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Navigating Trump's DC Invasion



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You: Supporter of law enforcement, defender of liberty, want people to feel safe where they live, work, and play, willing to hold criminals accountable, demand that violent crimes be prosecuted, live and represent the places the right wing only watches on TV, are not afraid of the gun lobby, refuse to ignore drugs, poverty, and mental illness, and stand with and support struggling neighborhoods even when there are no TV cameras around.

Them: Phonies on crime, defunding local police, trampling personal liberty, ignoring the massive murder rates in their home states, interested in struggling neighborhoods only when cameras show up (or not at all), terrified of the gun lobby, cutting mental health supports in schools that stop mass shootings, say that every effort to provide poor neighborhoods help with jobs, education, or afterschool programs is a waste.

Dems Start with a Trust Gap on Crime—Don't Make It Worse

There's a reason that President Trump wants to talk about crime rates: he knows that Republicans have historically had a huge advantage on the issue, and that this trust gap remains wide. In a recent [Associated Press poll](#), 66% of voters said crime was a “major problem” in the United States, with that number rising to 81% who view it as a major problem in larger cities. And while Trump's overall approval rating was underwater at 45%, 53% said they approved of his handling of this issue. When it comes to which political party they trust, [YouGov found](#) that voters pick Republicans by 11 points, with only 28% saying they trust Democrats more to handle crime. [CNN clocked](#) similar numbers, with Republicans up by 13 points on “crime and policing,” and only 27% of the country saying they had more trust in Democrats.

Compounding their historic, and ongoing, trust deficit on crime is a perception that Democratic policymakers may be interested in investing in social programs, education, or other initiatives that prevent crime, but they are not interested in holding criminals accountable for their actions. Voters [know](#) that Democrats are interested in prevention, but unless they're convinced we also prioritize accountability, including catching and prosecuting those who hurt people, they will not believe we can make their communities safe.

Yes, crime rates are falling in most places in the country. But they are still too high. Dismissing voters' legitimate concerns about crime and public safety will only confirm their suspicions that at best, you're not serious about these issues, and at worst, your policy stances are making things worse.

Offer an Alternative to Address Crime, Make Communities Safe, and Hold Criminals Accountable

Democrats won't overcome their trust deficit simply by opposing Trump's takeover. They must prove they believe crime and public safety are real problems that deserve their attention and outline an alternative vision for how we can make our communities safer. And that vision can't just be the same old, same old prevention policies that voters already associate with Democrats. Americans know that Democratic policymakers want investment in mental health, new gun safety laws, and support for substance abuse programs. They like those things too, but [they don't believe](#) any of them are sufficient to make their neighborhoods safe in the short term.

In this fraught political moment, Democrats need to show they have an agenda that prioritizes *both* accountability and prevention. What does that look like?

- Investing in law enforcement, so that local officials have what they need to recruit, train, and retain a high-quality police force;
- Improving emergency response times, so that more victims get help in real time and more perpetrators get caught;
- Increasing clearance rates on violent crime cases, so that more people who break the law pay the price, and more people who are considering doing so think twice;
- Making our streets safe by addressing homelessness and open-air drug use; and,
- Directing federal resources where they're really needed, like interstate gun trafficking and international drug cartels.

Packaged together, these kind of accountability measures have the potential to both rehabilitate the Democratic brand on crime and improve public safety in a way that's both swift and sustainable.

Hit Them on Hypocrisy: Trump Isn't Interested in Keeping Communities Safe

If Republican Governors truly believed that National Guard patrols permanently reduced crime in American cities, why wouldn't they have already deployed them in their own crime-ridden, murder-infested states?

The truth is that the murder rate in the 25 states that voted for Donald Trump has exceeded the murder rate in the 25 states that voted for Joe Biden in every year from 2000 to 2022. And for the past two decades, the top 10 murder rate states have been dominated by reliably red places, namely Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Missouri. Trump and his allies aren't using the military on the streets of American cities because they genuinely believe that's the best way to reduce crime. They're interested in political theatre, not public safety.

- Show how Trump and his allies have defunded law enforcement and public safety: in DC, at the FBI and ATF, and even in immigration enforcement.
- Explain the "why" behind their actions: they support indiscriminate budget cuts and are more concerned with boosting their deportation numbers to hit a quota than getting the right (dangerous) folks out of the country.
- Play the liberty card: ask them what federal powers they'd want a future Democratic president to impose on America's top 3 murder states: Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

Conclusion

The Trump Administration’s actions are pushing the American people too far. But if Democrats take the bait, revert to old, comfortable talking points, and come out looking like the “soft on crime” party, we’ll turn Trump’s overreach into a political win for him and encourage him to double and triple down on his draconian campaign in cities from coast to coast.

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