

TO: Interested Parties

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SUBJECT: New Polling Reveals Strongest Messaging for Upcoming Reconciliation Fight

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On April 15, the Center for American Progress conducted a nationwide [survey](#) of 2,271 likely voters to assess their support for messaging around Congressional Republicans' effort to pass multiple years of ICE and CBP funding via the budget reconciliation process. The good news is that messages emphasizing Republicans' misaligned priorities perform very well, and outperform Republican immigration messaging.

It is imperative that opponents of the reconciliation plan approach this fight strategically and with discipline, while not losing sight of the cost-of-living concerns that are front-of-mind for voters.

- **The strongest messages against additional funding focus on misaligned priorities: Republicans spending billions on ICE while cutting benefits hardworking Americans rely on.** This message outperformed all other opposition messages at +2.0 points, and was especially potent with swing voters (+5.7) and those who flipped from Biden to Trump (+4.5).
- **Trump accountability and deficit arguments are second-tier but still useful.** Framing Republicans as blindly following Trump's orders or pointing to the lack of a pay-fors both moved voters, but neither approached the power of the benefits contrast.
- **Procedural arguments are the weakest opposition frame.** Criticizing Republicans for bypassing normal budget processes generated the smallest lift, suggesting voters are less motivated by process violations than by pocketbook consequences.

DO

- **DO** contrast spending with cuts. Frame as: Republicans spending \$75B on ICE while cutting benefits that help hardworking Americans meet their basic needs.
- **DO** hold Republicans accountable to Trump. "Blindly following Trump's orders" is second-tier but still moves voters.
- **DO** flag the lack of pay-fors. Deficit framing is useful, especially when paired with the benefits contrast.

DON'T

- **DON'T** lean on procedural arguments. Criticizing Republicans for bypassing normal budget processes resonates least. Process violations don't cut through in the same way that pocketbook consequences do.
- **DON'T** focus solely on ICE misconduct without also emphasizing Trump's failure to deliver relief. Attacking the agency's abuses, conduct, and lack of accountability can resonate best if coupled with messaging highlighting Trump's misaligned priorities. For example, Republicans are proposing to put \$75 billion on the nation's credit card on a lawless agency while doing nothing to help Americans afford groceries.

Average treatment effects (ATEs)

Likely Messaging Party	Treatment	Message	Vote Choice	Percentile
Dem	Misaligned Priorities	Republicans are trying to spend \$75 billion on ICE and border patrol while cutting Medicaid and SNAP and taking away benefits that hardworking Americans rely on. Democrats believe we should be investing in helping people meet their basic needs, not pouring billions into an agency with no accountability. Republicans have their priorities backwards, and Democrats are fighting to make sure your tax dollars make life easier to afford.	2.0%	84%
Dem	Trump Pushback	Republicans keep doing whatever Trump tells them to - no pushback, no questions asked. This time it's \$75 billion for ICE and border patrol, handed over without any accountability. Democrats believe you deserve representatives who actually stand up for you, not politicians who simply follow Trump's orders even if they're not in Americans' best interests.	1.1%	41%
Dem	Deficit Argument	Republicans want to spend \$75 billion on ICE and border patrol and have no plan to pay for it. That means more debt, higher interest rates, and more inflation hitting your wallet. After putting more than \$3 trillion on the nation's credit card for more tax breaks for the wealthy and an aimless war in the Middle East, Republicans are driving up costs when Americans are already stretched thin.	1.0%	37%
Dem	Anti-ICE	Republicans want to give \$75 billion to ICE and border patrol - agencies that have shot and killed American citizens, broken into homes, refused to show ID, and frequently defied court orders. Democrats believe that no law enforcement agency should be above the law and are fighting to make sure ICE and border patrol have real oversight before handing them a blank check.	0.9%	30%
Dem	Procedural / Bipartisanship	Republicans in Congress are breaking the rules to push through \$75 billion for Trump's ICE and border patrol by bypassing the normal, bipartisan government funding process. This process exists to make sure spending is fair, transparent, and accountable. Republicans have refused to negotiate commonsense reforms to rein in ICE and are instead giving the rogue agency tens of billions of more dollars.	0.8%	29%
Dem	Procedural / Ideological Wish List	Republicans are breaking rules to hand \$75 billion to Trump's ICE and border patrol with zero oversight and zero accountability. They care more about enacting Trump's wish list than protecting taxpayers and Americans' rights. Republicans are willing to bypass the normal bipartisan government funding process just to do the bidding of Trump and their MAGA base.	0.8%	27%