Ohio Senate candidate Josh Mandel claims Big Tech is trying to censor him

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A day after Twitter temporarily restricted him for hate speech, U.S. Senate candidate Josh Mandel doubled down on his criticism of Big Tech at a legislative breakfast in northwest Ohio on Friday.

"Yesterday, I was canceled by these ultra-liberal thugs in Silicon Valley. They kicked me off Twitter," Mr. Mandel, a Republican, said to applause from Greater Toledo Right to Life during an event at The Pinnacle in Maumee.

"I wear that as a badge of honor. When we speak truth to power, just like [former] President Trump does, Silicon Valley executives who condescend on us, who look down on the heartland, they try to censor us," he said. "But mark my words: we the people will not be censored. We will not be silenced."

Mr. Mandel is tapping into outcry from some on the right that liberal tech companies are trying to silence conservative Republicans, which became a closing theme of the 2020 election. Mr. Trump was kicked off Twitter after the Jan. 6 insurrection over fears he would incite more violence.

Unlike the former president, Mr. Mandel wasn't permanently booted from Twitter, but the social-media platform suspended features of his account for 12 hours after his official campaign account posted a poll Tuesday asking whether "Muslim Terrorists" or "Mexican Gangbangers" were the "illegals" most likely to commit crimes.

Mr. Mandel's campaign sent a news release that showed Twitter flagged him for "violating our rules against hateful conduct," which say users can't "promote violence against, threaten, or harass other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability or serious disease."

In an interview after his Right to Life remarks, Mr. Mandel said the tweet in question was sent by staffers and he didn't know the details of his suspension. But he said the incident made him "proud" and he didn't see anything wrong with the language used.

"It's a signal that [Big Tech] is afraid of our movement of constitutional conservatives and Trump warriors throughout the state. Big Tech tries to silence and censor those they're afraid of, and they're obviously very afraid of me," he told The Blade.

There isn't much data about the correlation between illegal immigration and increased crime rates, but studies from the right-leaning Cato Institute, The Marshall Project, and the University of Madison-Wisconsin have found the opposite is true — that undocumented immigrants commit crimes at the same or lower rates than legal immigrants and native-born citizens.

Mr. Mandel's tweet was an apparent swipe at the Biden administration for a surge in unaccompanied minors at the U.S.-Mexico border who are fleeing violence in Central America.

The former state treasurer cited a report that four people matching the descriptions of people on the FBI's terrorist watch list were arrested at that border.

"I believe we should do everything we can to protect people against radical Muslim terrorists," he said.

After eight women, including six of Asian descent, were killed in shootings this week in Atlanta, Mr. Mandel's tweet struck a chord and was called out as racist.

"This type of bigotry in Ohio is what incites hate crime and racism. @JoshMandelOhio is creating a bullseye attack for communities of color because he wants white supremacy to prevail in our state," tweeted state Sen. Tina Maharath (D., Columbus), the first Asian-American woman elected to the Ohio Senate.

Mr. Mandel and former Ohio Republican Party chairman Jane Timken are competing for Trump support in Ohio's GOP Senate primary — both from his supporter base and from the former president himself.

But while Ms. Timken has touted endorsements from state lawmakers and praised a plan to rename a state park in Trumbull County after Mr. Trump, Mr. Mandel has taken to Twitter to attack two fellow Republicans: Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine for coronavirus mandates and U.S. Rep. Anthony Gonzalez of Rocky River for voting to impeach Mr. Trump, moves criticized within his own party.

"Bigotry MUST stop," state Sen. Matt Dolan (R., Chagrin Falls), who is considering a Senate bid, tweeted in response to Mr. Mandel's immigration Twitter poll. "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!"

At the legislative breakfast, Mr. Mandel, who's Jewish, said the United States was founded on Judeo-Christian values.

"And what's the centerpiece of that? The sanctity of life," he told the Right to Life audience. "You look at the Muslim world, the Middle East, people are murdered all the time for speaking their mind. I don't think there they respect the sanctity of life. You look in China, where someone has the audacity to disagree with the government. They get disappeared or get murdered. They don't respect the sanctity of life."

Also at the breakfast was Cleveland-area businessman Mike Gibbons, who's on a listening tour of the state as he weighs a Senate bid.

Mr. Gibbons is one of a dozen possible Senate candidates from both sides of the aisle weighing a run for the seat now held by Republican Rob Portman, who has declared he will not seek re-election next year.