

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Lake Research Partners
Re: Public Opinion on Affordability, Accountability, and Corruption¹
Date: August 2026

Lake Research Partners designed and administered a survey commissioned by Indivisible Action, which was conducted August 6-18, 2026, by phone using professional telephone interviewers and via text-to-online (a portion of the sample received a text to their cell phone with a link to complete the survey online). The survey reached 1,015 likely 2026 battleground voters², 532 likely 2028 senate battleground voters³, and 454 voters of color across the South.⁴

This survey research explored voters' attitudes toward affordability, accountability, and corruption – and results show that **an affordability + accountability agenda is strong, persuasive, and viewed as more credible** than either affordability or accountability alone. Voters want leaders to lower everyday costs and firmly believe that will require taking on political corruption, corporate power, and special interests' influence. **The clearest strategic opportunity is to make anti-corruption concrete for voters – call out the bad actors, connect their actions directly to bills, prices, and economic fairness, and lay out your plan for how you will address it. People agree that if we want affordability, we have to clean up corruption and rewrite the rules for families, not insider special interests.**

Core Takeaways:

1. *Cost of living messaging is persuasive when it includes accountability.*
 - The tested “Costs + Accountability” narrative performs strongly. It argues that when politicians and donors rig the system, working people face higher premiums, utility bills, and grocery costs. It also argues that affordability requires cleaning up corruption and rewriting rules that favor insiders and unrigging the system.
 - **Bottom Line:** Lowering costs should be the tangible promise, but taking on corruption and special interests provides the mechanism by which we can accomplish it. Adopt a “lower costs by taking on corruption” frame. Voters want their elected officials to both lower costs and clean up corruption by holding bad actors accountable.
2. *Voters see a rigged system and want their elected leaders to fix it.*
 - **Voters are extremely concerned about powerful actors exploiting the system** – from *politicians rigging the system for themselves to health care and insurance companies' influence over politicians.*
 - Voters respond to the idea that *rising costs stem primarily from corporate greed, corrupt CEOs, and price gouging* rather than too much government spending and waste. They also strongly agree with the idea that *corrupt insiders are making deals to keep*

¹ See p. 9 for full methodological note.

² 2026 battleground states defined as AK, GA, IA, MI, MT, NC, NE, OH, and TX.

³ 2028 battleground states defined as AZ, IL, NV, NY, NC, PA, and WI.

⁴ The South is defined as TN, AL, MS, KY, AR, LA, OK, TX, NC, SC, GA, VA, and FL.

themselves out of jail and continue getting richer, including 93% of voters of color across the South, 83% of 2026 battleground voters, and 77% of 2028 battleground voters.

- **Bottom Line:** Voters aren't just concerned about the economy today; they are fed up with the resulting unfairness of a rigged system. They see insiders, politicians, and corporations with too much power and elected leaders prioritizing their interests while ordinary people pay the cost. Make accountability and reforms central to any plan in order to show how you will deliver on affordability. This combination adds energy and credibility to the message. It explains how prices will be lowered and how we can change/unrig the economy.
3. *Voters want change and believe the system is failing them. Congress and both parties have a credibility problem, though anti-establishment actors are popular.*
- **Battleground voters hold unfavorable views of both parties in Congress, though Republicans fare worse than Democrats:** 70% of likely 2026 battleground voters, 71% of likely 2028 battleground voters, and 77% of voters of color across the South rate Republicans in Congress unfavorably. Democrats in Congress are viewed unfavorably by 53%-54% of battleground voters. Moreover, job ratings are bad for both parties.
 - **Corruption is a universal concern.** At least nine in 10 voters across the surveyed universes consider corruption at least somewhat of a serious problem in *Congress*. Forty-two percent of 2026 and 2028 battleground voters say corruption is a very serious problem in the *Democratic Party*; 60% of 2026 and 63% of 2028 battleground voters say it is a very serious problem within the *Republican Party*.
 - **Bottom Line:** Democrats cannot rely on generic contrasts or negative partisanship heading into the midterms and 2028. Voters need to see a credible reform agenda that acknowledges broad dissatisfaction with politics and politicians today and lays out their plans for accountability. In messaging, counter voter cynicism by tapping into populist feelings and pairing them with a clear plan, e.g., insiders are rigging the rules and that's raising your bills. Here's how we will take on corruption and hold special interests and corporations accountable in order to stop that from happening. Politicians rigging the system at our expense is the top villain.
4. *The strongest policy proposals focus on tangible limits on self-dealing, crackdowns on corporate market manipulation and price gouging, and clear links to voters' financial lives.*
- Several policy proposals to combat corruption and lower costs are popular, especially banning members of Congress and their spouses from stock trading while in office (91% of 2026 battleground voters strongly favor, 83% of 2028 battleground voters strongly favor and 88% of voters of color across the South strongly favor). At least eight in 10 voters across samples also strongly favor stopping data centers from passing utility and infrastructure costs on to ratepayers and more than seven in 10 strongly favor limiting billionaire influence over elections by tightening big-money politics rules.

- **Bottom Line:** Throughout the data, it is clear voters want their elected officials to both lower costs and clean up corruption by holding bad actors accountable. Fighting corruption is broadly popular. Build communications around easily repeatable policy actions – banning congressional stock trading; stopping corporate price gouging and grocery price fixing; blocking data centers from shifting costs onto local consumers; reducing billionaire and PAC influence; and making wealthy individuals pay their fair share in taxes.

Cost of living messaging is persuasive when it includes accountability.

One of the top testing message narratives voters find convincing focuses not just on addressing rising costs but holding politicians and special interests who are rigging the system in their favor accountable.

- [Costs + Accountability^] *When politicians and their donors rig the system, ordinary people pay the price. We're stuck paying higher premiums, utility bills, and grocery bills. And we're left with fewer answers from those in power. Accountability is not a slogan. It is the difference between a government that serves the public and a government that serves special interests. If we want affordability, we have to clean up corruption and rewrite the rules for families, not insiders. It's time to choose working people over corporate power.*
- Eight in 10 2026 battleground voters find this message convincing, including 54% who find it very convincing. More than three-quarters of 2028 battleground voters also find this message convincing, including 48% who find it very convincing. And 87% of voters of color across the South are convinced, including 68% who find it very convincing.

Voters believe politicians have rigged the system for their benefit. They want elected leaders who will unrig the system.

Voters are extremely concerned about politicians rigging the system to benefit themselves, politicians and powerful interests being corrupt, the influence health care and insurance companies have over politicians today, and government not working on ordinary people's behalf. Linking cost concerns with corruption accountability is powerful and persuasive.

- Battleground voters and voters of color across the South are extremely concerned about ***politicians rigging the system to benefit themselves at our expense, political corruption costing taxpayers money, and politicians and powerful interests being corrupt.***
- A major opportunity for this narrative is the health care issue. Two-thirds of 2026 battleground voters are also extremely concerned about ***health care and insurance companies having too much influence over politicians.***
- It's powerful to talk about politicians and political corruption. Voters are extremely concerned that the ***government is not working for ordinary people.***

% Extremely Concerned [^]	'26 BG Voters	'28 BG Voters	Voters of Color in South
Politicians rigging the system to benefit themselves at our expense	71%	63%	75%
Political corruption costing taxpayers money	69%	63%	79%
Politicians and powerful interests being corrupt	69%	64%	76%
Health care and insurance companies having too much influence over politicians	66%	57%	63%
Government not working for ordinary people	65%	64%	76%

[^]All items split sampled

- At least six-in-10 2028 battleground voters are also extremely concerned about *Big Tech having too much influence over politicians*^{^5} (63%) and *corporations rigging the system to benefit their shareholders at our expense*[^] (60%).
- Voters of color across the South are even more populist. More than nine in 10 voters of color across the South (93%) strongly agree that ***corrupt insiders are making deals to keep themselves out of jail and continue getting richer.***[^] Eighty-three percent (83%) of 2026 battleground voters and 77% of 2028 battleground voters also strongly agree.

Voters want change and believe the system is failing them. Congress and both parties have a credibility problem, though anti-establishment actors are popular.

Voters see corruption in Congress and in both parties as a very serious problem. Both parties in Congress have work to do to improve their image among the electorate. Both 2026 and 2028 battleground voters hold unfavorable views of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, and few believe either party is doing an excellent/good job. However, voters are noticeably more favorable of progressive, anti-establishment electeds than the establishment Democratic leaders tested.

- Battleground voters hold unfavorable views of both **Democrats in Congress** (53% unfavorable among 2026 battleground voters, 54% among 2028 battleground voters) and **Republicans in Congress** (70% and 71%, respectively). The intensity of unfavorable views is stronger for Republicans than Democrats (59% very unfavorable; 35% very unfavorable respectively among 2026 battleground voters; 61% very unfavorable; 34% very unfavorable respectively among 2028 battleground voters).
- Voters of color across the South are favorable of **Democrats in Congress**, but intensity is weak – 61% favorable, 23% very favorable. More than three-quarters (77%) hold unfavorable views of **Republicans in Congress**, including 67% who are very unfavorable.

⁵ All items with a [^] in this memo were split sampled

- Meanwhile, **anti-establishment actors are popular in battleground states**. Battleground voters view Senator Bernie Sanders, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and the No Kings movement almost 2x more favorably than Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Senator Chuck Schumer. These anti-establishment leaders, often seen taking on corruption themselves, are viewed more favorably than either party. Battleground voters also view the No Kings Movement favorably.

% Favorable (% unfavorable)	'26 BG Voters	'28 BG Voters	Voters of Color in South
Senator Bernie Sanders	58% (38%)	59% (38%)	73% (21%)
Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	53% (40%)	55% (36%)	61% (21%)
Mayor Zohran Mamdani	52% (36%)	56% (36%)	57% (20%)
Congressman Hakeem Jeffries	37% (46%)	35% (47%)	53% (31%)
Senator Chuck Schumer	28% (62%)	26% (65%)	37% (46%)
The No Kings Movement	57% (36%)	58% (32%)	68% (19%)

- **Voters believe both parties are doing a bad job.** At least eight in 10 voters across samples rate the job being done by **Republicans in Congress** as just fair/poor, including 83% of 2026 battleground voters, 80% of 2028 battleground voters, and 90% of voters of color across the South. **Democrats in Congress** are also rated poorly, with 77% of 2026 battleground voters, 80% of 2028 battleground voters, and 66% of voters of color across the South rating their job as just fair/poor.
- Six in 10 (60%) of 2026 battleground voters, 58% of 2028 battleground voters, and 71% of voters of color in the South believe **corruption is a very serious problem in Congress**. At least nine in 10 voters across samples believe it is a very serious/somewhat serious problem in Congress.
 - At least four in 10 battleground voters say corruption is a very serious problem within both the Republican and Democratic party, but they are even more likely to believe it is a very serious problem within the Republican party. Forty-two percent of 2026 and 2028 battleground voters say corruption is a very serious problem in the Democratic Party; 60% of 2026 battleground voters and 63% of 2028 battleground voters say it is a very serious problem within the Republican Party. This suggests significant trust-building opportunities for candidates and officials who clearly lay out their plans to tackle corruption.
- **Not only are voters extremely concerned about politicians and powerful interests being corrupt, they are also most likely to say corruption is a very serious problem in the presidency.** About two-thirds of 2026 battleground voters (64%) and 2028 battleground voters (66%) believe corruption is a **very serious problem in the presidency**. At least seven in 10 voters across samples believe it is a very serious/somewhat serious problem, including 71% of 2026 and 2028 battleground voters and 85% of voters of color across the South.

- **Battleground voters point to the Trump Administration as causing the MOST harm to American consumers – 22% of 2026 battleground voters and 25% of 2028 battleground voters blame the Administration most – followed by corrupt politicians (16% and 14%, respectively) and Donald Trump (14% and 13%, respectively).** Taken together, Trump and his Administration receive the most blame among battleground voters, including 36% of 2026 battleground voters and 38% of 2028 battleground voters.
- When asked who they believe has financially benefited the most from the Trump Administration and its actions, voters point to the Trump Family, President Trump, and donors to the president. A plurality say **the Trump family** has benefited the most, including 46% of 2026 battleground voters and 43% of 2028 battleground voters. A third say **President Trump** has benefited the most (33% of 2026 battleground voters and 36% of 2028 battleground voters) and about a quarter say donors to the president have benefited the most (23% of 2026 battleground voters and 27% of 2028 battleground voters).
- Democrats should not link the affordability crisis to corruption in the abstract – there are clear targets in voters’ minds that, if taken on, could lead to lowering costs and cleaning up rampant corruption.

Voters want and strongly favor action and solutions. The strongest policy proposals focus on tangible limits on self-dealing, crackdowns on corporate market manipulation and price gouging, and clear links to voters’ financial lives.

Voters readily connect the rising costs and affordability issues they are facing with corporate greed and corruption. They want their elected leaders to take action and commit uprooting the corruption that is driving a rigged economy – not just talk about the economy and rising costs hurting working families. Without holding the corrupt actors accountable, an affordability message will be less credible.

- **Voters want politicians to focus on both lowering costs and cleaning up corruption.** Over three-quarters of battleground voters (79% of 2026 battleground voters and 76% of 2028 battleground voters) and 84% of voters of color across the South say *politicians should focus on both lowering costs and cleaning up corruption at the same time*.
- **A solid majority of voters believe rising costs are primarily caused by greedy corporations, corrupt CEOs, and price gouging,** including 52% of 2026 battleground voters, 58% of 2028 battleground voters, and 61% of voters of color across the South.^
 - An even stronger majority of voters of color across the South believe **rising costs are primarily caused by greedy corporations and CEOs price gouging and rigging the economy for themselves (69%).**[^]
 - By contrast, only 37-38% of 2026 battleground voters, 29-43% of 2028 battleground voters, and 27-32% of voters of color across the South believe rising costs are primarily caused by too much government spending and waste.

Which of the following is the primary reason for rising costs?	'26 BG Voters	'28 BG Voters	Voters of Color in South
Rising costs are primarily caused by greedy corporations, corrupt CEOs, and price gouging [^]	52%	58%	61%
Rising costs are primarily caused by greedy corporations and CEOs price gouging and rigging the economy for themselves [^]	51%	42%	69%
Rising costs are primarily caused by too much government spending and waste	37-38%	29-43%	27-32%

- Solid majorities agree that **it is not enough for politicians to talk about the economy; a credible plan must address both lowering and addressing corruption.**
 - 90% of 2026 battleground voters strongly agree *it is not enough for politicians to talk about the economy; they need a plan to make life more affordable*, including 91% of Democrats, 88% of Independents and weak partisans, and 87% of Republicans.[^] 81% of 2028 battleground voters also strongly agree, including 84% of Democrats and 83% of Republicans. And finally, 97% of voters of color across the South strongly agree, including 100% of Black voters, 93% of Latino/a voters, and 91% of AAPI voters.
 - 88% of 2026 battleground voters strongly agree that *we must focus on both lowering costs and addressing corruption*, including 94% of Democrats, 78% of Independents and weak partisans, and 84% of Republicans.[^] 83% of 2028 battleground voters strongly agree as well, including 88% of Democrats and 76% of Republicans. Finally, 90% of voters of color across the South strongly agree, including 93% of Black voters, 87% of Latino/a voters, and 81% of AAPI voters.

Voters will vote for candidates with an agenda that includes anti-corruption and tackling rising costs. While lowering costs is important to voters, a solid majority are more likely to vote for candidates who will lower costs by taking on corruption.

- Battleground voters and voters of color across the South are much more likely to vote for a candidate running for public office whose agenda focuses on **lowering costs by taking on corruption**, including 57% of 2026 battleground voters, 56% of 2028 battleground voters, and 67% of voters of color across the South.[^]
- Moreover, seven in 10 (73%) 2026 battleground voters, 69% of 2028 battleground voters, and 74% of voters of color across the South say they are more likely to support a candidate for elected office who **fights for lower costs AND fights corruption and special interests equally well.**

Democrats have a clear opportunity to embrace a tightly paired anti-corruption, pro-affordability agenda.

Several policy proposals to combat corruption are popular with voters, especially policies that will curb members of Congress from financially benefiting from their position, forbid data centers from passing

on rate hikes to ratepayers, limit billionaire influence over elections, and take on corporate price gouging. These are all simple, specific actions.

- The top policy, **banning members of Congress and their spouses from stock trading while holding public office**, is near-universally favored across voter universes.

% Strongly favor^	'26 BG Voters	'28 BG Voters	Voters of Color in South
Ban members of Congress and their spouses from stock trading while holding public office	91%	83%	88%
Forbid data centers from passing on utility rate increase and infrastructure costs to ratepayers	85%	80%	84%
Limit billionaire influence over elections by tightening big-money politics rules	82%	73%	81%

^All items split sampled

- Voters also strongly favor proposals to quash price gouging by corporations, **cap donors' super PAC contributions, make the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share in taxes, create stronger rules against grocery price-fixing, and ban AI from setting prices or wages based on personal data.**

% Strongly favor^	'26 BG Voters	'28 BG Voters	Voters of Color in South
Crack down on corporate price gouging	81%	69%	88%
Cap contributions to super PACs (political action committees) at \$5,000 per donor per year	78%	76%	76%
Make the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share in taxes	74%	73%	87%
Ban artificial intelligence (AI) from setting different prices or wages based on personal data	67%	60%	75%
Create stronger rules against grocery price fixing and anti-competition practices	67%	61%	79%

^All items split sampled

Methodological Note

Lake Research Partners designed and administered a phone survey that was conducted August 6-18, 2026, by text-to-online (a portion of the sample received a text to their cell phone with a link to complete the survey online) and phone using professional telephone interviewers.

The survey reached 1,015 likely 2026 voters across the following battleground states: Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, Ohio, and Texas; 532 likely 2028 Senate battleground voters across the following states: Arizona, Illinois, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin; and 454 likely 2026 Black, Latino/a, and Asian American and Pacific Islander voters across the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Survey respondents were drawn from TargetSmart and statistically weighted to ensure the sample's demographic and political composition reflected that of each voter universe. Specifically, the likely 2026 battleground voter sample was weighted by gender, region, gender within region, age, race, gender within race, and education; the likely 2028 battleground voter sample was weighted by gender, region, gender within region, age, race, gender within race, party identification, and gender within party identification; the Black voter sample was weighted by region, age, party identification, and education; the Latino/a voter sample was weighted by gender, region, age, gender within party identification, and education; the Asian American and Pacific Islander voter sample was weighted by gender, region, age, party identification, gender within party identification, and education. The Black, Latino/a, and Asian American and Pacific Islander voter samples were then weighted to reflect their representative proportions of voters in the South.

The margin of error is ± 3.1 percent for the likely 2026 battleground voter sample, ± 4.2 percent for the likely 2028 battleground voter sample, and ± 4.6 percent for the voters of color across the South sample. In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. The margin of error for subgroups is higher.