Anthony Brown’s Lack of Attention to the Immigration Policy Crisis in America

*By David Harding*

At just over 15% percent of the total population, the 4th Congressional District of Maryland is home to the biggest Hispanic population in Maryland. Although this number does not make them close to the majority of that district, it is still a significant amount of the district’s make-up. With recent events regarding the national government’s immigration policy, it is important that Hispanic immigrants are properly represented in their district. However, Representative Anthony Brown seems to have better things to do in his time as a congressman.

If you go to Anthony Brown’s website, there is a tab that displays “key issues” for Congressmen Brown. Listed in these are civil rights, education, environment, jobs and the economy, immigration, and a few other issues. This is typical of a liberal politician, however if you click on the immigration issue, there is hardly anything there. Rather, Congressman Brown seems to have immigration on his website for show. He has no bills sponsored, only one piece of related news, and only a few tweets that actually talk about immigration policy. Sponsoring bills having to do with international affairs and national security, Brown is more interested in advancing himself politically on a national scale than representing the people who elected him.

Brown of course does represent many of the people in his district well. As a black representative, in a majority black Congressional district, Brown does a good job at representing the black community in his district. He has sponsored legislation on crime and law enforcement, along with taxation, and he works hard to make sure the black community in his district has their voice heard. On April 26th, he tweeted “The backing of the Black community has been critical to every Democratic victory across our state, and even though African Americans continue to break barriers, we have only managed to put cracks in the glass ceiling of our state’s political leadership. This must change now.” Brown advocates for rights and advances in the black community on a regular basis, however he rarely advocated for immigration policy, and even when he voices it, there is little information to back up that he actually supports immigration reform.

Brown has tweeted using the word “immigration” only twice in 2019. With all of the recent events involving Trump and immigration policy, this is hard to believe. And even these tweets seem to be used as a platform to bash Trump, rather than advocate for immigration reform on behalf of the Hispanic population in his district.

Scholars agree that reelection is a key motivating factor in a politician’s policy advocacy, however, politicians including Brown seem to be taking advantage of certain groups because they know that that particular group will not deviate from voting for their party. In this case, Brown is taking advantage of the Hispanic vote. According to Pew Research center, 69% of Hispanics voted for democratic representatives in the 2018 midterm election. However, Pew Research center also notes that only about 40% of eligible Hispanic voters voted in that election which is much less than both blacks and whites who voted at over a 50% clip. Because there is a higher percentage of blacks and whites and both groups vote at a higher rate, it makes sense for Brown to advocate for those groups much more than the Hispanic population, however, many of the Hispanic people in his district were likely to help him be elected. So, I argue that it is very unfair for Brown to care so little about the Hispanic population and immigration reform.

In a study done by Casellas and Leal on how population and partisanship effect immigration policy votes, they [argue](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21565503.2012.758588) that economic competition exists between poorer natives and immigrants. However, according the US Census Bureau, MD-4 has a median household income of over $81,000. However, in a study done by Tom K. Wong on the politics of immigration enforcement, he [claims](https://escholarship.org/uc/item/83c0g65q) that large Asian and Black populations correlate with less support for pro-immigrant policy. This seems to hold true for the 4th district of Maryland as well.

With Brown’s goals to be reelected and likely to advance his political career, he will likely not suddenly begin to strongly advocate for immigrant and Hispanic populations. With the make-up of his district and the groups of people he is prioritizing over Hispanic population, the large number of Hispanics will continue to be under represented in Maryland. Instead Brown will continue to bash republicans and Trump with tweet like “While Trump demagogues’ migrants, his cruel, inhumane immigration policies are being carried out the way he intended.” Yet, he will continue to not act upon his stance on immigration. Brown will simply treat the topic of immigration indifferently as he has already done in his tenure as congressman for Maryland.

Looking into the media of Brown’s district, there is also not many articles written on immigration. I examined the number of articles written on immigration by the Sentinel compared to the capital Gazette from December and January (The time of the shutdown). The Gazette had almost twice as many articles written. Showing that not only Brown, but the media in Brown’s district also has little interest in immigration and the policy reform that is so salient in our nation. Abrajano and Hajnal [explain](https://press.princeton.edu/titles/10516.html) that there is a “threat narrative” in media coverage, where other races, specifically whites, feel threatened by Latino populations, leading to little news coverage on immigration and Latinos and that news coverage generally being negative.

Immigration reform is something this country has needed for a while. And building a wall is the opposite of what that reform should look like. Hispanics, immigrants, and those who feel strongly about immigration policy should really consider a different candidate than Anthony Brown when voting in the 2020 election. Unless Brown is somehow convinced otherwise, he will continue to treat the urgent issue of immigration reform as a non-issue.