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Twitter temporarily restricts Ohio Senate candidate Josh Mandel over 'hateful conduct'

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Twitter temporarily restricted Ohio Senate candidate Josh Mandel's account for violating the social media platform's rules on "hateful conduct."

Mandel's account created a poll Tuesday morning about which type of "illegals" would commit more crimes, "Muslim Terrorists" or "Mexican Gangbangers." His campaign later shared that the account was temporarily suspended for 12 hours for violating Twitter's policies on "hateful conduct."

The policy prohibits tweets that "promote violence against or directly attack or threaten" individuals based on race, ethnicity, national origin or other factors. That includes tweets that "incite fear or spread fearful stereotypes about a protected category, including asserting that members of a protected category are more likely to take part in dangerous or illegal activities, e.g., 'all [religious group] are terrorists.'"

During that time, he cannot send tweets, retweet, like or follow new accounts.

The tweet was an apparent critique of President Joe Biden's immigration policies, which have led to a surge of unaccompanied minors being stopped at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many U.S. crime databases don't track immigration status, making national studies difficult. But studies of Texas data, which does collect immigration information, have shown undocumented immigrants are arrested and convicted at lower rates than legal immigrants and native-born Americans.

"There is more and more evidence that immigrants, regardless of legal status, are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans," the authors of a recent study from the right-leaning Cato Institute wrote in October.

The majority of terrorist attacks and plots in the U.S. have been committed by right-wing extremists, according to analysis of such events by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a nonpartisan foreign policy think tank. Religious terrorism accounted for about 15% of all attacks dating back to 1994, the study found, but was responsible for the largest number deaths due to the Sept. 11 attacks.

Mandel's account indicates all tweets from the candidate are signed "JM" and the poll was not signed.

The poll prompted outrage from fellow Republicans, including Sen. Matt Dolan, of Chagrin Falls, who is considering a U.S. Senate bid.

"Bigotry MUST stop," Dolan tweeted. "This type of message distracts from the very real crisis at the border. This message also tarnishes the Republican Party. We must do better. We should be better. We can do better!"

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Sen. Jay Hottinger, R-Newark, tweeted that "Josh Mandel continues to offer NOTHING of substance in the race for U.S. Senate."

Mandel, a former state treasurer, decried Twitter's move as censorship.

"Conservatives everywhere should be frightened by the ongoing censorship by Twitter, Facebook, Google and the liberal media," he said in a statement. "Big tech should never have the power to decide what speech is allowed in America and I won't ever shy away from holding politicians accountable for their terrible policies."

Mandel's campaign has used his Twitter account to call Rep. Anthony Gonzalez, who voted to impeach former President Donald Trump, a traitor; share inaccurate information about COVID-19 restrictions and tell Gov. Mike DeWine to reopen the state.

Mandel and former Ohio Republican Party leader Jane Timken have fashioned themselves as the Trump candidate in the race to replace Sen. Rob Portman. Twitter permanently suspended Trump's account in January, following the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

USA Today Network Ohio bureau chief Jackie Borchardt contributed.