

To: Interested Parties

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Subject: Combatting Common Attacks on Immigration, Crime, and LGBTQI+ Issues

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With the 2026 midterms well underway, progressive lawmakers are already being attacked over immigration, crime, and LGBTQI+ issues. Those attacking lawmakers in this way hope to distract from the cost-of-living crisis. Americans, however, are interested in hearing lawmakers both neutralize these attacks with popular, commonsense positions, while also focusing on affordability issues, which Americans continuously rate as their paramount concern.

The information below is organized by topic, with specific DO's and DON'Ts for how to discuss each defensive issue in a debate. They are grounded in the polling from CAP Action as well as polling from our sister organization, the Center for American Progress, and policy suggestions found here: on [combatting Republican attacks](#), [immigration](#), [crime](#), and [LGBTQI+](#) issues. When framing these issues it is important to not capitulate to attacks, but instead give the American people the reassurance they need on the issue, and also provide them affirmative ideas for addressing the rising cost of living.

Immigration

- **DO: Prioritize both border security *and* expanding *legal* immigration**, rather than pushing in just one direction. By a nearly 2-to-1 (61% to 33%) margin, Americans agree that illegal immigration is a big problem facing this country. By a similar margin (57% to 32%), Americans believe that expanded legal immigration is a critical component for fixing the country's broken immigration system. The political worry that any pro-immigration stance is a political vulnerability does not hold up under polling.
 - Proposed answer: I support both strengthening border security AND expanded legal immigration, including a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who have been here a long time.
- **DO: Emphasize the harms of Trump and Republicans' indiscriminate, haphazard mass deportation policy.**
 - Proposed answer: It is outrageous that this administration claims its immigration enforcement efforts are focused on deporting violent criminals and yet in July, the most recent month for which we have data, [a majority of people being arrested by ICE had no criminal record](#). The truth is that this administration's targeting of construction workers who build our houses and agricultural workers who grow our food is harming our economy and driving up prices for families. We must also be clear: this administration is not just going after people in our country illegally, they are also working to deport people in this country legally under protected status. Now, more than 1 million people in America legally because they cannot

safely return to their home countries are at risk of being deported at no fault of their own.

- **DO: Remind Americans that Trump's ICE and CBP agents have brutally killed American citizens** and are operating without accountability.
 - Proposed answer: Like tens of millions of Americans, I have watched the terrifying videos of American citizens like Alex Pretti and Renee Good, among others, being killed at point blank range by Trump's ICE and CBP agents simply for exercising their constitutional rights. I have to say that I find it outrageous that Republicans in Congress have responded to these tragedies not by standing with the overwhelming majority of Americans who support commonsense policies like requiring ICE agents to identify themselves just like local police but instead giving Trump an additional \$70 billion in funding for ICE and CBP to continue operating without any accountability measures enacted to prevent further loss of American lives.
- **DO: Respond to "sanctuary cities" attacks by highlighting existing cooperation between states and localities and the federal government and how President Trump's overreach is an attack on local control that puts people in danger.**
 - Proposed answer: We need to be clear here: President Trump is trying to divert state and local law enforcement from fulfilling their mission to protect their communities. It is the federal government's job to enforce federal immigration laws. I would never support policies that prevent the enforcement of criminal laws, and sanctuary policies do not do that. The truth is that city police departments in all cities, including "sanctuary cities," routinely support and cooperate with DHS to solve crimes and hold dangerous criminals accountable. Further, just like his deployment of National Guard troops to American cities, which [research shows](#) has had no measurable impact on lowering the rate of violent crime, this is just another example of the Trump administration overreaching into local priorities and attempting to override local control. That's dangerous. President Trump's plan to turn as many state and local law enforcement agencies as he can into an arm of ICE risks diminishing trust in law enforcement and making immigrant communities less likely to report crimes or seek protection when needed.
- **DO NOT: Blanketly oppose immigration enforcement.**
 - Proposed answer: I support targeted immigration enforcement that prioritizes deporting those who commit violent crimes, not dispatching ICE to harass people trying to help their kids get to school or hunting down immigrant small business owners who have been in this country for decades like this administration has.
- **DO NOT: Defend the Biden administration's immigration record.**
 - Proposed answer: I want to be clear: I believe that both President Biden and President Trump have failed to deliver on immigration. The truth is that we can

have a secure border and enforce our immigration laws without terrorizing communities and killing American citizens in our streets.

Crime

- **DO: Frame any approach to crime as both strengthening law enforcement and addressing root causes.** A paired approach - including funding for law enforcement *and* addressing the root causes of crime beats a prevention-only message by 8 points overall (16 among swing voters).
 - Proposed answer: I believe we need to both ensure law enforcement have the resources they need to protect our communities and address the root causes of crime. We can and must do both.
- **DO: Lead with concrete, resourced solutions rather than abstract goals.** Standalone, abstract claims like “solve crimes faster” tests poorly, but the same idea works well when tied to a specific policy solution e.g., “hiring more detectives to clear case backlogs” or “giving officers better tools to identify suspects.”
 - Proposed answer: The truth is that nearly half of all murder cases in this country go unsolved. I think that’s unacceptable and that victims and their families deserve justice. That’s why I support hiring more detectives to clear case backlogs and giving officers better tools to identify suspects.
- **DO: Center justice for victims** when talking about prosecution and enforcement - specifically that too many crimes go unsolved. This is the strongest framing both for individual policy components and for describing the crime-prevention broadly: justice-for-victims frames shift House vote by 2.6 points.
 - Proposed answer: We owe it to the victims and their families to ensure that no other family must endure this tragic loss of life, that’s why I support holding people who commit violent crimes accountable and making sure our local police departments can recruit, train, and retain the best talent.
- **DO: Link your origin story to your commitment to public safety.** Use your biography or credentials to more authentically convey to Americans that you take crime seriously and are committed to fighting it. For example, if you grew up in a dangerous neighborhood rife with gun violence, say so. If you oversaw crime reduction as a local elected official, championed legislation to crack down on violent crime, or successfully prosecuted murders and human traffickers, say so. If you’re a parent who has lived in fear for your child’s safety, say so.
- **DO NOT: Downplay crime as a real concern or pivot away from it.** Though shrinking, Republicans still have a 7-point trust advantage on the issue, and it remains one of the strongest issues for Republicans. Americans disapprove of the Trump Administration’s approach (by 9 points, Americans do not approve of the emergency federal actions on crime, including the National Guard deployments, a 13-point shift from last year), but

need to see a real alternative policy from Democrats, rather than a dismissal of Americans' very real concerns about safety.

- **DO NOT: Make the message solely about attacking Trump.** While Trump's approach to crime is unpopular, it is critical to hold Republican Members of Congress and the broader Republican Party accountable for these actions. Messages only focused on attacking Trump on crime were not effective at moving house vote choice.

LGBTQ+ Issues

- **DO: Emphasize universal values and oppose politicians interfering with deeply personal decisions.**
 - Proposed answer: I believe that discriminating against people for who they are is wrong. All Americans, including LGBTQ people, deserve to be able to work, access housing, and enjoy public spaces free from discrimination. I also believe that politicians should not interfere with medical decisions or the health of patients. These are decisions better made on a case-by-case basis by experts. It's why I trust parents, in consultation with doctors, to know best about their own child's needs than the government does. And it's why I trust sports governing bodies, not politicians, to set policies that ensure that competition is both fair and inclusive.
- **DO NOT: Defend policies or litigate individual examples that you are unfamiliar with.** Republicans often exploit the public's lack of familiarity with policies affecting LGBTQI+ people by invoking sensational examples of statutes in one state or locality or exploiting a less sympathetic case study. Answer these attacks by reasserting your values—believing in fairness, opposing discrimination, trusting parents and doctors to know what's best for their children.

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 to ssignorelli@americanprogress.org if we can be helpful.