



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Senate Majority PAC

DATE: September 29, 2026

RE: Democrats Amplify Corruption Arguments by Tying them to Increased Costs

Voter disgust with the political system is at a level campaigns rarely see. Asked open-endedly, what's wrong, "corruption" and "politicians" dominate the responses, with 57% of voters placing "too much corruption in politics" in their top four problems.

This is not an abstract complaint. Eighty-seven percent of all voters, and 85% of swing voters, say corruption is a problem that personally raises their own costs, and the top reason by far is that it drives up the price of everyday goods: gas, groceries, utilities, housing.

But while voters somewhat intuit the corruption-to-cost link, campaigns win more ground by spelling it out. The strongest message is when voters see the clearest cost connection, for example, using examples like politicians who take money from monopoly utility and data-center companies **while letting them raise electric bills** (71% of swings say this bothers them a great deal; 63% say it raises their own costs a lot), or politicians who take money from big pharma and insurance companies **while voting to raise premiums and drug costs** (71% bothered; 61% cost impact). On stock trading: We can make our message much more relevant to voters by pointing out that, when politicians trade stocks using insider information, **they personally profit when these companies boost their profits by raising our prices** (47% of swings say this raises their costs a lot; compared to only 28% when we just say they trade stocks using insider information).

Drawing the Contrast

To win the argument, Democrats need to do a few things:

- **Keep the cost piece front-and-center when hitting our opponents.** The strongest reason to vote against a Republican continues to be that they have raised our costs; **do not sacrifice the cost piece in favor of communicating about corruption alone**, as corruption charges that are not anchored to costs do not clear the bar. When pitted against a "socialist" Democrat, voters are more concerned about a Republican who has voted to increase the cost of everything we buy (tariffs, the Iran war/gas prices, healthcare and utility costs) by 16 points – the single strongest attack in the survey. Compare this to messaging about a Republican who:
 - Is bought-and-paid for by big corporations than votes to give them tax breaks (Net more concerned: 0)

- Is more focused on making themselves and their donors richer than on helping the middle class (Net more concerned: +4)
- Trades stocks based on insider information the public doesn't have access to (Net more concerned: -4)
- **Invoke the right bogeymen.** "Corrupt politicians" and "pay-to-play politicians" are strongly disliked among swings (84% and 65% very unfavorable), while softer synonyms like "career politicians" and "political insiders" register less (37% and 43%). On the corporate side, "price-gouging CEOs" and "price-gouging monopolies" (73% and 72% very unfavorable with swings) outperform generic terms like "corporate special interests" (54% very unfavorable). Name industries directly: big pharma and monopoly utility companies are loathed without explanation (76% and 73% unfavorable among swings, including majorities who are very unfavorable).
- **Effectively tie our opponents to Trump's corruption.** While swing voters believe that Republicans are more corrupt than Democrats by 10 points (55% to 45%), that gap increases to 28 points when we attach them to Trump (64% say Trump and the Republicans are more corrupt, 36% say Democrats are more corrupt). A Republican who **enables Donald Trump's corruption and self-dealing, even as it raises our costs**, concerns voters more than a "socialist" Democrat by 8 points.
- **Show we understand that corruption is a systemic problem and are willing to take on the corruption in both parties.** A Democrat who will hold politicians in both parties accountable for letting corporate monopolies rip people off beats a Republican who will cut middle-class taxes and rein in wasteful government spending, 60% to 40%. A Democrat who will take on the corruption in both parties that's raising our costs beats the same Republican, also 60% to 40%.

Winning With Corruption Messaging

Every corruption message this cycle should do four things: show that our candidates understand the problems with the political system writ large; tie our opponents' corruption explicitly to rising costs (e.g. taxes, utility bills, drug prices, grocery costs); name the villain specifically ("corrupt politicians" and "price-gouging monopolies," not "career politicians" or "special interests"; and, wherever credible, connect the Republican opponent to Trump, rather than running a generic anti-corruption message alone. The top-testing language for closing the sale is direct and should anchor scripts and mail: "We can't afford their corruption anymore," and "the people who make the law shouldn't be above the law."

Global Strategy Group's cost-of-corruption survey for Senate Majority PAC was fielded August 12-18 among 1,800 likely voters across nine battlegrounds (200 each in Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas; overall margin of error +/- 2.3%),