

Ethiopian Americans Made the Difference for the Republicans in Virginia

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Ethiopian Americans in Virginia have helped deliver an unexpected win for the Republican Party in Virginia's gubernatorial governor election.

Close to 100,000 Ethiopian-Americans live in Virginia, and many have for weeks been highlighting their anger with the Biden White House over its policy on the tragic and continuing conflict in Ethiopia.

Despite attempts by the American-Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC), Democratic candidate Terry McAuliffe refused to put his support behind challenging President Biden's approach, particularly on sanctions.

In contrast, Republican candidate and now Governor-elect Glenn Youngkin promised to expand the State's trading relations with Ethiopia, if he was to take office.

AEPAC, which has been running an on the ground operation for the past 6 weeks, confirmed a large protest vote did take place, with thousands of Ethiopians switching from Democrat to Republican for the very first time.

In September, President Biden threatened the Ethiopian Government with wide-ranging sanctions if it didn't engage in political discussions with the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF). The move angered the majority of the American-Ethiopian diaspora, who view the TPLF as a terrorist organisation threatening the country's hard-fought journey to democracy and economic liberalisation.

On election day, President Biden gave notice that Ethiopia would be removed from the trading benefits set out in the African Growth and Opportunities Act, a move that will see 200,000 Ethiopian jobs lost.

A recent poll conducted by People to People of 2,500 members of the Ethiopian American community found while 79% considered themselves Democrats, 61% of those intended to change their vote to the Republican Party due to White House's policy on Ethiopia.

Chairman of AEPAC Mesfin Tegenu said:

Ethiopian-Americans have a proud history of supporting the Democratic Party. There is no doubt that community support helped President Biden secure victory in key swing states such as Georgia, Arizona and Pennsylvania in 2020.

However, Ethiopian-Americans feel desperately let down by the President and Democratic Members of Congress. They have shown sympathy towards an insurgency determined to undermine Ethiopia's democratic and economic progress and have failed to constructively engage the Ethiopian Government. Instead, this Administration has opted for a misguided and contradictory approach with aggressive rhetoric and sanctions that will hurt ordinary Ethiopians."

"The community in Virginia have clearly had enough and this frustration has helped deliver a real upset. We at AEPAC look forward to working constructively with Glenn Youngkin during his term in office to strengthen relations between Ethiopia and the U.S."

About AEPAC: The American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee is dedicated to promoting a positive relationship between the United States and Ethiopia. AEPAC's core mission is to strengthen and enhance the century-old relationship between the United States and Ethiopia. AEPAC is a voluntary, non-profit, non-connected, public affairs organization that is not affiliated with any political party or with any specific candidate for election.