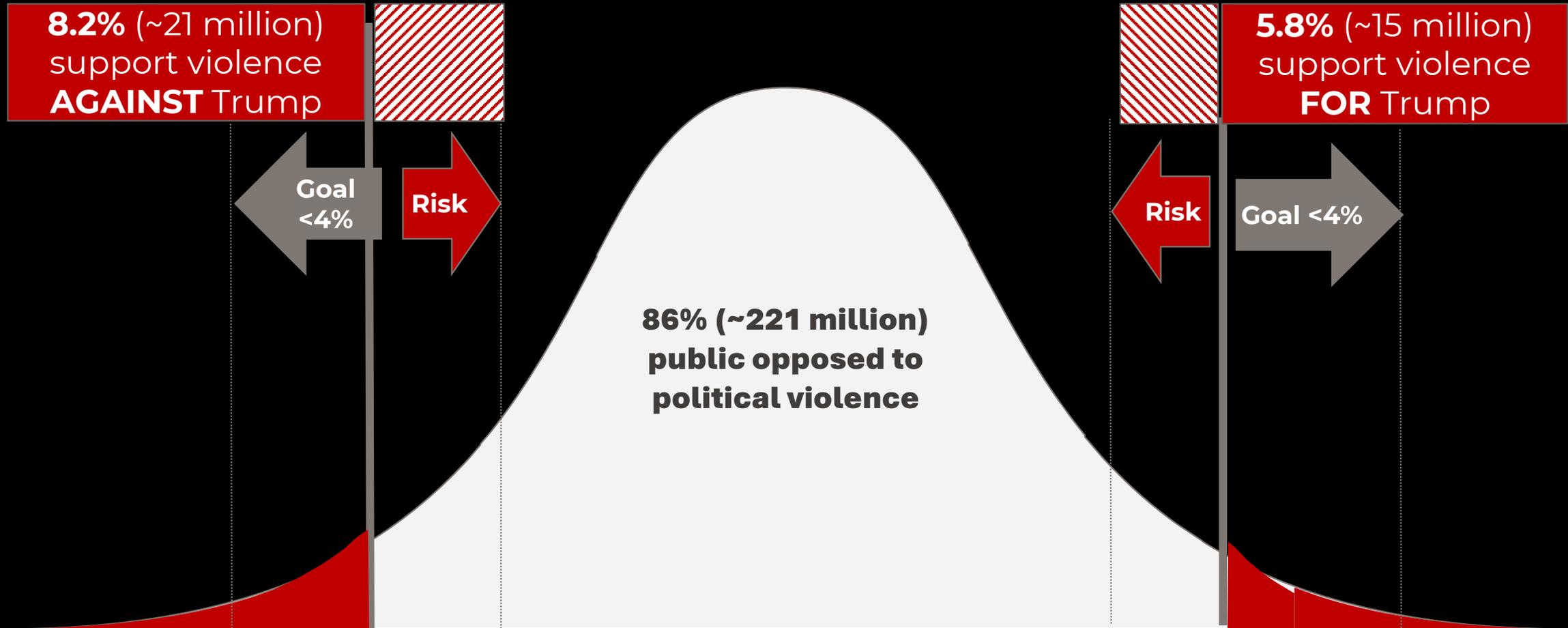
**14%**  
**36**  
**Million**

### Agree as Percent Party



*SOURCE: CPOST/NORC Sept 2025, N=2,131. Margin of Error = ±2.92%. Population size based on US Census population estimate of 258 million US adults.  
NOTE: Proportions based on entire sample. Skipped/Don't Know <1%*

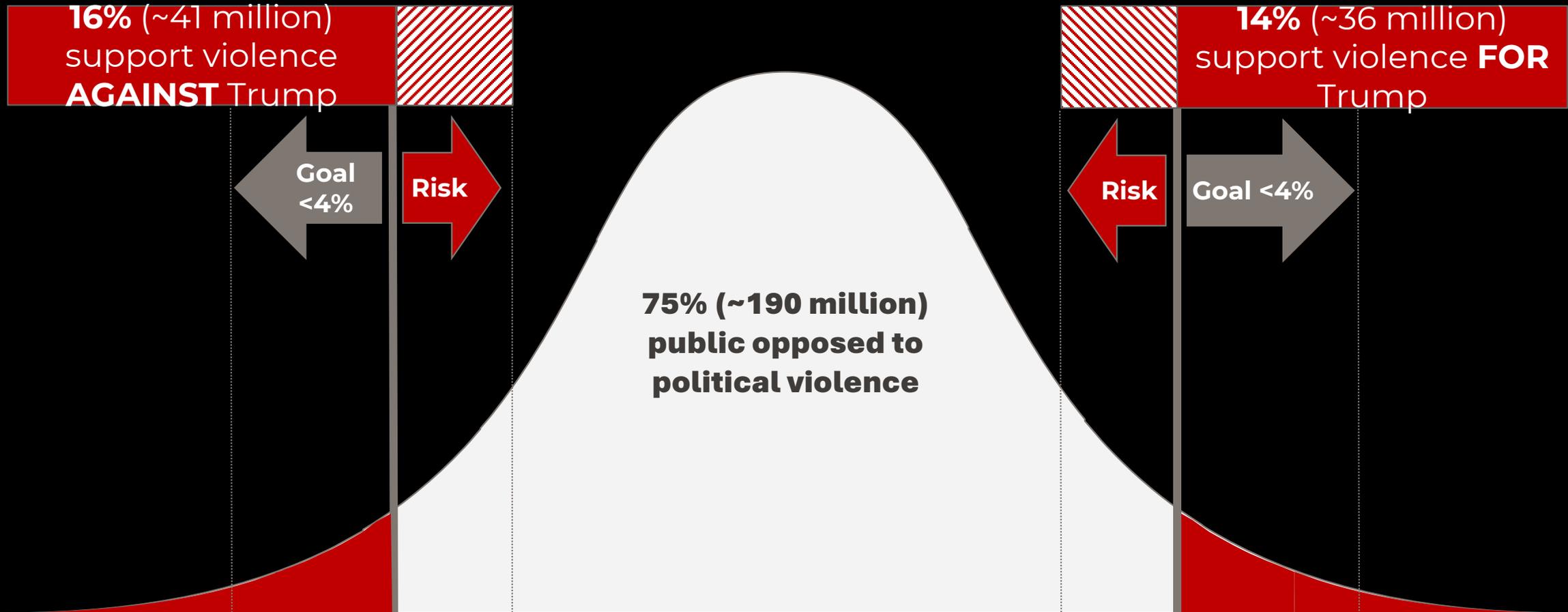
# THE RISK OF ESCALATING POLITICAL VIOLENCE



CPOST/NORC Sept 12-16, 2024, N = 2214, based on US Census population estimate of 258 million US adults. Don't know/Did not answer = 1%

# THE RISK OF ESCALATING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

## Challenges and strategies for the 2025 thru 2026 national elections



CPOST/NORC Sept 25-28, 2025, N = 2152, based on US Census population estimate of 258 million US adults. Don't know/Did not answer = 1%

# DEPORTATIONS A FLASHPOINT

% **Republicans** agree lethal force justified to deport illegal immigrants

33%

28%

% **Democrats** agree Immigrants targeted are justified in using force

“The use of lethal force by the government is justified to deport illegal immigrants”

“Immigrants targeted by the Trump administration for deportation are justified in using force to defend themselves.”

Source: CPOST/NORC Sept 2025, N=2,152. Margin of Error = ±2.86%. Population size based on US Census population estimate of 258 million US adults. NOTE: Proportions based on entire sample. Skipped/Don't Know <1%

# WHAT WAS OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ

# “OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ”



Sept 8 – Nov 15: 10x increase in enforcement

## Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Before	Midway Blitz
65 agents	300 agents



## Customs and Border Patrol

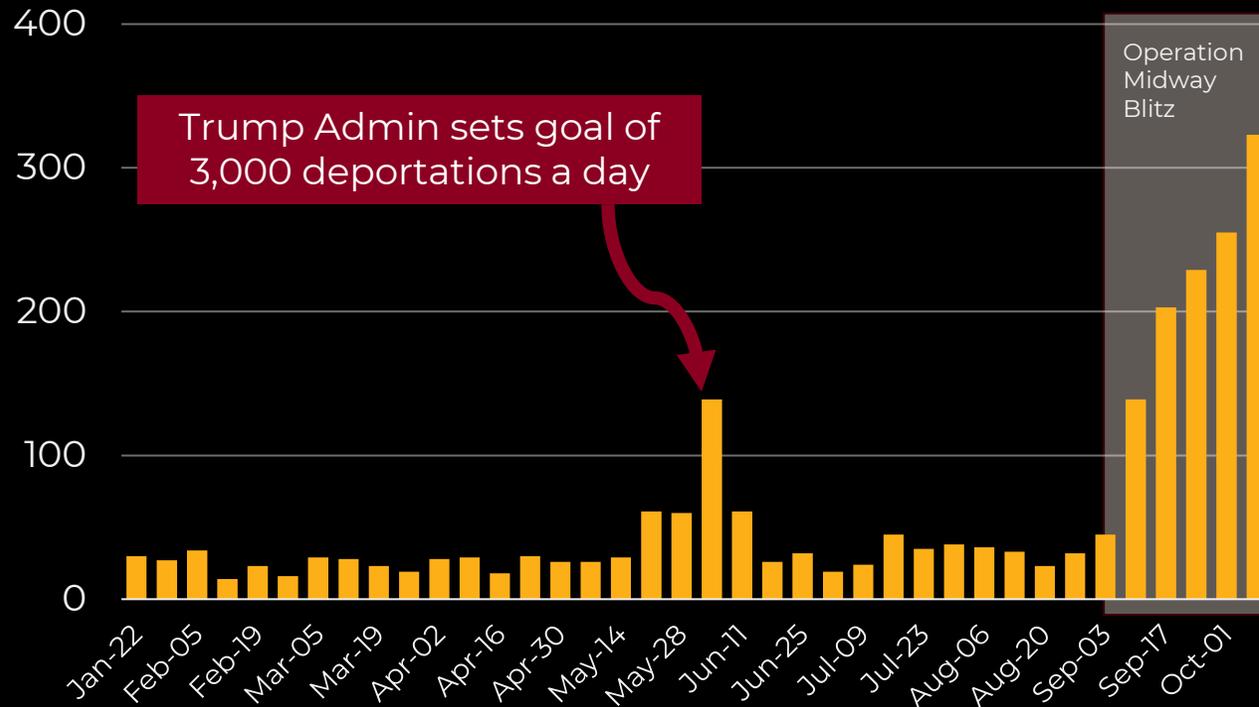
Before	Midway Blitz
0 agents	300 agents



# ARREST PROFILE HAS SHIFTED

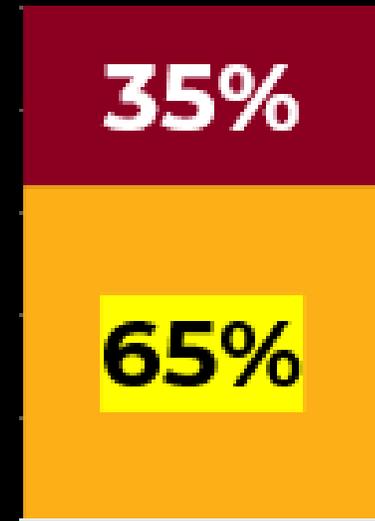
## OMB Well Beyond “Worst of the Worst”

**Total Weekly ICE Arrests (Illinois + Indiana)  
Immigrants with No Prior Criminal Conviction**



Source: Deportation Data Project, Data Through October 15, 2025

**Arrests in Midway Blitz**



### Illinois

- Criminal (Conviction/Pending)
- Non-criminal

## **FOUR DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT:**

- 1. Scale and Saturation**
- 2. Militarized Optics**
- 3. Loss of Local Control**
- 4. Everyday Life Disruption**

# DIMENSION 1: SCALE AND SATURATION

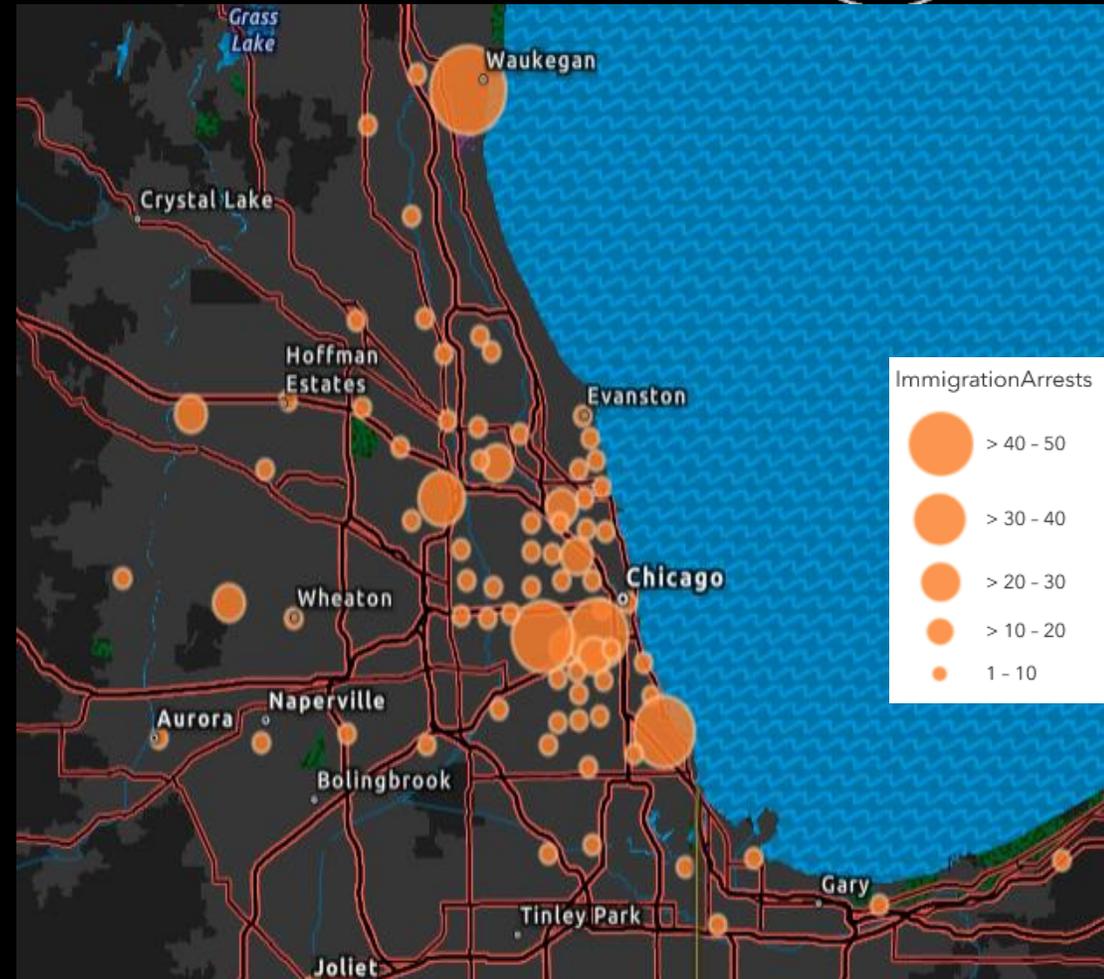


284+

OMB Enforcement Events  
in Chicago,  
Sept 8 to Nov 15  
(reported in media)

- ***Sustained, multi-agency federal deployment***
- ***Across neighborhoods***, not confined facilities.
- Federal presence ***rivals local law enforcement visibility.***

Data: CPOST Dataset of Enforcement and Protest Events  
During Operation Midway Blitz



**When enforcement becomes *the atmosphere*, it feels like control of civic space.**

# DIMENSION 2: MILITARIZED OPTICS AND TACTICS



## Tactical Gear and Crowd Control Tools



## Armored Vehicles



- **Tactical gear**
- **Armored vehicles**
- **Surprise residential raids**
- **Tear gas**

# WHY OPTICS MATTER



In political violence research, citizens infer intent from appearance, not internal policy memos



Chicago's South Side, October 14, 2025  
REUTERS/Jim Vondruska

## **DIMENSION 3: LOSS OF LOCAL CONTROL**

- **City and state leaders publicly oppose OMB tactics**
- **Federal enforcement without local consent or accountability**
- **Courts intervene—only after harm occurs.**

**Political Control is felt most acutely when force operates  
*above elected local institutions***

## DIMENSION 4: EVERYDAY LIFE DISRUPTION



- **Observed Effects in Latino areas**
  - School attendance: Down 12-14%
  - Business Revenues: Down > 20%
  - Clinics, churches, and workplaces become sites of fear

### **CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS** Immigration crackdown deals a blow to Chicago's Latino business corridors

By Marlen Garcia

September 04, 2025 08:46 AM

In interviews, small-business owners and leaders who serve Latino communities in the Chicago area have blamed immigration arrests and deportations as the main factor behind year-over-year revenue drops ranging from 20% to 50%.

***When enforcement reshapes daily routines, it ceases to feel targeted and starts to feel collective in nature***

# ENFORCEMENT EVENT → SPONTANEOUS PROTEST



## A Predictable Three Step Dynamic



**Enforcement and Protest become Mutually Reinforcing**

# STEPS 1 & 2: ENFORCEMENT → PROTEST

## Surprise Raids Provoke Spontaneous Community Protests



Federal agents stand guard as community members gather near a car crash site in Chicago on Tuesday, October 14. (Jim Vondruska/Reuters)

# STEP 3: SUPPRESSION AND SPILLOVER HARM



**Harm - and Fear  
Spread Beyond Intended Targets**



Federal officers detain a person while members of the community and activists protest near the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue, Oct. 4, in Chicago.

*Armando L. Sanchez/Tribune News Service*

# FREQUENCY MATTERS



- 48 Spontaneous protests at surprise raids in communities
- 17 Chemical agent deployments at these spontaneous protests
- These are patterns, not isolated incidents



***Protest dynamics are not driven by criminal intent – they are driven by perceived illegitimacy***

# WHY THE IMPACT ON CHICAGO



**CHICAGO PERCEIVED OMB**

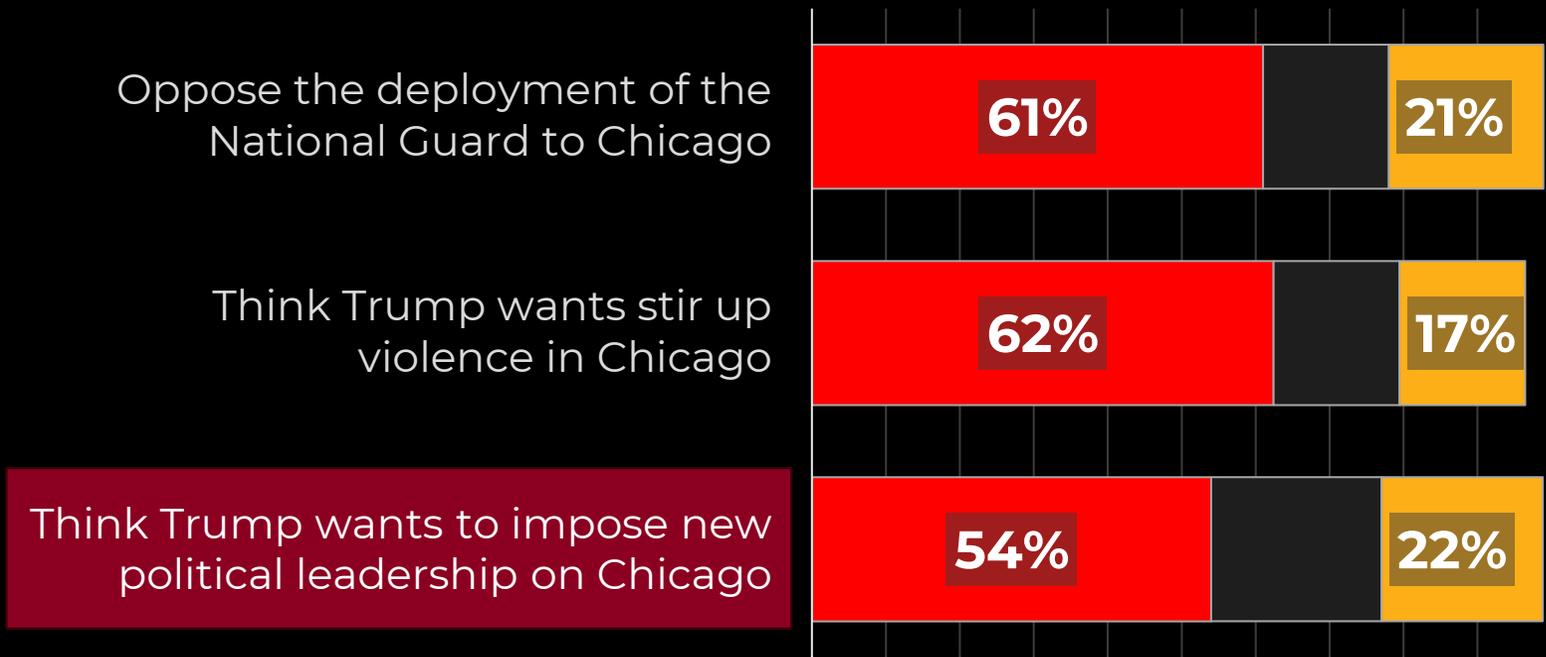
**AS**

**POLITICAL CONTROL**

# UNSURPRISING CULMINATION: PERCEIVED POLITICAL CONTROL

- Majorities:
  - **Do Not Want** Federal Agents Present
  - See Federal Intent as **Political Control**
  
- In escalation dynamics, **perception is not noise – it is the reality** through which legitimacy either stabilizes or collapses.
  
- **Resistance** is response to perceived illegitimacy – **when people think action is not fair and right**

Percentage of Chicagoans who...

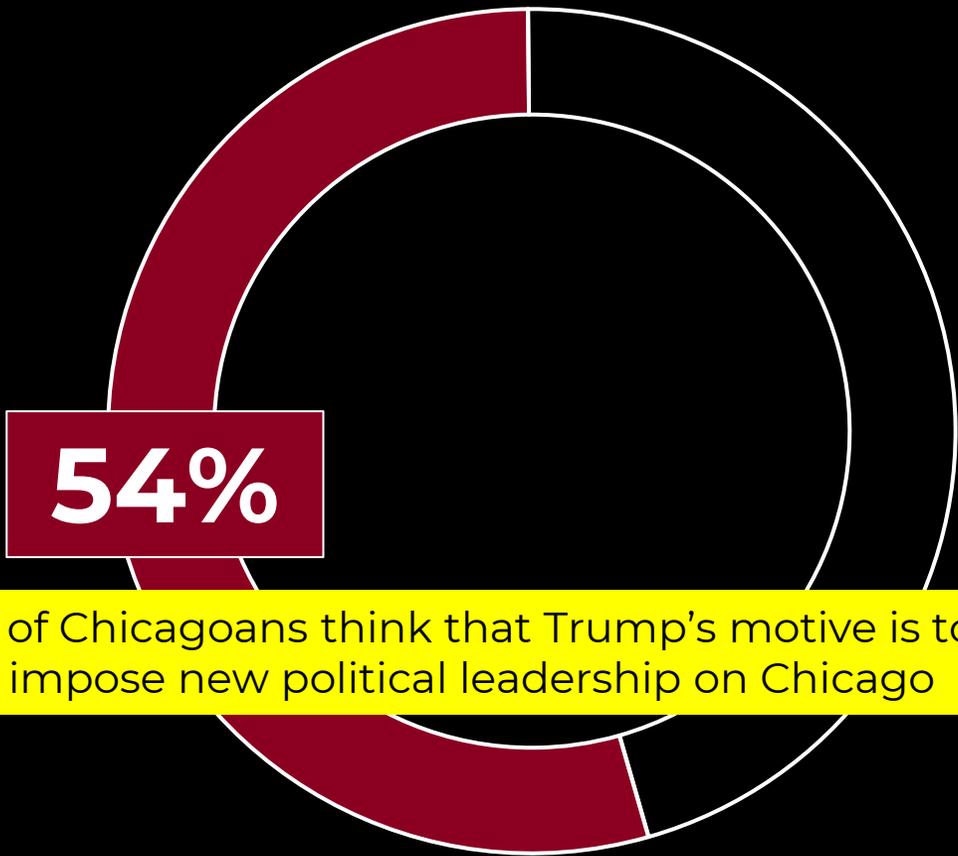


Note: Probability sample of 1,362 Chicago adults from NORC's ChicagoSpeaks panel matching Chicagoans on political, demographic, and geographic dimensions. Data collected Sept 16-29, 2025 (Operation Midway Blitz began Sept. 8). Margin of error: ±3.73%.

# CHICAGOANS FEAR TRUMP'S MOTIVES

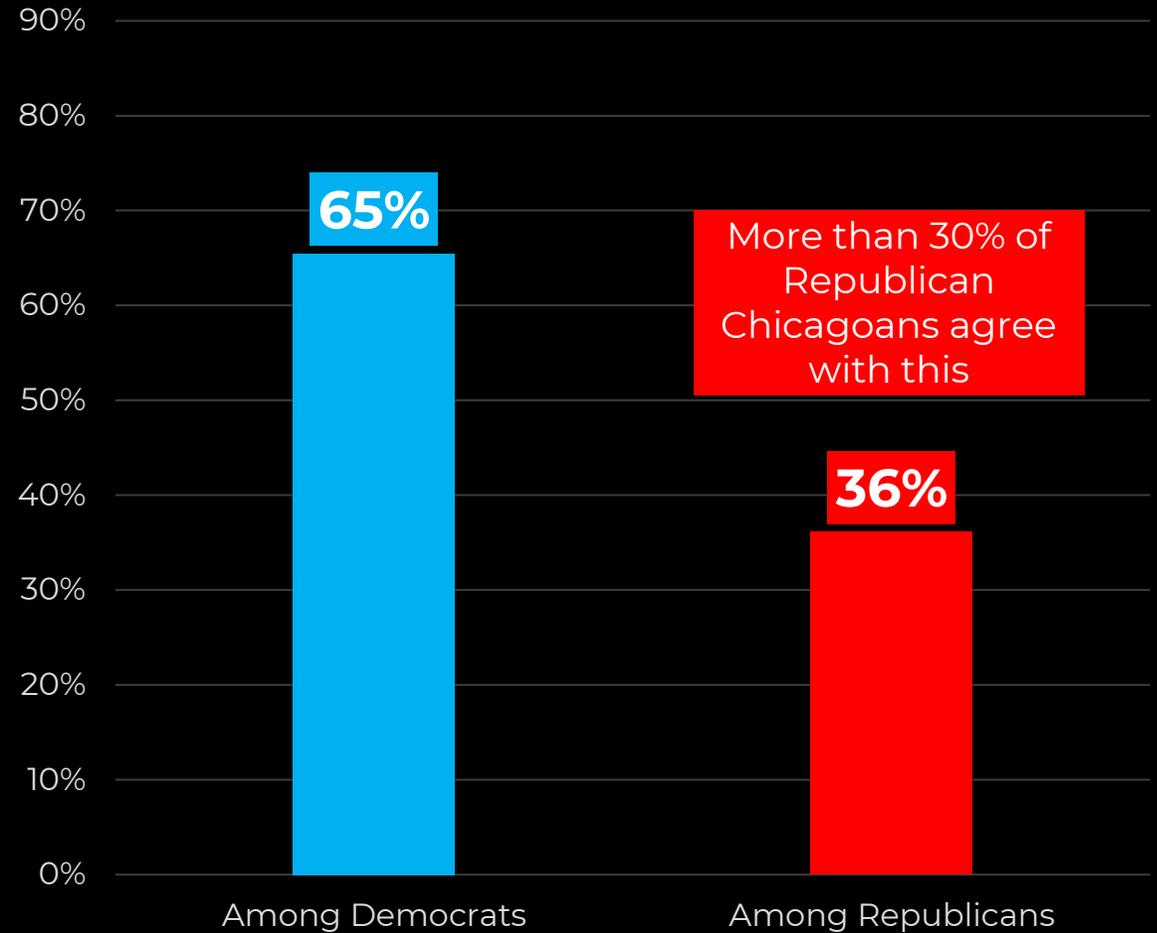


"[Trump wants to deploy the Guard] to impose new political leadership on Chicago."



... of Chicagoans think that Trump's motive is to impose new political leadership on Chicago

By Partisanship

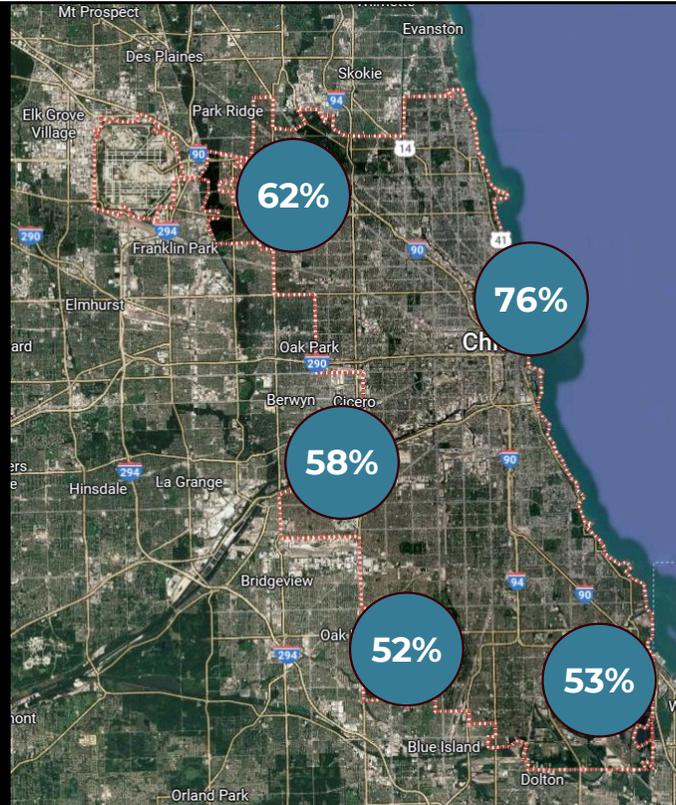


# CHICAGO OPPOSES FEDERAL AGENTS CITYWIDE

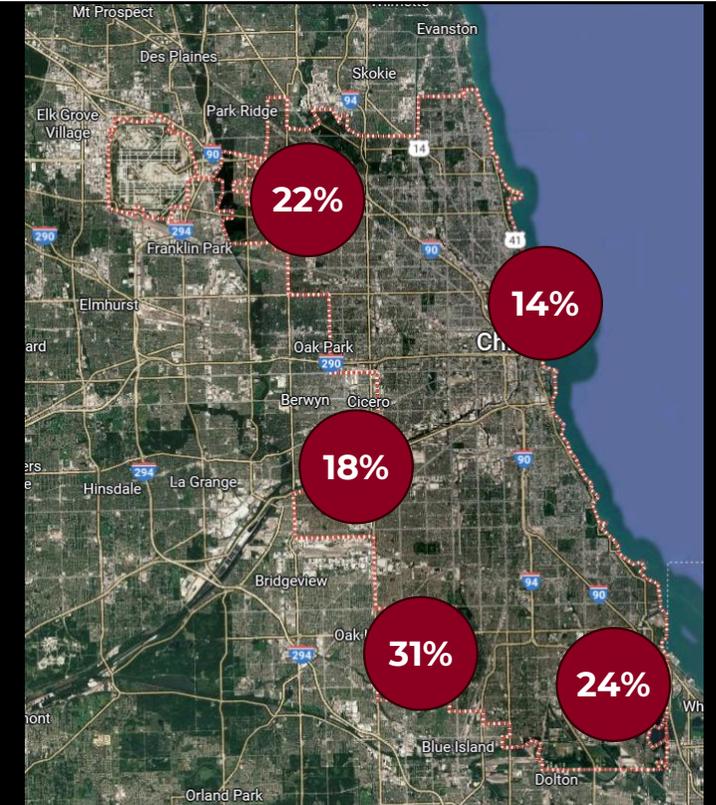


“I oppose the deployment of the National Guard by the President to Chicago.”

## OPPOSE NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT



## SUPPORT NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT



- **No district\*** in Chicago has more than 31% support for President Trump deploying the National Guard to Chicago
- **Every district has majority opposition** to the National Guard being deployed by President Trump to Chicago

\*Districts are North-Central, Northwest, West, Southwest, and South, as defined by NORC

Source: Probability sample of 1,362 Chicago adults from NORC's ChicagoSpeaks panel matching Chicagoans on political, demographic, and geographic dimensions. Data collected Sept 16-29, 2025 (Operation Midway Blitz began Sept. 8). Margin of error: ±3.73%.

# HUGE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENT PROTEST



**WOULD PROTEST AGAINST THE  
NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT**

**39%**

**WOULD PROTEST ... EVEN IF IT BECAME  
VIOLENT**

**28%**

**High opposition to federal militarized forces in Chicagos**

# **WHY WOULD CHICAGO PERCEIVED OMB AS POLITICAL CONTROL?**

**PRESIDENT TRUMP  
FRAMED OMB AS  
POLITICAL CONTROL**

# TARGETING DEMOCRATIC LOCAL OFFICIALS



## President Trump Tells the Generals...



“The **Democrats** run most of the cities that are in bad shape...”

“We should **use some of these dangerous cities as training grounds** for our military ... we’re going into **Chicago** very soon.”

“I say, **they spit, we hit.**”

### **President Donald Trump**

Address to 800 senior military officers gathered at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Quantico, Virginia September 30, 2025

# TARGETING DEMOCRATIC LOCAL OFFICIALS

## DHS Onboard with the Political Mission



“We are not going away. **We are staying here to liberate this city from the socialist and burdensome leadership** that this Governor Newsom and this mayor placed on this country and what they have tried to insert into this city.”

**DHS Secretary Kristi Noem**

Press conference in Los Angeles California

June 12, 2025

# MORALIZED ENFORCEMENT

- In polarized environments, **moralized narratives amplify perceptions** that force is being used to impose **political control** rather than enforce neutral rules.
- Research on political violence shows that **when state force is framed as existential struggle, civilian resistance becomes more likely**—even among people who reject violence in principle.



Moralization activates supporters – and signals domination

# WHERE WE MAY BE HEADING

**LA -> Chicago -> Minneapolis**

**+**

**Midterms**

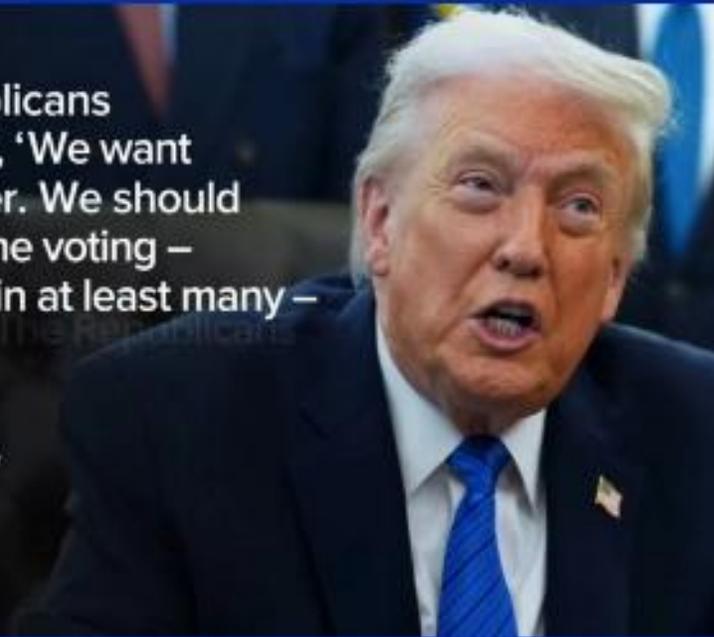
# WILL ICE INFLUENCE THE ELECTION?

February 2, 2026

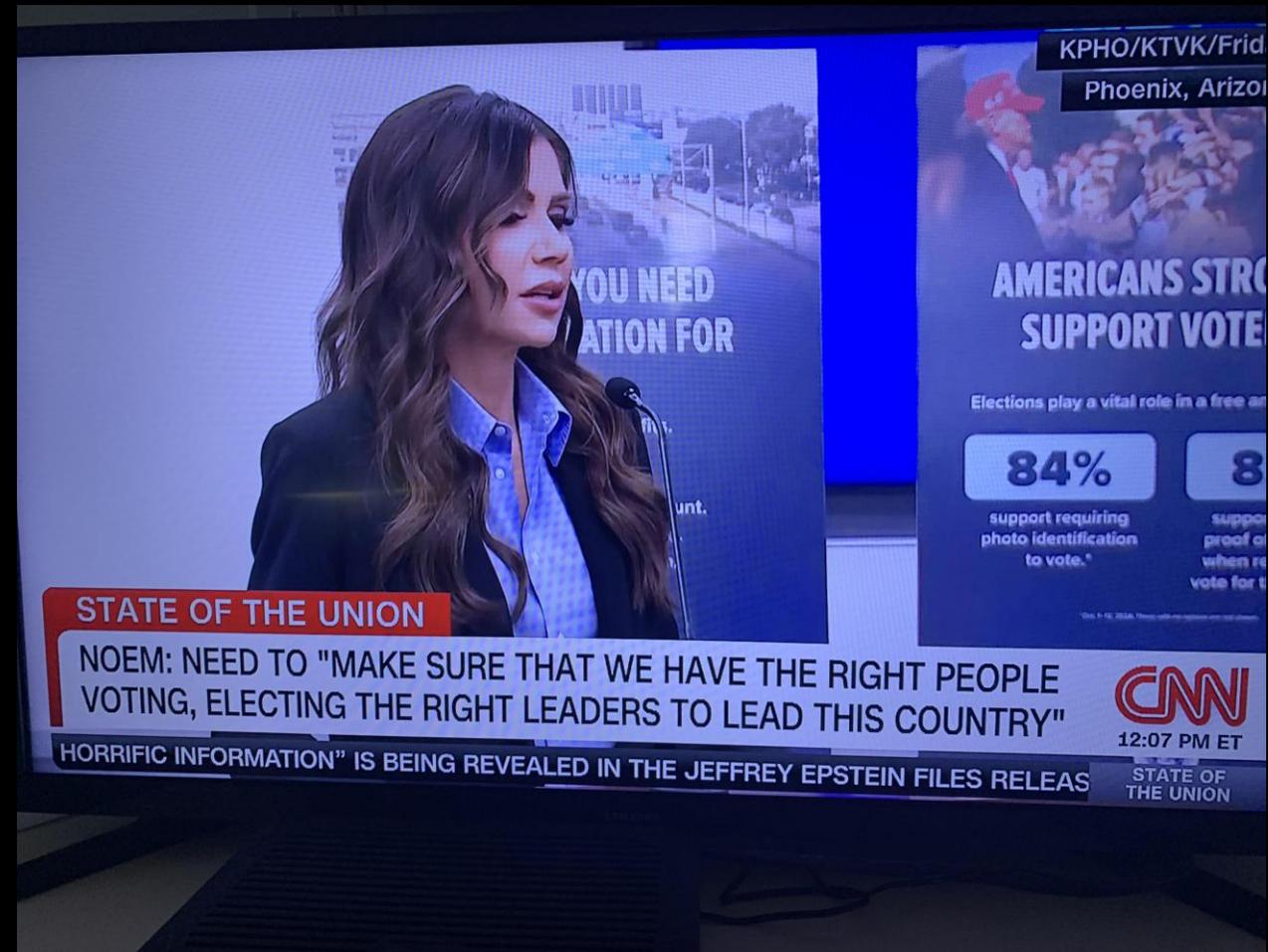
## TRUMP URGES REPUBLICANS TO 'TAKE OVER' AND 'NATIONALIZE' VOTING

“The Republicans should say, ‘We want to take over. We should take over the voting – the voting, in at least many – 15 places.’”

The Dan Bongino Show



February 15, 2026



KPHO/KTVK/Frid  
Phoenix, Arizoi

YOU NEED  
ATION FOR

AMERICANS STRONG  
SUPPORT VOTE

Elections play a vital role in a free an

84% support requiring photo identification to vote.

8 support proof of when re vote for t

STATE OF THE UNION

NOEM: NEED TO "MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE VOTING, ELECTING THE RIGHT LEADERS TO LEAD THIS COUNTRY"

HORRIFIC INFORMATION" IS BEING REVEALED IN THE JEFFREY EPSTEIN FILES RELEAS

CNN  
12:07 PM ET  
STATE OF THE UNION

# PROPOSAL



# Moratorium on Federal Militarized Agents in Liberal Cities October to January 2027

# ROBERT A. PAPE, PHD

Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago



**Email:** [rpape@uchicago.edu](mailto:rpape@uchicago.edu)

**Cell:** (773) 914-1371

**Web:** <https://cpost.uchicago.edu> (for the slide deck)

**Social Media:**

X @ProfessorPape

