

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group & Accountable.US

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Re: NEW POLLING—Administration Has Positive Story To Tell On Consumer Protection, Lowering Costs

Americans across political, geographic, and demographic lines cite rising costs as the most pressing issue facing the country today. They are very receptive, however, to new information about the Biden Administration's efforts to lower costs by cracking down on corporate price gouging, including banning junk fees. Americans – including a large segment of disaffected Democrats and independents – believe policies being pursued by the Administration via the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau will lower costs “for people like me” and crucially, these policies can illustrate how Democrats are fighting on the side of consumers instead of corporations.

Key Findings

Costs remain Americans' top concern, and most believe the Administration's work to crack down on “price gouging” and eliminate “hidden junk fees” will lower costs for them. Two thirds (68%) say hidden junk fees are a growing problem, and 60% also believe “crack[ing] down on price gouging by banning hidden junk fees” would be effective at lowering costs.

The work to protect consumers and hold corporations accountable is a powerful proof point for Americans that the Administration and congressional Democrats are siding with consumers and against corporate greed. People already see President Biden as the leader more likely to stand for consumers over corporations, and corporate accountability is an area where Biden and Democrats in Congress have more credibility. By advocating for consumers when so much in the economy seems to be driven by corporate greed, the Administration and its allies can provide a bridge between their strengths and Americans' top priorities.

It is important to tie banning hidden junk fees to *cracking down on corporate price gouging*. Amid broadly rising prices, tackling junk fees alone is not the top priority – and in fact, in our focus groups we found “junk fees” to be an unfamiliar term, when used without a definition or the “hidden” prefix. But the message around the CFPB and junk fees is just as believable (if not more) as the message around CFPB's other efforts to help consumers, focused on unfair practices, fraud, and scams. Moreover, junk fees can – and should – be brought up alongside efforts to lower prices by *cracking down on corporate price gouging*. This gives advocates something to say on an issue where Americans are skeptical of the Administration and congressional Democrats (inflation), in terms where they have credibility (consumer protection, corporate accountability) and can provide proof points (cracking down on price gouging via junk fees).

A few themes rise above the rest as both most important and the best fit for the Administration and congressional Democrats: holding corporations accountable, protecting consumers, and lowering costs

Importance v. Net Trust in Biden/Democrats on Economic Issues



Advocates should define the debate as protecting consumers instead of corporations, something that President Biden and Democrats in Congress will do, and Republicans will not. The persuadable population on these issues – a mix of financially stressed Democrats, independents, and non-MAGA Republicans (detailed below) – gravitate towards an over-arching slogan of “protects consumers, not corporations” rather than alternatives about “real results”, “ban junk fees”, or “government” that’s on your side. When they hear about the efforts on junk fees and price gouging, they become more certain the CFPB will significantly lower the costs they personally face. Importantly, this is not just a debate about protecting consumers, it’s about fighting on their side instead of protecting the corporations. Americans also believe these corporate special interests have congressional Republicans in their pockets, and that because of this, congressional Republicans will oppose these efforts at every turn.

A critical segment of the public is stressed by rising prices but come to see pro-consumer efforts as likely to lower costs “for people like me.” Around 1 in 5 adults are not highly partisan, are highly sensitive to inflation, and expect the CFPB’s efforts will help them personally. This includes a disproportionate number of people of color and “disaffected” Democrats (the slice of Democrats who disapprove of Biden on the economy).

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Global Strategy Group conducted three focus groups among Black, Hispanic/Latino, and white adults – all with no four year college degree, followed by an online survey. For the survey, GSG conducted 1,202 interviews, including 1,001 registered voters nationwide and 225 interviews with registered voters in the 18 districts won by Joe Biden and a Congressional Republican (including an oversample of 201 with this group) between October 13th and October 19th, 2023. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.1%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of registered voters are properly represented.