

# THE ANCHOR

## CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

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In this political season, it's our responsibility as voters to make sure we have the facts right. Otherwise we become willfully ignorant consumers of misinformation.

For example, in a debate on Wednesday, October 19 between Republican Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt and his Democratic challenger Joy Hofmeister, Stitt claimed that Democrats are soft on crime. Hofmeister responded by pointing out, "The fact is, the rates of violent crime are higher in Oklahoma under your watch than in New York and California. That's a fact." Both Stitt and the debate moderator refused to believe her claim. Stitt said to the audience, "Oklahomans, do you believe that we have higher crime than New York or California? That's what she said."

In fact Hofmeister was right.

Of note, politicians who make this claim leave out the per capita reference, which is a critical part of any population equation. A [study](#) released by Third Way, a centrist think tank, found that the per capita murder rate in 2020 was higher in Oklahoma (7.25 per capita) than in New York (4.11 per capita) and California (5.59 per capita). California's population, for example, is 40 million, which is ten times Oklahoma's population of roughly 4 million, so of course the number of violent crimes in California would be higher, but not so on a per capita basis. Oklahoma's violent crime rate is 458.58 offenses per 100,000 people, according to an [analysis](#) of FBI data by World Population Review. New York has a violent crime rate of 363.76 per 100,000 people, while California's rate is 442.05 per 100,000 people.

And there's more.

Claims that the national debt has exploded under President Biden need a little perspective. Biden has added \$4.8 trillion to the debt to date, whereas President Trump added \$7.8 trillion during his tenure. Is this a case of the pot calling the kettle black? Moreover, most of Biden's money went into the pockets of ordinary Americans as pandemic relief. Trump's shortfall was because of tax breaks for corporations, many of which used it for stock buybacks.

Claims that President Biden has an open door borders policy also need a little clarity. The Cato Institute pointed out that government data show that President Trump failed to produce the border security he promised. The border patrol recorded a 41 percent increase in successful illegal entries in fiscal 2019 over 2016 when Trump assumed office. As he left office in January, reports indicate that the numbers reached even greater heights.

Is Biden's energy policy responsible for higher energy costs, with more to come? Not if you listen to most of the world's economists who blame fallout from the war in Ukraine and the impact of the pandemic.

As Steve Bannon pointed out, "It's not whether something is true or not, it's whether or not you can make people believe it's true," a reminder that if you encounter what you suspect are dubious claims from either political party, a great tool for fact checking is the Google machine, of which you can ask almost any question to get to the truth.

Contrary to Steve Bannon's claim, the truth really does matter, especially when it comes to who we decide to vote for.