

To: Interested Parties

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Subject: Democrats Can Counter Top Republican Attacks for the 2026 Midterms

Date: March 25, 2026

With the 2026 elections less than 8 months away, the Republican Party's strategy for the midterms is increasingly coming into view. Saddled with low approval ratings for President Trump and voters' frustration with the cost of living, the president's chief political advisors are [encouraging](#) House Republicans to train their attacks against Democrats on 3 core topics: border security, crime, and taxes. Specifically, Axios [reports](#) that the GOP's "emerging strategy [is to] remind voters of Democrats' Biden-era positions on crime, cashless bail and open borders." Unsurprisingly, Republicans are aiming to make the midterms about issues on which they have historically enjoyed a partisan advantage.

Voters [rate](#) the cost of living as their paramount concern, which is why it is imperative that Democrats have a positive affordability agenda to address their pocketbook anxieties. Further, recent battleground survey [data](#) from Navigator finds increasing costs are a massive vulnerability for Republicans just over seven months out from the midterms. But for Democratic candidates to capitalize on this weakness and close the deal with persuadable voters, they must defuse the public safety issues where they are vulnerable by articulating popular, commonsense policy positions on these topics. The Center for American Progress (CAP), our sister 501(c)(3) organization, has published policy agendas to tackle these issues head on, which have the support of a broad majority of Americans. By championing these ideas, Democrats can clear the hurdle voters have set on security issues and stay focused on the cost-of-living.

Security at Home

While the president's handling of immigration has fallen significantly over the last year, his handling of [border security remains one of the few issues in which Trump is above water and has the support of a majority of Americans](#)—even after the tragic killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. Democrats should defuse concerns about the border and asylum to shift the immigration conversation to issues where Republicans are out of step with the American people. They can do this by championing [CAP's immigration plan](#), which proposes to:

- **Strengthen border security:** Building new barriers, deploying new technology, and investing in security systems at ports of entry.
- **End the misuse of the asylum system:** Establishing a fair and fast process to adjudicate claims at the border in under a month, including by presuming that applicants from other democracies are ineligible and raising the legal standard for all applicants. This is crucial to ensuring order at the border.
- **Expand legal immigration:** Increasing opportunities for legal immigration, expanding access to economic visas, reforming work visa programs, and creating an alternative pathway for victims of crimes.

- **Create a secure path to citizenship:** Allowing undocumented immigrants who have lived and worked in the U.S. for at least a decade (and who have not committed serious crimes in that time) to apply for and earn citizenship.

[CAP has also called for](#) sensible reforms to ICE and CBP: requiring federal agents to wear uniforms that clearly identify their agency, mandating body-worn cameras, ending warrantless home raids, and otherwise reining in abuses and providing guardrails on enforcement actions. Polls show strong support for these commonsense steps. A strong majority supports restricting illegal border crossings *and* expanding legal immigration. About 60% of voters support investments like hiring more agents (and half still support building a wall on the Mexican border). On the flip side, [a record 79% of Americans](#) told Gallup in 2025 that immigration is a "good thing" for the country, up 15 points year-over-year; 78% support a path to citizenship, including 59% of Republicans; and, in March 2026, [62%, including 66% of swing voters](#), believe ICE has been too aggressive. That's why CAP's plan rejects the unpopular extremes on both ends and creates a broad base of support among the American people to fix our broken immigration system once and for all.

Similarly, on crime and community safety, polling CAP Action conducted last year with Blue Rose Research shows that Republicans enjoy an 8-point advantage (50% to 42%). Even more troubling, among swing voters, Republicans' advantage swells to 28 points (54% to 26%). Voters are 30 points more likely to believe a generic Republican official "want[s] to keep your local community safe" and "care[s] about fighting crime and getting criminals off the streets." That's why Democrats should state unequivocally that they support swift and certain justice for people who break the law and value the difficult work law enforcement does to keep Americans safe. CAP has published a [crime agenda](#) that seeks to:

- **Hold lawbreakers accountable:** Hiring 7,000 more detectives and police officers, investing in effective policing strategies like hot-spot policing and focused deterrence, recruiting mental health professionals and co-responders, and investing in court systems to deliver swifter, more certain consequences.
 - Democrats who call for "hiring new police officers" and "stopping crime before it starts" outperform Republicans who echo Trump's message of "sending in the troops" by 12 points, including 16 points among swing voters.
 - That message also does nearly 20 points better than messages that focus just on prevention or violence interruption.
- **Stop crime before it starts:** Expanding evidence-backed crime prevention strategies and proven community violence intervention programs—like those in Baltimore and San Francisco—as well as reducing recidivism.
- **Disrupt illicit markets:** Concentrating federal law enforcement resources on the violent criminal organizations and individuals who profit from illegal trafficking.

MaxDiff polling CAP Action conducted last September with Blue Rose found that the most popular crime-fighting policies tested were "make sure that people who commit crimes are swiftly prosecuted and held accountable" and "recruit and retain good police officers."

For too long, Democrats have downplayed crime as a serious voter concern or sought to redirect the narrative to other topics. That strategy doesn't work. The right to feel and be safe in your community is fundamental for voters, who are twice as likely to perceive crime as being on the rise versus falling and by a 17-point margin believe Democrats are less likely to support accountability policies.

Raising Costs

Finally, Republicans plan to attack Democrats for opposing the Big "Beautiful" Bill by [claiming](#) that they supported raising taxes on Americans by \$4 trillion and opposing "the biggest working class tax cut in history." Democrats can turn this attack on its head by hammering Republicans for supporting President Trump's tariffs that are themselves a massive tax increase on all Americans by driving up costs for [groceries](#), [utilities](#), and other common expenses. Democrats should assail Republicans' Big "Beautiful" Bill for giving [more than \\$1 trillion in new tax breaks to the top 1%](#) while making historic cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that, on top of tariffs, [made 99% of Americans worse off](#). In 2024, Republicans promised to bring the cost of living down, but their policies have done the opposite.

While Republicans are gutting programs that help meet people's basic needs and putting trillions in new tax breaks on the country's credit card, Americans are left with little to show for it. A recently-released Center for American Progress [analysis](#) shows that less than half of households earning \$100,000 will receive any increase in their tax return this year and those meager increases average roughly \$208 for 2025. Put simply, on the whole, working- and middle-class Americans are [net losers](#) when considering the combined effects of the President's Big "Beautiful" Bill and tariffs. Republicans' signature economic policies are liabilities, not assets, evinced by the Big "Beautiful" Bill's approval rating being [more than 20 points underwater](#) and [the White House discouraging members from calling the bill by its name](#). In highlighting what tax relief they support, Democrats should call for eliminating the president's sweeping tariffs, redirecting tax breaks for the ultrawealthy to working- and middle-class Americans, and restoring tax cuts for everyday Americans that Republicans chose to let expire, like the Affordable Care Act premium tax credits.

Our experts at the Center for American Progress Action Fund are happy to meet with you to discuss these issues. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be helpful.