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THE AIR WAR

Kyl, Pederson focus on immigration

Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and Democratic challenger Jim Pederson have launched advertisements taking on the illegal-immigration issue, which has emerged as a major factor in recent primary races.

In Arizona, Democrats have hyped their chances of defeating Kyl because they believe the traditionally conservative state has become more fertile ground as retirees and immigrants flock there.

Still, a survey conducted by Wilson Research Strategies, which compared the two ads, showed that 57 percent of respondents predicted that Kyl would win the race and only 13 percent of Democrats said Pederson could win.

Moreover, Pederson's advertisement, which uses fellow Ariz. Sen. John McCain (R) to attack Kyl's immigration bill, is not the type of ad that would help a challenger defeat an incumbent. The ad did not impress the reporters, political consultants and Capitol Hill staffers whom Wilson Research Strategies surveyed.

The ad quotes McCain's statement last year in a congressional hearing that "[to] think that they're going to come out of the shadows and say, 'Send me back to Guatemala — I've been living in Phoenix for 50 years,' borders on fantasy."

After 15 seconds of hammering Kyl, Pederson pivots to a positive message by promoting his plan to curtail illegal immigration. His plan, he says, "is not amnesty, it's realistic."

"It's a big mistake to do negative first, then positive because it turns people off before introducing the candidate," Chris Wilson of Wilson Research Strategies, said.

Kyl's ad cites endorsements from local Arizona newspapers and CNN that praise his immigration bill and mentions that Time magazine listed him as one of the upper chamber's 10 most effective senators.

Respondents said that Kyl's ad is more effective by 50 to 27 percent.



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The remaining 23 percent said that the ads are equally effective or that neither ad is effective. Self-described Democrats and independents both said Kyl's ad was more effective than Pederson's ad.

In the survey, political consultants, lobbyists and staffers rated Kyl's ad effective, giving it a score of 6.1, 7.6 and 6.6, respectively, on a 10-point scale. That's more than a point above the average for each group.

Working with The Hill for its Air War feature, Wilson Research Strategies e-mails campaign or issue ads to survey participants who view the ads and rate their effectiveness on several criteria.

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