

TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Americans Support A Balanced Approach to Crime and Public Safety That Strengthens Law Enforcement And Addresses Underlying Causes

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In August 2026, the Center for American Progress and Blue Rose Research fielded a national survey to examine views toward the Trump administration's approach to crime and CAP's policy alternatives.

The U.S. has been experiencing a [historic drop](#) in violent crime [since 2023](#). The FBI reports violent crime fell [9.3% in 2025](#), the lowest rate since 1968, and the murder rate hit its lowest level since at least 1960. [Preliminary analysis](#) for 2026 finds that homicides continue to [fall, down 18%](#) from the same period in 2025, putting 2026 on pace for another historic low as major cities show steep declines. Homicides [fell by 50%](#) in Miami, 43.9% in DC, and 52.4% in Boston. While this trend started under the Biden administration, [Congressional Republicans](#) and [President Trump](#) are moving quickly to claim credit while blaming Democratic leadership for failing to address the issue with so-called "soft-on-crime policies." However, their actual record has actively threatened public safety: [the administration has](#) relaxed gun regulations; cut roughly \$500 million in federal grants administered by the Department of Justice that focus on crime prevention; fired career prosecutors; and redirected agents from drug trafficking, child exploitation, and human trafficking cases toward immigration enforcement. And CAP's polling shows that many of President Trump's policies are largely unpopular with Americans and are a growing vulnerability:

- **Americans now disagree with the ongoing deployment of the National Guard;**
- Few Americans say they feel **safer** under the Trump administration; and
- Americans strongly disapprove of President Trump's funding cuts to community organizations and local law enforcement programs to address crime, relaxing of gun regulations, and firing of career prosecutors.

While President Trump has stronger approval on crime and public safety relative to other issues, his approval on the issue is still underwater—with net approval on handling crime [at -8](#), down from [+12](#) at the start of his term. However, Republicans fare much better: [Pew Research Center](#) finds crime remains their strongest issue with a +14 advantage. Perhaps because of that issue advantage, Republicans are using this long-standing trust advantage to their benefit in the midterms, hammering some Democrats as "soft-on-crime" and wanting to "defund the police" in races nationwide. In [Michigan's 10th](#), former prosecutor Christina Hines has been attacked over "[soft-on-crime](#) policies;" in Arizona's 6th and Colorado's 8th, [JoAnna Mendoza](#) and [Manny Rutinel](#) have faced "defund the police" attacks, while similar lines are running in [North Carolina](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and Nevada's [race for governor](#). [President Trump](#) and his administration have led this charge: at the Republican Midterm Convention, they made false claims that [Democrats](#) want to [defund the police](#) and stand "[with criminals](#)."

To neutralize these attacks and build credibility with Americans, voters must hear concrete, substantive plans on crime—not slogans, abstract goals, or a pivot away from the issue. Democrats can do so with policies like those outlined in [CAP's plan to stop crime in communities, achieve accountability, and ensure swift and certain delivery of justice.](#)

CAP's plan meets the challenge to protect everyone from crime by utilizing the most effective strategies to reduce crime and keep communities safe. And rather than making it more difficult for mayors, police, and prosecutors to do their jobs, CAP's plan is on the side of local law enforcement, with a balanced policy approach that:

- Holds lawbreakers accountable by providing police departments with funding and resources to hire more detectives and police officers to solve crimes.
 - By hiring thousands more detectives and leveraging emerging technologies, such as ballistics evidence and DNA extraction, to solve homicides and violent crimes.
- Ensures swift and certain justice so that violent offenders are off the streets without undue delays and victims get the justice they deserve.
 - By hiring more local prosecutors, expanding judicial and public defender positions, and improving case management to clear court backlogs.
- Fixes the underlying problems that lead to crime by investing in youth crime prevention efforts, and community violence intervention (CVI).
 - By funding youth summer employment programs and CVI programs that help connect individuals to resources, like housing and mental health and substance use treatment.

And CAP's new polling shows that Americans want real, actionable solutions that will:

- **Ensure swift and certain justice that gets violent offenders off the streets without undue delays;**
- **Give police officers the tools to keep us safe; and**
- **Fix the underlying problems that lead to crime, through investing in after-school programs and youth employment programs and other prevention strategies.**

Leaders must hold Republicans and the Trump administration accountable for their unpopular actions, while providing an agenda with tangible policy alternatives that respond to Americans' very real concerns about public safety.

1. Republicans lead on trust, but the Trump administration's actions are out of step with Americans.

Though shrinking, Republicans continue to hold a trust advantage on crime and community safety (+7 points, compared to +8 in CAP's 2025 polling)—but that hasn't translated into public support for the Trump administration's current approach. Notably, **agreement with deploying the National Guard has flipped and is now underwater.** CAP's 2025 polling showed **53%** of

Americans supported emergency actions like deploying the National Guard; now just 40% agree, while 49%—including 49% of swing voters—disagree.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?					
Crime is out of control and requires a comprehensive new crime bill and emergency federal action, such as continuing to deploy Federal law enforcement and the National Guard.					
Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	2024 Vote Status Did not vote
Strongly agree	16%	9%	14%	23%	16%
Somewhat agree	24%	12%	22%	35%	22%
Somewhat disagree	17%	17%	21%	17%	18%
Strongly disagree	32%	54%	28%	11%	22%
Not sure	12%	9%	15%	14%	21%
Agree	40%	21%	36%	58%	39%
Disagree	49%	70%	49%	28%	40%
Net	-9%	-49%	-13%	30%	-1%

Americans don't believe the Trump administration is making them safer: More Americans say they feel *less safe* because of the National Guard deployment (36% less safe, 30% more safe), firing of career prosecutors and reassigning law enforcement (46% vs 16%), and relaxed gun regulations (44% vs 19%). Fifty-four percent of Americans—and 58% of swing voters—also worry that President Trump is ignoring the civil rights of Americans in an effort to address crime.

The Trump administration's decisions to fund priorities like the deployment of the National Guard while cutting crime-prevention resources is also out of step with Americans' priorities.

Americans' top concerns with the deployment are that it 1) takes power away from states and cities; 2) it puts troops into roles they're not adequately trained for; and 3) it wastes taxpayer money that could be spent on other priorities. Notably, a majority of Americans would prefer to stop the deployment of and redirect the [estimated \\$1.7 billion](#) it would cost otherwise towards other priorities, like lowering costs for American families. Americans also respond strongly to messages that highlight how the \$1.7 billion could instead be put towards a range of other costs, like cost of living, healthcare, food, housing, childcare, gas, or to fund critical programs like Medicaid. These messages increase disapproval of President Trump's job performance by +1.3 points or more, with the cost-of-living and healthcare ranking in the top 10% of all messages tested by Blue Rose Research.

The National Guard isn't solely where the Trump administration is out of step with voters. Voters largely disapprove of the actions taken by the administration to:

- Cut funding for organizations that focus on issues like violent crime and community intervention (60% disapprove).
- Cut programs that provide state and local law enforcement with resources to address crime, such as targeting drug trafficking organizations (59% disapprove).
- Fire career prosecutors and reassign law enforcement agents off drug trafficking, child exploitation, and human trafficking cases (55% disapprove).
- Relax gun regulations related to buying, selling, and owning a gun (51% disapprove).

2. Americans want a balanced approach to crime that addresses both the underlying problems that lead to crime and also provides more resources to police.

When CAP's plan is matched against a more left-leaning approach—which prioritizes prevention and rehabilitation *rather than* police funding—**Americans prefer CAP's plan to hire new officers, speed up prosecutions, and provide justice to victims by eight points.** Notably this balanced approach is highly effective with swing voters who prefer CAP's plan by +16 points—a significant margin that could help credibility among a group who currently trust Republicans on the issue by 19 points.

Democrats have different approaches to addressing the issue of crime and public safety. Which of the following approaches do you prefer, even if neither is exactly right?					
Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	2024 Vote Status Did not vote
Some Democrats say violent crime is a serious problem that needs real solutions and holds people who break the law accountable. We should deliver swift and certain justice by hiring thousands of new police officers and detectives to solve crimes faster, speed up prosecutions so victims get justice without delay, and ensure law enforcement maintains high standards and protects civil rights.	42%	37%	44%	46%	36%
Some Democrats say we should stop pouring more money into police alone and prioritizing harsh punishments, which only leads to more violence. Instead we need to provide people with programs that are proven to turn their lives around and create safe communities: mental health responders, addiction treatment, affordable housing, job opportunities, and funding public schools.	34%	51%	28%	18%	33%
Not sure	24%	12%	29%	36%	31%

This preference for a balanced approach holds throughout the poll: the two top-performing messages to give officers the resources they need to do their jobs and fix problems that lead to crime in the first place shift House vote choice by **3.3 points each**—and shift swing voters by +8.2 and +8 points, respectively.

3. Concrete, resourced policy solutions outperform abstract goals or slogans.

Throughout the poll, Americans consistently prefer concrete policy actions over abstract goals. The top ranked approaches that Americans want to prioritize to bring down crime are to: “fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place,” “hold lawbreakers accountable for crimes,” and “give police officers the tools they need to keep us safe.”

Other useful, mid-tier phrases—ranking in at least the top seven—include: “recruit and retain good police officers,” “go after violent criminal organizations and cartels,” and “deliver accountability and invest in prevention.”

Which should be the higher priority to bring down crime?	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump
Fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place	61%	65%	62%	57%
Hold lawbreakers accountable for crimes	59%	58%	58%	59%
Give police officers the tools they need to keep us safe	56%	55%	55%	58%
Deliver accountability and invest in prevention	56%	60%	57%	52%
Recruit and retain good police officers	55%	56%	56%	54%
Go after violent criminal organizations and cartels	55%	53%	54%	57%
Be tough on the root causes of crime	54%	55%	54%	54%

Americans are less likely to prefer broad statements about speed and efficiency **on their own**, such as “catch criminals quickly” or “solve crimes faster” *relative to more specific approaches* above. However, message testing shows that these broad goals can be effective when paired with concrete policies. When discussing specific *policy* components of CAP’s plan, Americans respond most to the following messages:

- **Provide police officers with the tools to keep us safe**—like funding to hire and train good officers or updated technologies to catch suspects quickly;
- **Fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place**—like investing in after-school programs and youth employment programs to provide structure to youth and help them succeed;
- **Hire more police**—by giving local police departments more capacity to stop crime before it happens, solve cases, and hold criminals accountable; and
- **Deliver justice to victims**—getting violent offenders off the streets to bring justice and keep our communities safe **without undue delay**

CAP's Policy	Message Variant	House Vote Choice	Percentile
Recruit Good Police	...give police officers the tools they need to keep us safe . This means funding and resources to hire and train good officers, solve crimes, hold repeat offenders accountable, and give police officers the support they need to do their difficult jobs.	3.3%	91%
Prevent Crime	... fix the problems that lead to crime in the first place . This means investing in after-school programs and youth employment programs to provide structure to our youth and help them succeed.	3.3%	89%
Hire More Police	... keep communities safe by hiring more police officers . Democrats' plan will give local police departments more capacity to stop crime before it happens, solve cases, and hold criminals accountable.	3.1%	84%
Deliver Justice To Victims	... deliver justice to victims . Too often, crimes go unsolved. We need to show victims that their cases matter by getting violent offenders off the streets so that we can bring justice and keep our communities safe without any delays.	3.0%	82%

4. Center justice for victims and resources for local law enforcement to make the system more efficient.

The most effective messaging frames to bring down crime center on **bringing justice to victims, making the justice system more efficient, and solving crimes quickly**.

Emphasizing that too many crimes are going unsolved (+2.9 points) or citing that only 60% of murders are solved (+2.6 points) resonates strongly with Americans, particularly when paired with CAP's solution of hiring more officers and detectives.

Americans also want to see the justice system be more efficient by clearing backlogs, respecting due process, and ensuring judicial and public defender positions are fully staffed (+2.8 points). When discussing solving crimes faster, the top-performing messages provide a clear plan, such as giving police officers tools to more quickly identify suspects (+2.6 points).

Treatment	Content	House Vote Choice	Percentile	Swing
CAP Victim Justice	Democrats say you should support CANDIDATE because they want to bring justice to victims of crimes . Too often, crimes go unsolved. Democrats want to hire thousands more police and detectives so that criminals are held accountable, violent offenders are off the streets, and victims and their families have justice.	2.9%	80%	6.6%
CAP Efficiency	Democrats say you should support CANDIDATE because they have a plan to make the justice system more efficient. People who commit crimes must face accountability and victims must receive justice efficiently. Democrats want to hire more local prosecutors, fully staff judicial and public defender positions, and modernize court technology so cases are resolved quickly and with respect for due process.	2.8%	77%	7.0%
CAP Victim Justice/ Murder Rate	Democrats say you should support CANDIDATE because they want to bring justice to victims of crimes . Only 60% of murders are solved. Democrats want to hire thousands more police and detectives so that criminals are held accountable, violent offenders are off the streets, and victims and their families have justice.	2.6%	69%	5.9%
CAP Solve Crimes Faster	Democrats say you should support CANDIDATE because they have a plan to solve crimes faster and get dangerous criminals off the streets . Crime labs face years-long backlogs and detectives work through impossible caseloads. Democrats want to hire thousands more detectives, clear forensic backlogs, and fund local real-time crime centers that help police identify suspects in hours instead of weeks.	2.6%	68%	6.1%

Conclusion

Though crime remains one of the strongest issues for Republicans, President Trump's record on crime is a growing vulnerability. More Americans believe the administration is making them *less* safe, not more.

Despite this unpopularity, messages focused **solely** on Trump are **least effective** at shifting House vote choice. Democrats should contrast themselves with the current administration and neutralize the GOP's "soft-on-crime attacks"—but should **not** lead with Trump alone. Americans instead should be met with substantive, concrete policies that validate—rather than dismiss—their safety concerns. A policy plan that pairs concrete goals to fund police, prevent crime before it happens, and deliver swift and certain justice for victims is best positioned to meet Americans' priorities.