

TRANS FREEDOM ALLIANCE
THREAT BRIEFING

The Battleground Map

How Anti-Trans Attacks Are Landing Across TFA's Priority States — and How Campaigns Should Answer

This was the week the institutions answered, and every answer started a new fight. The WNBA ruled that Enes Kanter Freedom and Royce White — the two former NBA players who declared for its 2027 draft saying they now identify as women — are ineligible, and gave no reason why; the Chicago Sky separately barred Freedom from its arena after he provoked one of its players from a courtside seat. A federal appeals court told a New Hampshire school district it had likely violated the First Amendment by punishing parents who wore “XX” wristbands at a girls’ soccer game. The federal health department published a commissioned survey reporting that support for gender-affirming clinical positions correlates with calling political violence justified. And in Michigan, the Democratic Senate nominee answered a Fox News question about care for transgender minors by asking the host whether he was circumcised — the most-watched exchange of the week in either direction. This is the second weekly edition of the electoral briefing: who drove each state’s attacks, who they reached, and where the openings are.

August 24 – 30, 2026

Data: Trans Rhetoric Social Media Dashboard | 79K+ channels | 20 platforms | 1M+ posts

13 priority states | 507 state-tagged posts | 15.2M engagements | weekly electoral briefing

Topline Finding

The map turned over almost completely in seven days. **Michigan** (~7.7M, from 67K last week) leads because Democratic Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed answered a question about care for transgender minors on live television and the clip traveled in both directions at once — supporters carried it as a win, opponents as a confession, and his Republican opponent Mike Rogers had it in a Detroit-market ad four days later. **Minnesota** (~3.1M, from 71K) is second on a single post: the one-year anniversary of the Annunciation Catholic School shooting in Minneapolis, recirculated as “a trans gunman shot 24 kids... the media buried the story.” Both halves of that sentence are checkable, and the second one is false — the attack led national coverage for days, drew statements from the president and the vice president, and was investigated federally as domestic terrorism. **Texas** (~2.6M) is third and is the only priority state where this terrain is the race itself: with James Talarico leading Ken Paxton 42–39 in an August University of Texas poll, Sen. Ted Cruz, the president, and the state and national party accounts all ran the same three-line attack on him this week. **Iowa** (~656K, from 22K) is fourth on the opposite kind of item — the Democratic nominee for governor volunteering that “girls’ sports are for girls.” Below that the story is subtraction: **Georgia fell from 4.7M to 7K, Maine from 441K to 6K, Nevada from 349K to 2K** — each of those states’ previous numbers was one post, and when the post stopped traveling the state emptied. The through-line is that four institutions — a sports league, a federal appeals court, a cabinet department, and a state health agency — supplied this week’s attack material, and none of them are campaigns.

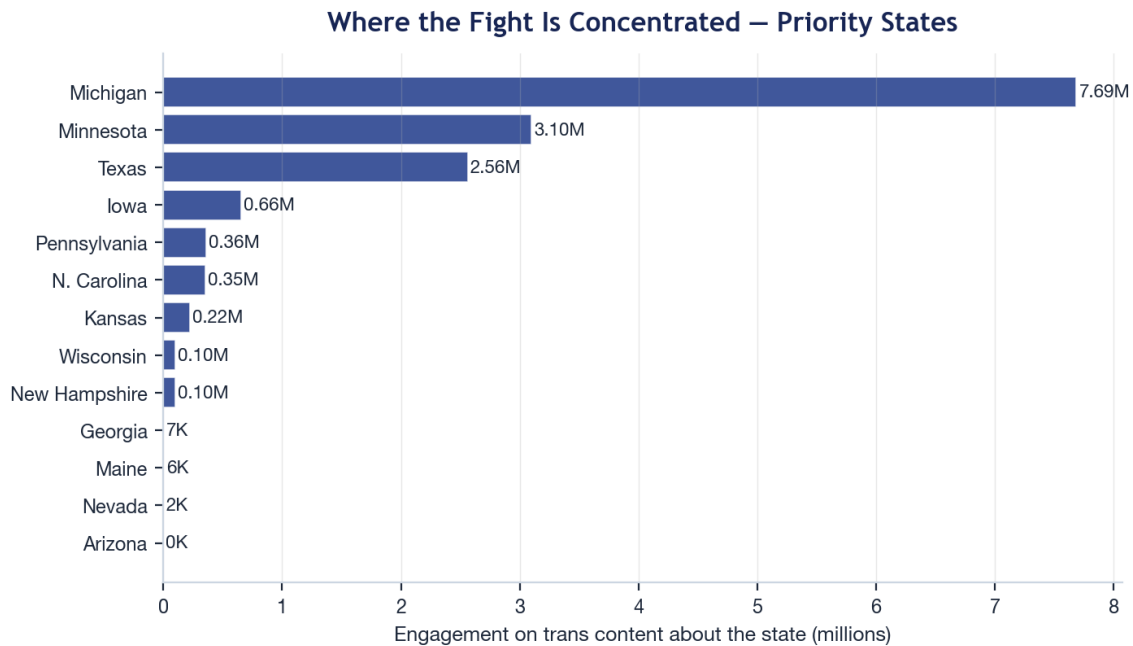
Where the Trans Conversation Is Landing — National Reach Map

gold outline = TFA priority state | darker = more engagement on trans content about the state



Source: Trans Rhetoric Dashboard | issue-location layer, off-topic virality removed | reach labeled for states above 100K

Three states hold 88% of the week's reach, and all three are Senate races. The rest of the map is nearly empty — including three states that led it a week ago. Read the top of this chart as where attention went, not where the attacks are worst.



Source: Trans Rhetoric Dashboard | issue-location layer, off-topic virality removed

Michigan, Minnesota, Texas and Iowa each got there a different way: a candidate's own answer, an anniversary, a coordinated party attack, and a Democrat breaking with his party. Only the third is something a campaign can see coming.

Narratives by Race

The same national fight shows up as a different story in every contest. Here is which narrative was doing the work where this week, and whether it was still organic or had entered paid media.

Race	Narrative doing the work	This week	Where it's running
Michigan Senate	Youth medical care — the televised El-Sayed exchange	7.7M	Organic on both sides → a Mike Rogers TV ad in Detroit within four days
Minnesota Senate	Violence framing — the school-shooting anniversary	3.1M	Organic, aggregator-led
Texas Senate	Faith-framed candidate attack — “he loves transgender children”	2.6M	Organic, synchronized: Sen. Ted Cruz, the president, party accounts, Attorney General Ken Paxton
Iowa 3rd District	Girls'/women's sports	656K	Organic (a Democrat's own comment) + PAID — Nunn campaign Meta ad, live since Aug 21
Pennsylvania (statewide)	Language in law — “mother” → “postpartum individual”	361K	Organic; comment period closes Sept 21

Kansas Governor	Bathroom law — the compliance protest (supportive-led)	223K	Organic
Georgia Senate	Quiet on this terrain	7K	Ossoff's heavy paid week runs entirely off it — watch row
Arizona 6th District	Schools / Prop 318, via a faux-local-news page	—	PAID (cutout page); rotated out this week, back to camouflage — watch row

Michigan got medicine, Texas got faith, and Iowa got sports — the frame follows whatever surface the local race offers. Two of those lanes are now paid (Iowa's sports frame on Meta, Michigan's medical frame on Detroit TV), and paid lanes keep running after the news moves on. The quiet rows are worth as much as the loud ones: Georgia led this map two weeks straight and went silent the moment its arena story stopped traveling.

Key Findings

- The WNBA answered, and refused to explain.** The league ruled former NBA players Enes Kanter Freedom and Royce White ineligible for its 2027 draft after both declared while saying they now identify as women. Sources called the declarations publicity stunts; the league gave no public reasoning, and its new collective bargaining agreement says only that “only players who are women are eligible” without defining the term. Freedom was then barred from the Chicago Sky’s arena after a courtside confrontation with Sky guard Natasha Cloud. An unexplained ruling is the most quotable outcome the stunt could have produced: Fox News alone ran the story past 5.3M across three platforms.
- Michigan’s Senate nominee answered the care question live, and both sides claimed the tape.** Asked by Fox News host Jesse Watters whether he supports gender-affirming care for minors, Democratic nominee Abdul El-Sayed — a physician — said the decision belongs to a patient, a parent and a doctor, then asked whether Watters was circumcised. Mo News (1.2M), HuffPost (880K) and Newsweek (488K) carried it as a win; Nick Sortor (1.6M nationally), Fox’s own clips and RNC Research (376K) carried the same seconds as an admission. The interview drew 3.3M television viewers, and Michigan went from 67K to 7.7M on one exchange.
- An anniversary became attack creative.** The single largest state-attributable post of the week was End Wokeness marking one year since the Annunciation Catholic School shooting in Minneapolis (2.6M, plus 1.2M across 81 verbatim reposts). Two children — ages 8 and 10 — were killed and 24 schoolchildren and three parishioners wounded on Aug 27, 2025; the shooter, who died at the scene, had a 2019 name-change record citing a female identification. The post’s factual vulnerability is its last clause — “the media buried the story” — which is contradicted by the wall-to-wall national coverage, presidential and vice-presidential statements, and federal domestic-terrorism investigation the attack drew at the time.
- Texas is the only priority state where this terrain is the whole race.** James Talarico led Ken Paxton 42–39 in an August University of Texas poll, and the response was a single coordinated attack line repeated by Sen. Ted Cruz (194K), the national party account (59K), the president via a friendly aggregator (154K), Libs of TikTok (122K) and Paxton himself with Riley Gaines (59K): “God is

nonbinary,” “six genders,” and the girls’-sports vote. 1.96M of Texas’s 2.56M is hostile, against 149K supportive.

- **Iowa’s biggest item came from a Democrat — and the first paid sports attack of the cycle landed in Iowa’s Third District.** Gubernatorial nominee Rob Sand told Politico “girls’ sports are for girls, and boys’ sports are for boys,” which carried 496K by itself and took Iowa from 22K to 656K. Separately, a manual ad-library check found the Nunn campaign running its first paid sports-frame attack on Sarah Trone Garriott (“Men in women’s sports. It’s not fair. It’s not safe”), live since Aug 21 at 60,000–70,000 impressions. The organic and paid lanes are now pointing the same direction in one district.
- **A federal appeals court handed the “XX” symbol a First Amendment win.** On Aug 26 the First Circuit held unanimously that Bow, New Hampshire school officials likely violated the First Amendment by punishing parents who silently wore pink “XX” wristbands at a girls’ soccer game, found likely viewpoint discrimination, and sent the case back for a remedy. The shirt-and-wristband format this briefing flagged two weeks ago now has a favorable appellate ruling attached to it, thirteen days before New Hampshire votes.
- **The federal government published the argument.** The Department of Health and Human Services released a commissioned survey of 1,208 adults reporting that stronger endorsement of gender-affirming clinical positions correlates with left-wing authoritarian attitudes and with calling political violence justified. The New York Post’s write-up was the week’s single biggest post at 6.9M. The study reports association, not causation; it measured whether respondents considered six acts justified, not whether anyone acted; and it did not examine whether transgender people commit violence.
- **Pennsylvania was drawn onto the terrain by a regulation, not a candidate.** A 502-page state health-code rewrite published Aug 8 replaces “pregnant woman” and “mother of a newborn” with “pregnant or postpartum individual” in provisions on syphilis testing. Libs of TikTok made it the state’s story (219K); Pennsylvania’s week ran 360K hostile to 954 supportive, the most lopsided column on the map. Public comment closes Sept 21 — a fixed date on which the administration can put its own explanation on the record.

The Battleground at a Glance

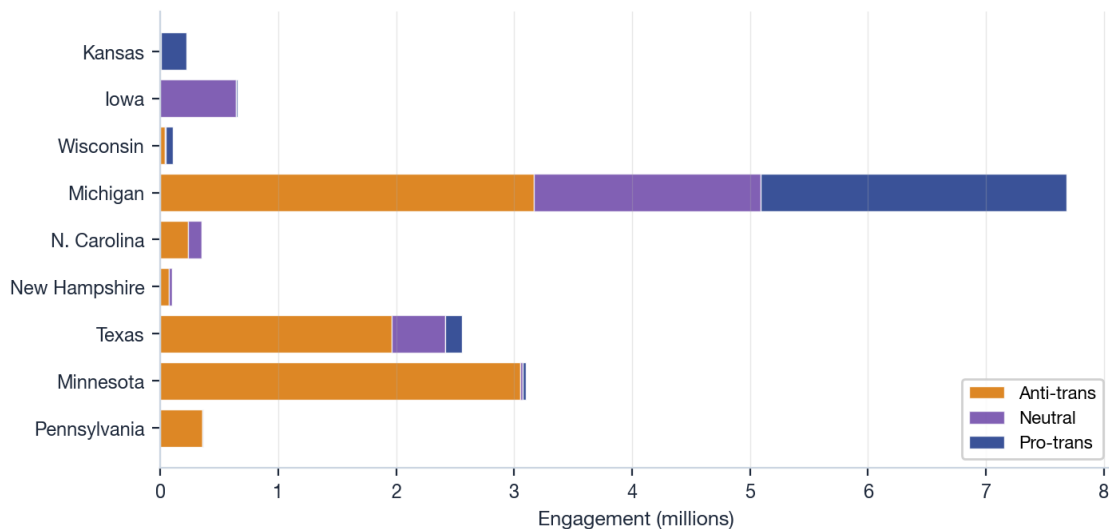
Two layers drive this briefing. The **issue-location** layer tags which state each post is about; the **account-location** layer tags where the messenger is based. A post can be about a state without originating there (a national account attacking Roy Cooper counts toward North Carolina), so the reach figures below measure attention on a state, not local activity alone. Off-topic virality that keyword-matched a state (foreign-language tabloid items, unrelated news) has been removed by hand.

State	Primary	Posts	Reach	vs last	Anti / Pro	Top messenger
Michigan	8/4/26	203	7.7M	▲ 115x	3.2M / 2.6M	Mo News
Minnesota	8/11/26	37	3.1M	▲ 43x	3.1M / 24K	End Wokeness
Texas	TBD	131	2.6M	▲ 114%	2.0M / 149K	Brandon Herrera

Iowa	TBD	27	656K	▲ 30x	2K / 12K	POLITICO
Pennsylvania	5/19/26	33	361K	▲ 17x	360K / 954	Libs of TikTok
North Carolina	3/3/26	16	352K	▼ 31%	235K / 3K	Gunther Eagleman™
Kansas	TBD	27	223K	▲ 82%	0 / 220K	e.c.lider
Wisconsin	8/11/26	14	104K	▲ 12x	39K / 57K	Polymarket
N. Hampshire	9/8/26	18	102K	▲ 44%	75K / 186	Wesley Yang
Georgia	5/19/26	10	7K	▼ 100%	0 / 502	Mary Talley Bowden M
Maine	6/9/26	12	6K	▼ 99%	1K / 2K	Dr Charlie Ward
Nevada	6/9/26	3	2K	▼ 99%	0 / 2K	Billy Dunn
Arizona	8/4/26	5	462	▼ 34%	0 / 446	Naomi Kanakia

“vs last” compares reach with the previous weekly edition (≈ means within ±10%). A rising state deserves attention before its number is large.

Tone of the State Conversation (states above 100K reach)



Source: Trans Rhetoric Dashboard | stance classifier; "neutral" includes hostile-leaning news coverage

Tone is a directional read from the stance classifier; “neutral” absorbs a large amount of hostile-leaning coverage, so anti-trans shares are conservative. Three columns need reading against the grain this week. **Wisconsin** shows as majority-supportive, but nearly all of it is coverage of the Defense Secretary’s slur — attention to an attack, not counter-speech. **Michigan’s** supportive column is largely the same twenty seconds of tape that the other side is also running. **Kansas** reads entirely supportive because one protest post carried the state, and a wire item about that same protest had been coded hostile in error. Forty-five stance codes were hand-corrected this window where the classifier had inverted or under-read campaign content — a senator’s own attack post coded neutral, a mocking post coded supportive — and each correction is documented in our review notes. Read this chart alongside the state notes, not instead of them.

How the Attacks Travel — Originators vs. Amplifiers

Two different jobs create anti-trans reach. A small set of accounts **originate** stories — surfacing a local incident that then spreads; a larger set **amplify**, putting the most eyeballs on stories someone else started. The two call for different campaign responses: pre-empt originators, rapid-respond to amplifiers.

Top originators (seed stories that travel): Fox News (12.1M, 14 seed stories); New York Post (7.2M, 3 seed stories); Rep. Brandon Gill (4.1M, 1 seed story); Acyn (3.1M, 2 seed stories); NowThis Impact (2.3M, 2 seed stories).

Top amplifiers (most reach on others' stories): Fox News (all accounts) (7.9M, 20 reposts); Rep. Brandon Gill (House account) (1.8M, 1 repost); The News Movement (660K, 1 repost); Mo News (580K, 1 repost); Turning Point Action (392K, 1 repost).

Who These Attacks Reach

The dashboard has no engager-level data, so audience is **modeled** — inferred from the demographics of the accounts that produce and amplify content, weighted by engagement, under a homophily assumption. It blends US Census surname data, Social Security first-name records, each platform's known user base, and where accounts are based. For the roughly 83% of anti-trans reach carried by accounts with a real name or seed match this period, this is a genuine read; the rest falls back to a national baseline. Treat it as directional, not measured — but the split between the two sides is stark enough to act on.

Basis notes: this week's geolocation pass was unusually hands-on. Sixty-three high-reach posts whose subject was unmistakably one state — the Minneapolis anniversary post, the Texas Senate attacks, the Michigan interview coverage, the Iowa governor's Politico interview, a New Hampshire school-board vote, a Wisconsin school-records campaign and a Kansas protest — carried no state tag at all and were hand-assigned, the same remedy used for the Atlanta arena cluster last week. Four posts carrying a state tag they had not earned were unassigned or reassigned, including one about the country of Georgia rather than the state. Two things make the “vs last” column read hotter than the underlying activity: this edition's geotagging sweep was much wider than last week's, and the collection pipeline was expanded on Aug 31 to capture a substantially larger share of matching posts — this edition sees roughly a third more in-window posts than last week's edition could. Treat the week-over-week percentages as directional only this edition; the state notes flag where it matters. Prior editions' figures remain valid as minimums. All figures were computed on a window-exact frozen snapshot of the dashboard taken after the expansion.

Audience of...	Gender	Top age cohorts	Race (modeled)	Evidence	Conf.
Anti-trans attacks	68% male / 32% female	Millennial 31% · Gen X 30% · Boomer 22%	White 73% · Hispanic 12% · Asian 6%	83%	0.59

Pro-trans content	52% male / 48% female	Millennial 35% · Gen Z 29% · Gen X 22%	White 79% · Black 9% · Hispanic 8%	9%	0.42
All state content	62% male / 38% female	Millennial 32% · Gen X 27% · Gen Z 20%	White 75% · Hispanic 11% · Black 7%	53%	0.52

The audience swung back toward the older partisan core: anti-trans state content reached a **68%-male audience split evenly between millennials and Gen X** this week, because the reach ran through partisan accounts and two Senate races rather than through wire coverage of a sports incident. Supportive state-tagged reach rose to roughly 3.0M — but that number needs the heaviest caveat in this document. Almost all of it is coverage of the Michigan interview, of the Defense Secretary’s slur and of the Kansas protest; it measures attention to attacks, not persuasion, and its evidence share is **9%**, meaning the model had a real name or seed match for only a sliver of that reach and fell back to a national baseline for the rest. Treat the supportive row as a direction, not a measurement. The anti-trans row is on far firmer footing (83% evidence, 0.59 mean confidence). The racial estimate remains the weakest layer in either row.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Michigan — The Answer That Both Sides Ran

What happened. Fox News host Jesse Watters pressed **Abdul El-Sayed**, the Democratic nominee for Michigan’s open U.S. Senate seat and a physician by training, on whether he supports gender-affirming care for minors. El-Sayed said the decision belongs to a patient, a parent and a doctor rather than the federal government; when Watters pushed with a graphic characterization of surgery, El-Sayed asked whether Watters was circumcised, and — after Watters called that a personal question — said the point was that Watters had decided he gets to sit inside a family’s medical decision. The interview drew 3.3M television viewers, the largest primetime audience of the night. Within 48 hours the same seconds of tape were the week’s biggest state story in both directions: Mo News at 1.2M, HuffPost at 880K and Newsweek at 488K on one side; Nick Sortor at 1.6M nationally, Fox’s own clips, RNC Research at 376K and Benny Johnson at 314K on the other. Republican nominee **Mike Rogers** converted it into ad copy on Aug 28 — a 30-second Detroit-market spot inside a seven-figure buy with the national Senate committee (231K): “Abdul thinks football is bad, but men playing women’s sports is good.”

Why it matters. This is the first time in this tracking that a priority-state nominee has answered the care question at length, on camera, in hostile territory — and the result is instructive. The answer itself is a governance answer (who decides), not a clinical one, and it is the part supporters amplified. The rebuttal question is the part opponents amplified, because it is repeatable without context. One exchange produced 7.7M engagements in a state that generated 67K the week before, which is a fair estimate of what a single televised answer is now worth in a Senate battleground.

Takeaway. Decide in advance which sentence is the clip. El-Sayed’s durable line is the decision-rights one — a patient, a parent and a doctor — and it survives being quoted by opponents; the rhetorical counter-question does not. Campaigns preparing for the same question should write the governance sentence first, deliver it first, and treat any follow-up improvisation as material the other side will own. Michigan also shows the answer is unavoidable: the question came in an interview about gas prices and faith.

Case Study 2: Minnesota — The Anniversary as Attack Creative

What happened. On the first anniversary of the Aug 27, 2025 shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, the account **End Wokeness** posted: “1 year ago, a trans gunman shot 24 kids at a Christian school in Minneapolis. The media buried the story.” It reached 2.6M engagements, with roughly 1.2M more across 81 verbatim reposts that this briefing does not count separately. The underlying record: two children — Fletcher Merkel, 8, and Harper Moyski, 10 — were killed, and 24 schoolchildren and three parishioners were wounded; the shooter, 23, died at the scene; court records from 2019 show a name change granted on a petition stating the then-minor identified as female, and reporting since has noted no evidence of medical transition and diary entries expressing disillusionment. The attack was covered for days by every national outlet, drew statements from the president and the vice president, and was investigated federally as domestic terrorism and as an anti-Catholic hate crime.

Why it matters. An anniversary is a scheduled event. Unlike a school-board meeting or a viral clip, it can be diarized months ahead, which makes this the most predictable attack format in this briefing — and the least prepared-for. It put a state with an open Senate seat at the top of the map without any candidate, party or ad buy touching it, and it did so with a claim whose weakest link is not the shooter’s identity but the assertion of a media cover-up, which is the one part of the post that is straightforwardly false.

Takeaway. Put the dates in the calendar and prepare the narrow correction, not the broad one. Arguing about the shooter’s identity concedes the frame and cannot be won on a feed; “this was front-page news in every outlet in the country for a week, and the president ordered flags to half-staff” is checkable in one click and answers the actual accusation. Minnesota campaigns should also expect the anniversary cycle to recur annually, inside the general-election window next year and every year after.

Case Study 3: Texas — One Attack Line, Five Messengers

What happened. An August University of Texas poll put Democrat **James Talarico** ahead of Republican **Ken Paxton** 42–39 in the U.S. Senate race. The response was strikingly uniform: the same three-part indictment — Talarico’s 2021 remark that “God is nonbinary,” a claim that he believes in “six genders,” and his vote against the girls’-sports bill — was delivered by **Sen. Ted Cruz** in his own voice (194K), by the national party account (59K), by the president through a friendly aggregator (154K), by **Libs of TikTok** compressed to four words (122K), and by Paxton alongside an endorsement from Riley Gaines (59K). A congressional candidate’s version — “a liar who wants to trans children” — was the state’s single biggest

post at 553K. Texas ran 1.96M hostile against 149K supportive, and the most-shared supportive item was a neutral candidate profile rather than a rebuttal.

Why it matters. This is what message discipline looks like from the other side, and it is aimed at a candidate who is winning. The attack does not depend on any news event, so it cannot be waited out; it recycles a five-year-old quote, which means it is unaffected by anything the campaign does now; and it is being carried by principals rather than by consultants, which guarantees coverage. Meanwhile the state's most consequential actual development — the Texas Department of Criminal Justice quietly withdrawing the policy under which people in its custody received hormone therapy, weeks after renewing it in July — drew 29K.

Takeaway. A five-year-old quote repeated by five messengers is a durability problem, not a news problem, and the answer has to be equally durable: one sentence in the candidate's own voice, on the record, that opponents have to quote in full to use. The supportive column being a wire-style profile rather than a rebuttal is the gap worth closing first. And the prison policy is the week's reminder that the loudest lane and the consequential lane are not the same lane.

Attack Formats to Watch

- **The anniversary.** A dated tragedy, recirculated on its anniversary with an identity attached and a media cover-up claim bolted on. It needs no news hook, no ad buy and no candidate; it put Minnesota at the top of this map by itself. It is also the only format here that can be put on a calendar in advance, which makes an unprepared response inexcusable.
- **The government study as ammunition.** A federal agency publishes research, and the press release does the campaigning. This week's HHS survey linking gender-affirming clinical positions to left-wing authoritarian attitudes produced the largest single post of the window (6.9M). The counter is not to dispute that a study exists but to state what it measured: association rather than cause, whether 1,208 respondents called six acts justified rather than whether anyone did anything, and — by the authors' own account — nothing at all about whether transgender people commit violence.
- **The favorable court ruling as symbol.** The First Circuit's Bow decision hands the "XX" wristband a First Amendment credential that will be attached to the symbol at every school board and stadium from now on. Expect the ruling to be cited far outside New England and far outside its actual holding, which is about punishing silent spectators, not about who plays.
- **The regulation nobody campaigned on.** A 502-page state health-code rewrite, published in a bulletin in August, becomes the state's entire trans-issue conversation within three weeks. Any agency's routine language update is an entry point; the tell is a rulemaking with an open comment period and no communications plan attached. Pennsylvania's closes Sept 21.
- **The principal on tour.** A cabinet secretary delivering a slur from a factory floor — Iowa one week, Wisconsin the next — guarantees in-state coverage without any local actor participating. Because it follows a published travel schedule, campaigns in states on that schedule can prepare a response before the visit rather than after the clip.
- **The faux-local-newspaper cutout — now documented end to end.** The "Grand Canyon Gazette" page in Arizona has completed a full cycle this month: build local-news credibility with cheap

community filler, inject a burst of attack creative against **JoAnna Mendoza** in the week of Aug 24, then rotate back to camouflage. Roughly 360 ads at \$200–\$299 each since spring, and the candidate’s own page never carried the attack. The lesson is that an opponent’s ad library can look clean while the attack is running; check the local-sounding pages in the district, and check them between bursts.

- **The declaration that never happened.** A post claiming that transgender French basketball player Julie Tétart had “officially declared” for the 2027 WNBA draft carried 580K this week. She has not declared, no team has approached her, and she has said publicly that a move is unrealistic. The format — a plausible-sounding sports announcement with no source attached, arriving mid-controversy — costs nothing to produce and is rarely corrected. Verify a declaration before responding to one.

Looking Ahead — The Calendar

September 8: New Hampshire votes. The state primary is the next election on this calendar, and it arrives thirteen days after a federal appeals court sided with parents who protested a transgender athlete’s participation. Expect the ruling in New Hampshire mail and expect the “XX” symbol to appear on the trail; the district court still has to decide a remedy, which will generate a second cycle later.

September 21: Pennsylvania’s comment window closes. Public comment on the health-code rewrite that replaced “mother” with “postpartum individual” ends that day. It is a fixed date on which the administration can explain the change in plain language, or on which the only explanation on the record will be the one Libs of TikTok wrote.

October 13: the Medicaid rule takes effect. Federal Medicaid and CHIP funding for gender-transition care for minors ends, with a six-month taper for patients already in treatment. States may continue covering it with their own funds — “may, not must” — which turns a federal rule into thirteen state questions three weeks before Election Day. Every priority-state campaign should have that distinction in hand now.

Date to be set: Kansas goes to trial. A Douglas County judge restored one plaintiff’s driver’s license on Aug 25 and sent the broader challenge to the state’s identification-and-facilities law toward trial. Roughly 1,700 residents’ licenses hang on it, and the governor’s and attorney general’s races are both on this year’s ballot.

Unscheduled, but coming: the league explains itself. The WNBA ruled two former NBA players ineligible and published no reasoning, while its new collective bargaining agreement says only that “only players who are women are eligible.” A written explanation, a legal challenge, or a public demand for one is the likeliest next beat, and it will land inside the general election.

Strategic Recommendations

COUNTER

PIVOT AWAY

LEAN INTO

• The cover-up claim, not the identity claim (Minnesota): the anniversary post's checkable error is "the media buried the story" — the Minneapolis shooting led national coverage for days, drew statements from the president and the vice president, and was investigated federally as domestic terrorism. Answer the sentence that is false; leave the one that is a fight. • What the federal study actually measured: association rather than cause, and whether 1,208 respondents called six acts justified — not whether anyone did anything. That sentence is the whole rebuttal and it fits in a tweet. • Check the local-sounding pages, not just the opponent's (Arizona): the Mendoza attack ran through a faux-newspaper page and never appeared on the candidate's own ad rotation. A clean opponent library is not evidence of a clean district.	• Improvising past the prepared answer on camera (Michigan): the decision-rights sentence survived being quoted by opponents; the follow-up question became their clip. Write the sentence that works when the other side plays it. • Re-litigating the "XX" wristband as harassment: a federal appeals court has now held the opposite about silent spectators. Contest the sports policy on its own terms, not the symbol. • Responding to an unverified declaration: the 580K post saying a French player had declared for the WNBA draft is not true. Confirm before answering; a rebuttal is what gives an invented announcement its second life.	• Fixed dates as offense: Sept 21 (Pennsylvania's comment deadline) and Oct 13 (the Medicaid rule) are both moments where a plain-language explanation from your side can be first on the record instead of last. The "may, not must" receipt belongs in every priority-state campaign's hands now. • The durable single sentence (Texas): against a five-year-old quote repeated by five messengers, the only counter that compounds is one line in the candidate's own voice that opponents must quote in full to use. • The paid lane in Iowa's Third District is now open ("Men in women's sports. It's not fair. It's not safe", live since Aug 21). A district-level response written now beats one written after the buy scales.
---	--	---

The bottom line. Four institutions wrote this week's attacks — a sports league that ruled without explaining, a federal court that sided with protesting parents, a federal health department that published a study, and a state health agency that rewrote a form. None of them is a campaign, none of them can be out-spent, and three of the four handed over a specific, checkable overreach in the process. The week's two biggest attack posts each contain one: a claim of a media cover-up that did not happen, and a study whose own text says association rather than cause. That is the work — answer the false clause, not the frame; write the sentence that survives being quoted by the other side; and put Sept 21, Oct 13 and next August's anniversary in the calendar today.

Limitations

Geography is measured from two dashboard layers: **issue-location** (which state a post is about; ~10% of posts carry a state tag) and **account-location** (where a channel is based; ~2% of channels). A post can be about a state without originating there, so state reach measures attention, not local activity. Off-topic virality that keyword-matched a state was removed by hand — fifty-nine posts this window — and forty-five stance codes and sixty-seven geolocation tags were hand-corrected, all documented in our review notes. Stance is a directional classifier read; "neutral" absorbs much hostile-leaning news, so anti-trans shares are conservative. This is a seven-day window (Aug 24–30), computed on a frozen, integrity-verified weekly snapshot of the dashboard. Week-over-week comparability caveats for this edition — the Aug 31 collection expansion and the wider geotagging sweep — are stated with the Battleground table; arrows compare against the Aug 16–23 weekly edition only, and future editions are directly comparable to this one.

The **audience** read is modeled, not observed: the dashboard has no engager-level data, so audience is inferred from the demographics of the accounts producing and amplifying content, engagement-weighted, under a homophily assumption (producer ≠ audience is the foundational caveat). It blends Census surname data, SSA first-name records, platform user base, and account location; the "evidence" column reports the share of reach with a real name/seed match versus a national fallback. The racial

estimate is the weakest layer (only ~2% of channels have a state) and is hedged hardest. The **originator/amplifier** read is modeled from near-duplicate text clustering plus native amplifier edges captured for ~36% of posts. The **MaxDiff** guidance in Strategic Recommendations is modeled × modeled — a synthetic panel with no live survey calibration available since June — reported there as a prediction only. Engagement is not persuasion.

Methodology

Data source. Trans Rhetoric Social Media Dashboard, built for TFA on the Junkipedia social listening API — 79,000+ channels across 20 platforms, 1,000,000+ posts spanning December 2023 to present, collected on 90+ keywords (topic terms, framing terms, and named trans public figures). **Period:** August 24 – 30, 2026 — the second WEEKLY edition of the electoral briefing, which runs weekly through election day at TFA’s request (the narrative briefing remains biweekly). **Priority states** are drawn from Adrienne’s “TFA priority states-races 5.18.26” sheet, plus Iowa (Jun 9 request) and Texas/Talarico. **Per-state signal** uses two geolocation layers — issue-location (which state a post concerns) and account-location (where a channel is based) — filtered to trans-relevant posts carrying engagement, with a manual audit of the high-engagement tail to remove off-topic keyword matches.

Diffusion: Originators vs. Amplifiers

The originator/amplifier analysis separates the accounts that *start* a story from those that give it the most reach. It runs in two passes. First, **near-duplicate clustering**: every post’s text is normalized (URLs, @-handles, casing, and punctuation stripped) and grouped with near-identical posts, so the same claim or clip is tracked as it reappears across accounts — a window’s posts collapse into a few thousand recurring-story clusters covering roughly 40% of volume. Second, **native amplifier edges**: the platform-level quote, reply, and repost relationships (present on about 36% of posts) link each amplifying post to the item it echoes.

Within a cluster, the **originator** is the earliest poster (or, for a retweet/quote chain, the account being quoted); **downstream reach** is the total engagement the story accrues beyond the originator’s own post; **amplifiers** are the other accounts in the cluster, ranked by the reach they add to stories they did not start. Originators are ranked both by the number of distinct stories they seed and by the downstream reach those seeds generate. Caveats: native edges exist on ~36% of posts; clustering misses heavy paraphrase; and “originator” is the earliest post *in the dataset*, which can trail an off-platform origin.

Audience Model

Because the dashboard captures no engager-level data, audience is **modeled** from the accounts that produce and amplify each slice of content, engagement-weighted, under a homophily assumption (producer ≠ audience is the foundational caveat), blending Census, SSA, platform, and location data. **Legal characterizations** of the Medicaid rule follow the published rule: federal funding ends, state-only coverage is permitted, a six-month taper is allowed — “may, not must.” The message-guidance predictions in Strategic Recommendations come from the August 17 synthetic MaxDiff panel on the AI attack-ad narrative (23 messages), uncalibrated against live survey data since June.

Prepared by Ari Drennen for the Trans Freedom Alliance | August 2026