



## *Center for Peace, Democracy, and Development*

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### **CPDD Raises Concern over Voter Intimidation and Growing Potential for Election Violence**

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#### **Summary:**

CPDD, based on data gathered from the Trust Network and its own sources, is deeply concerned by efforts over the last few days on the part of partisan supporters of US political parties – and those of President Donald Trump in particular – to intimidate voters and spark violent confrontations through vehicle caravans.

While many of these caravans appear to be organized as legitimate grassroots shows of support for the president, some of the more worrisome incidents of intimidation and harassment appear to have been encouraged by him and his family. In some instances, supporters of both sides have reported to be carrying guns and other weapons. Everyone has a right to show support for their candidate of choice, but extending this into voter intimidation, harassment, and violence is illegal, contrary to democratic principles, and creates a significant risk of escalating tensions that could erupt in violence.

- Organizers should avoid contact between ‘car rallies’ and political opponents or polling places, given the potential for escalation. A strong bipartisan statement by political leaders of both parties is needed that rallies and campaign activities must not devolve into harassment or attacks on opponents, and warning that vehicles can and sometimes are being weaponized to do harm.
- We call on President Trump in particular to urge his supporters to remain calm and to do nothing to disrupt or undermine the voting process, and to condemn violence categorically.
- We also call on law enforcement to remain nonpartisan and vigilant in ensuring public safety throughout the elections.
- We ask that both the mainstream media and social media users exercise caution and responsibility in reporting evidence or allegations of election violence or intimidation, making extra efforts to verify sources and to report information in a nonpartisan fashion.

## **Background:**

### **The Trump Caravan: Occupying the Highway to Intimidate Voters**

Scenes of flag-waving “caravans” of pickup trucks have become a common sight on highways and local streets across the country in recent weeks. Many of these caravans have been in support of President Trump, with Trump flags streaming behind them. While one interpretation of this phenomenon could be that it is an innovative alternative to rallies and marches in a socially-distanced era, allowing people to congregate and express support for their candidate from the safety of their cars, the caravans have often taken a darker turn. For example, on October 28, [social media posts surfaced of a pro-Trump caravan driving by honking and attempting to disrupt a pro-Biden campaign](#) while the Biden campaign bus was making a campaign stop at the Miller Avenue Government Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Later on in the day, as the Biden campaign bus was moving towards the I-35, [Trump supporters were observed scrambling on to their trucks to follow the bus](#).

On Friday, October 30, a Biden campaign bus was travelling from San Antonio to Austin, Texas on Highway 35 when it was surrounded by trucks flying Trump flags, which then [forced the bus to slow down, attempted to run it off the road](#), and one of the trucks rammed a campaign volunteer’s vehicle, causing damage. Two [Biden campaign events in Texas that day were cancelled](#) as a result, at least one of which organizers said was cancelled for safety reasons. Police who were contacted to investigate the incident where the staffer’s vehicle was side-swiped said [they have no jurisdiction to investigate](#), although the campaign did say local law enforcement helped them get to Austin. A federal investigation was opened by the FBI, at the same time that a crowdsourced effort appeared to [identify at least one of the drivers](#), who was known to have participated in [previous vehicle-based protest confrontations](#), including [driving into a crowd of protestors at a Black Lives Matter protest on September 12 in San Antonio](#). [Reports have surfaced](#) that the plan to block the Biden campaign bus was organized and coordinated in a private Facebook group, ‘Alamo City Trump Train,’ that was [filled with references to QAnon and claims that the drivers were armed](#). Supporters in San Antonio alerted the caravan drivers of the bus’s departure and timing so that they could intercept it.

[Caravan organizers](#), who have used the hashtag #MAGAdragtheinterstate to coordinate the effort on social media, describe these caravans as ‘rolling rallies’ and as ‘rolling flag parade caravans.’ According to data collected in an early warning/early response system by the [Trust Network](#), a non-partisan network of peacebuilding organizations seeking to prevent election-related violence, however, incidents across the country are leading to unfortunate conflicts, harassment of politicians and poll stations, and even attacks.

Incidents involving “Trump Caravans” or “Trump Trains” intensified over the weekend in several cities across the US. On November 1, a Trump caravan [shut down the Garden State](#)

[Parkway in New Jersey](#). In Louisville, Kentucky, the ["Trump Train" caravan with around 100 vehicles who gathered at a local school was met with a force of around 1000 counter protesters](#) upset that they were allowed to use the property. The caravan eventually managed to move to the Kentucky Exposition Center for a rally in support of President Donald Trump. Both sides had firearms and one BLM protester was arrested. On the same day, another Trump caravan rolled into Temecula, CA [blocking a voter center](#). A large group of local residents held a peaceful protest against the incident later in the evening. Again on November 1, a large convoy of the [Trump Train drove through the Denver Metro Area](#). No altercations were reported.

On November 2, [a Trump caravan was again involved in an altercation in Richmond Virginia](#) near the site of a Robert E Lee statue. A woman was reportedly pepper sprayed by an unknown attacker in a vehicle and an abandoned vehicle was shot at once. Black communities in Marin County, CA [complained of intimidation after around 350 vehicles belonging to a Trump caravan rolled into town](#). Reports indicate that some occupants of the caravan had made racial slurs at members of the local Black community. On the same day, large convoys of the Trump Caravan entered New York City [threatening counter-protestors and halting traffic on the Whitestone Bridge to wave pro-Trump and pro-police flags and later taking over the Mario Cuomo Bridge](#). In at least two of these events, the goal [appears to be voter intimidation](#).

While many of the caravans appear to be organized as a grassroots show of support for the President, some of the more worrisome incidents of intimidation and harassment appear to have been encouraged by the President and his family. President Trump tweeted "I love Texas" with a video of the caravan surrounding the Biden bus on Highway 35 in Texas, and after the FBI announced it was investigating the incident, [Trump criticized their investigation](#). Further [support for the Trump caravan came from Florida Senator Marco Rubio](#). Donald Trump, Jr. [had earlier released a video](#) encouraging followers to target their caravan to 'greet' Kamala Harris's campaign bus in Texas.

### **Call for Calm and Responsible Behavior**

While everyone has a right to show support for their candidate of choice, extending this enthusiasm into voter intimidation, harassment, and violence is illegal, contrary to democratic principles, and creates a significant risk of escalating tensions that could erupt in violence. Organizers should avoid contact between 'car rallies' and political opponents and polling places, given the potential for escalation. A strong bipartisan statement by political leaders of both parties is needed that rallies and campaign activities must not devolve into harassment or attacks on opponents, and calling out with condemnation that vehicles can and sometimes are being weaponized to do harm. Such a statement would be a helpful signal to followers to avoid escalating celebratory events into violent attacks or intimidation.