TO: Interested Parties
FR: Becca Siegel, Chief Insights Officer, Center for American Progress
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RE: Americans Demand an Ambitious Policy Agenda to Fight Corruption

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In the 2026 midterm elections, voters sent a clear message: corruption is a serious problem, and they want leaders who will take it on. In exit polling, nine in ten voters said corruption was a crucial or major factor in their vote. This closely aligns with polling conducted in October by the Center for American Progress and Blue Rose Research focused on corruption and CAP's policy proposals to address it.

- Corruption is a **top priority issue** across party lines, and it has greatly **increased in salience** over the last two years.
- Americans are most concerned about acts of corruption that have a **clear link to their lives, particularly through misuse of taxpayer dollars.**
- Though there is a strong sense that the Trump administration is uniquely corrupt, **neither party is trusted to root out corruption.**
- The best way to build trust with Americans is to **prioritize a robust anti-corruption policy agenda that applies to all lawmakers**, not just Trump.

CAP's anti-corruption agenda answers Americans' demand with a set of broadly popular policy proposals. Each policy tested enjoys majority support, including from a majority of swing voters. These policy proposals are structured to:

1. **Prioritize real consequences,** like requiring senior officials to divest from individual stocks (60% support, 84th percentile) and recovering taxpayer money spent under conflicts of interest (59% support, 80th percentile)
2. **Address new forms of corruption**, like banning federal employees from using prediction markets (65% support, 97th percentile) and regulating officials' crypto holdings (62% support, 89th percentile)
3. **Close presidential exemptions**, like banning the President and senior administration officials from profiting off foreign governments (63% support, 92nd percentile) and requiring pardon transparency (63% support, 92nd percentile)
4. **Apply across government**, like real-time stock trading disclosures (62% support, 89th percentile) and a binding Supreme Court code of ethics (62% support, 89th percentile)

Polling data for this research includes 15,461 responses, collected via online web panels October 4-7. The margin of error with 95% confidence is ±3.4pp for the full sample and larger within subgroups.

1. Political corruption is a rising priority for Americans

The issue of government corruption has risen in importance to Americans since 2024, and is now a top-priority issue across the partisan spectrum. Cracking down on corruption is

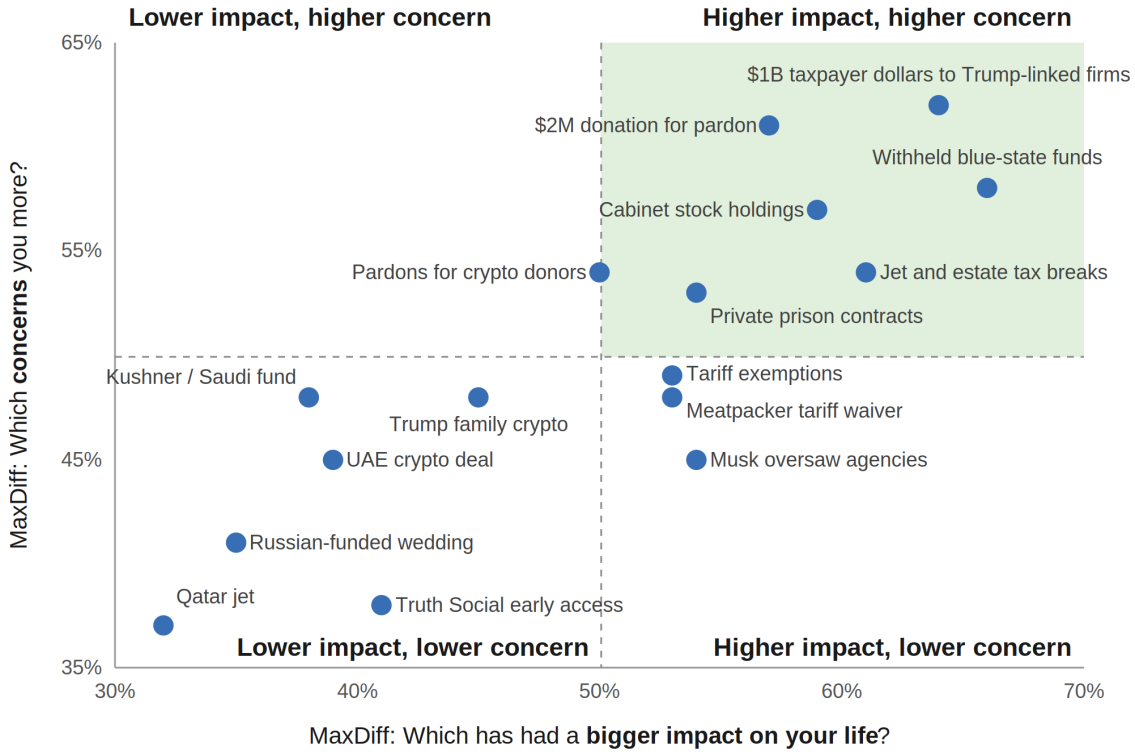
Americans' top non-economic priority, and ranked 5th out of 17 priorities tested, trailing only pocketbook economic issues. Salience is consistent across the partisan spectrum, and across all demographic groups. In polling from Ipsos, the share of Americans that cite corruption among their top concerns has more than doubled in the past two years (from 17% in September 2024 to 38% June 2026). By a 3-1 margin (66-23), Americans believe that Congress needs to investigate corruption, and that doing so is "necessary to make the government work."

2. Americans are most concerned about acts of government corruption that directly impact their own lives, raise their costs, or use their tax dollars

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Americans see political corruption as a broader problem than simply leaders doing illegal things while in office: 72% are concerned about officials becoming much wealthier in office even when they break no laws, including 61% of Trump voters. Concern about officials getting richer through legal insider stock trading (81%) is nearly as high as concern about officials doing so illegally (82%). This is consistent with a broader feeling that the entire system is rigged against everyday, working Americans. Americans' top problem with corruption is not that it is illegal, but that "it lets the wealthy and well-connected play by a different set of rules" (59%).

Given the economic prioritization and sense of a rigged system, it follows that **Americans are most concerned about tangible, domestic corruption that is clearly connected to their everyday lives.** For example, Americans express much more concern about $1B in taxpayer money going to Trump-family-linked firms, as compared to the Qatari government gifting a jet, since the former is much more clearly linked to domestic priorities and tax dollars.



Across fifteen different examples of corruption in the Trump administration, the most salient actions are those that have the clearest link to a misuse of taxpayer dollars or to the everyday struggles of Americans.

3. Neither party is trusted to root out government corruption. This means there is political upside for the leaders who can own this issue, but also a need to build trust.

Democrats hold a slim +5 point advantage over Republicans (31% to 26%) on which party is more trusted to root out corruption, but a large share (22%) trust neither party. **Swing voters particularly show high levels of distrust: 54% say they trust neither party or are unsure.**

While the Trump administration is seen as uniquely corrupt, there is strong belief that corruption extends across political parties — and a strong desire to investigate corruption in both parties. 69% of Americans have heard about corruption allegations in the Trump administration and Americans rank Trump first as to who they hold responsible for wrongdoings within the government. By 47% to 25%, Americans also say the Trump administration is more corrupt than past administrations. Swing voters agree with this sentiment (47-16), with strong intensity: 30% believe the administration is "much more corrupt" than past administrations, compared to 17% who say "somewhat more corrupt". Even so, **by nearly a 3-1 margin (66-26, including a narrow majority of Harris voters), Americans want Congress to investigate officials from both parties rather than concentrate only on Trump**, his family, and members of the administration.

When deciding where to focus its corruption investigations, which approach comes closer to your view?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	Non-Voter
Congress should concentrate its investigative efforts on **allegations involving Trump**, his family, and senior members of his administration.	26%	41%	23%	11%	18%
Congress should spread its investigative efforts across government, including allegations involving officials from **both political parties.**	66%	50%	66%	81%	53%
Not sure	9%	10%	11%	8%	28%

This polling identified two key ways that lawmakers and candidates can gain trust on the issue of political corruption. First, by 62% to 23%, voters say a bipartisan focus on corruption investigations would give them *more* confidence in Democrats in Congress to actually root out corruption, rather than a focus only on Trump; this includes 66% of swing voters. Second, **Americans are more likely to trust a candidate who outlines clear policies to fight corruption over a candidate who only makes personal anti-corruption pledges.** For example, a candidate proposing a congressional stock trading ban earned net +17 trust, compared with +8 for a candidate who personally pledged not to trade stocks.

A candidate for Congress says fighting corruption in Washington is one of their top priorities. The most important part of their anti-corruption platform is a …

How much do you trust this candidate to actually fight corruption in Washington?

	Trust candidate	Do not trust	Net
...policy to disclose finances and donate gains above a limit	49%	36%	+13
...personal pledge to disclose finances and donate gains	46%	40%	+6
...policy to ban corporate PAC donations to members of Congress	47%	35%	+12
...personal pledge to refuse corporate PAC donations	43%	34%	+9
...policy to ban foreign money or business deals for officials and families	47%	37%	+10
...personal pledge to refuse foreign money or business deals	45%	37%	+8
...policy to enact congressional term limits	47%	31%	+16
...personal pledge to serve a limited number of terms	44%	31%	+13
...policy to ban individual stock trading by members of Congress	46%	29%	+17
...personal pledge to not partake in individual stock trading	45%	37%	+8

Most importantly, Americans are clear that they want lawmakers and candidates to prioritize fighting corruption. **83% of Americans say it is important for 2028 candidates to prioritize this issue**, including 89% of Harris voters, 79% of Trump voters, and 73% of swing voters. The combination of the high salience and low trust for either party to fight corruption means that a lawmaker, candidate, or political party that does effectively take on this issue could see high political payoff. The best way to gain trust on this issue is to introduce, support, and enact specific, bipartisan anti-corruption policies - many of which are included in CAP's plan.

4. There is broad support for CAP's policy approach to fighting political corruption

The Center for American Progress has proposed a series of individual policies to address government corruption. Americans view corruption as a larger and more pressing issue than they have in the past; CAP's policy proposal meets the scale of the problem and reflects key priorities that Americans say they want in anti-corruption policy:

1. **Prioritizing real consequences rather than simple disclosures**: by a 5-1 margin (38-7), Americans want corrupt officials removed or prosecuted, rather than just exposed.

2. **Accounting for new forms of corruption**: Americans strongly support regulations on prediction markets, crypto investments, and presidential pardons.

3. **Putting enforcement beyond the reach of the executive branch and closing presidential exemptions:** By 47-25, Americans say the Trump administration is more

corrupt than past administrations, and they rank President Trump first among those responsible for wrongdoing in government.

4. **Applying across government**: by nearly a 3-1 margin (66-26), Americans want Congress to investigate officials from both parties, and many of the top-performing policies apply to officials across all three branches of government.

The most popular individual policies are clearly bipartisan - covering elected officials from both parties. These include **banning federal employees from participating in prediction markets** (65% support, 97th percentile), **barring senior government officials from profiting off of foreign governments** (63% support, 92nd percentile), and **requiring transparency around presidential pardons** (63% support, 92nd percentile). Each of these policies also sees support from more than 70% of swing voters.

Though the Trump administration is not named in any of the policy proposals, several policies are implicitly related to the administration: requiring presidential divestment (53% support, 44th percentile), providing options for states and citizens to sue when the president illegally profits (54% support, 48th percentile), and a post-office ethics certification (56%, 67th percentile). These policies naturally see lower support from some Trump voters, but are supported by a majority of Americans, including a majority of swing voters.

5. Conclusion

Concern about corruption has hit a ten-year high and is now Americans' second-biggest worry, behind only economic concerns. Corruption is particularly salient when it has a direct connection to tax dollars and rising prices. While Americans view the Trump administration as more corrupt than past administrations, neither party has a clear trust advantage. This means that the leaders who can effectively build trust and take on the fight - by enacting ambitious anti-corruption policies across all of government - will have an opportunity to own this important issue for years to come.

6. Appendix: Full Policy Test Results

	Policy Text	Topline Support	Topline %tile
Prediction Markets	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to ban all federal employees from using prediction markets, which are websites where people bet money on the outcome of real-world events, including political and policy decisions connected to their own government work. Under this policy, federal workers could not use inside knowledge of government decisions to profit on these platforms.	65%	97%
Foreign Influence	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing legislation that would stop the President, vice presidents, cabinet members, and senior White House staff from profiting off foreign governments or companies owned by foreign governments. Under this policy, officials would face this ban while in office and for four years after leaving, while family members would face it for two years.	63%	92%
Pardon Transparency	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to require public disclosure of who lobbied for a presidential pardon and any financial ties over $10,000 between the person pardoned and the president, their family, their businesses, or their political action committees. Under this policy, hidden financial ties would count as evidence of corruption that could trigger an investigation, and giving something of value to get a pardon would be treated as bribery.	63%	92%
Real-Time Digital Trading Disclosure	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to require senior government officials to make all their financial trades, including cryptocurrency, through a public database that updates within 24 hours of each trade. Under this policy, any trade not reported this way would be treated as illegal, and the public would be able to see any financial moves that senior government officials make in real-time, not months later.	62%	89%
Binding Supreme Court Code of Ethics	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to create a binding, enforceable code of ethics for Supreme Court justices, similar to the rules that apply to other federal judges. Under this policy, justices could be investigated and disciplined for violations such as accepting undisclosed gifts or failing to recuse themselves from cases involving a financial conflict of interest, closing a gap that currently lets Supreme Court justices police themselves.	62%	89%
Crypto SEC Regulation and Recusal	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing legislation to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate cryptocurrency created by a federal official or their family the same way it regulates stocks and bonds. Under this policy, any official holding more than $1,000 in cryptocurrency would have to recuse themselves from government decisions related to the cryptocurrency industry.	62%	89%
Crypto Self-Dealing Felony	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing legislation to make it a federal felony for any government official to use their official power to benefit their own cryptocurrency, meme coin, or other digital holdings. Under this policy, violators could face up to 10 years in prison and forfeiture of all crypto and digital assets tied to the crime.	61%	87%
Megadonor Cooling-Off Period	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to bar anyone who has donated more than $1 million to one political group, or $5 million total in a single election, from serving as a federal government employee, paid or unpaid, unless they are appointed to and go through a Senate confirmation process. Under this policy, the ban would last five years after the donor's last contribution, applying to both full-time and unpaid advisor roles.	61%	85%

Emoluments Clause Codification	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing a federal law that will be able to enforce the constitutional ban on presidents accepting gifts or payments from foreign governments, with specific penalties attached. Under this policy, a president who violated this ban could be forced to pay back any profits received and face additional financial penalties enforced through the courts, rather than relying on the president to follow the Constitution.	61%	85%
Universal Divestiture	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to require senior officials, including the President, Cabinet members, members of Congress, and Supreme Court justices, to sell individual stocks and place their money in a blind trust or approved index fund. Under this policy, violators would forfeit any profits and pay a penalty worth three times the investment's value, closing off the ways officials and their families could otherwise profit from government decisions.	60%	84%
Ethics Pledge Codification	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to turn the strongest ethics rules from past presidents into permanent law, including a two-year ban on working on issues tied to former lobbying clients, a ban on gifts from lobbyists, and a four-year ban on lobbying after leaving government. Under this policy, these rules would apply no matter who is president, and could not be removed or modified without Congress.	60%	84%
Self-Enrichment Surtax	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing an extra tax on any profits a president makes while in office that do not come from their government salary, a certified blind trust, or normal real estate gains, including money moved through family members, trusts, or companies they control. Under this policy, these profits would be taxed at a higher rate which would disincentivize the President using their elected office to get rich.	59%	81%
Appropriations Integrity Rider	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to add a rule to every government funding bill saying officials with a financial conflict of interest cannot direct how that money is spent. Under this policy, any funding decision made in violation would be canceled and the money recovered, with auditors, state officials, or taxpayers able to pursue violations in court, allowing enforcement by parties outside the government.	59%	80%
Extend Conflict-of-Interest Law to President/VP	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to apply existing federal conflict-of-interest laws to the President and Vice President, who are currently the only executive branch officials exempt from these laws. Under this policy, the President and Vice President would have to divest their financial holdings that cause a conflict of interest that could financially benefit them, closing a loophole that lets them avoid rules all other federal employees must follow.	59%	80%
Corruption Enforcement Against Agencies/ Contractors	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to make it easier for outside groups, like companies, states, or members of Congress, to challenge government decisions affected by alleged conflicts of interest. Under this policy, if a decision is found to be corrupt, it could be reversed, any improper profits could be taken back, and the officials involved could lose their power to make decisions.	58%	77%
Crypto Ban	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing legislation to ban any U.S. Presidents and other senior officials from creating, promoting, or holding cryptocurrency, including memecoins and NFTs, while in office. Under this policy, officials would be required to publicly disclose any cryptocurrency they already own and sell it at its current value, and would not be able to hide profits in assets that are hard to track publicly.	58%	74%

Foreign Lobbying Ban	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing a lifetime ban on some former government officials lobbying for foreign governments after they leave public service, including working for foreign companies or agencies that lobby on a foreign government's behalf. Under this policy, former government officials could never be paid to represent a foreign government's interests, no matter how many years have passed since they left office.	57%	71%
Government Contractor Firewall	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to stop anyone who owns more than 1 percent of a company that got over $10 million in federal contracts in the past five years from taking a government job that oversees, funds, or regulates that industry. Under this policy, violators would lose their job, forfeit their pay, and face a five-year ban on federal contracting for themselves and their companies.	57%	69%
Post-Office Certification	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to require the President and their family to certify, within 30 days of leaving office, that they followed all the self-enrichment and conflict-of-interest rules that applied to them while in office. Under this policy, lying on this certification, or failing to file it, could lead to civil or criminal penalties.	56%	67%
SGE Reform	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing new rules for unpaid government advisors, like Elon Musk's role running DOGE, requiring them to sell company stock and give up board seats in areas they may make policy decisions about before starting government work. Under this policy, advisors could serve no more than 90 days and would sign ethics agreements reviewed by the government's ethics office.	56%	63%
SGE Net Worth Bar	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to bar anyone with a net worth over $100 million from serving as an unpaid government advisor, since their financial holdings would be too complex to fully separate from their government role. Under this policy, these individuals could still serve in government, but only in a Senate-confirmed position with full public vetting.	55%	61%
Self-Enrichment Lawsuit	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to let states or private citizens sue on the public's behalf when the president illegally profits while in office. Under this policy, a successful lawsuit would require the money be paid back with an added penalty, and the citizen who brought the case could receive a share of the money recovered.	54%	48%
Insider Trading Advantage Tax	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to tax government officials whose stock and other investments (that are not diversified index funds or held in a blind trust) significantly outperform the overall stock market average during their time in office. Under this policy, officials would pay a 90 percent tax on these profits, even if investigators can't prove insider trading, removing financial incentives to trade on nonpublic information.	53%	47%
Presidential Divestment	Some Democrats in Congress are proposing to require the President and Vice President to sell their business interests while in office, and stop their immediate family from starting or profiting from a new business during their term and for four years after. Under this policy, the government could not award contracts to companies tied to these family members.	53%	44%