



To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: September 2026
Re: How Democrats Win Amid Anti-Trans Attacks

Over the past couple years, GSG has conducted tens of thousands of interviews and dozens of qualitative conversations with swing voters across the 2026 battleground and in key states.

Collectively, the research shows **Democrats can withstand and even win on transgender issues if candidates are prepared to engage authentically and with discipline.** Key recommendations from this research are below.

Disclaimer: The goal of this specific messaging is not to convince voters to adopt our outlook. It is to win elections in difficult terrain without abandoning Democratic values or key constituencies.

Key Findings

Democrats can win these debates, but leaving the attacks unanswered is the worst option. When voters hear a response to attacks, Democrats are able to get back to where they started and often grow their lead.

This is far from an 80/20 issue. Voters feel stuck in the middle: They want elected officials to care about everyone, make sure there are safeguards in place, and treat transgender people with dignity and respect. They do not see either party doing that.

Democrats' central problem: Voters perceive us as focused on transgender people at the expense of everyone else and, to a lesser degree, uninterested in establishing guardrails.

There's a role for inoculation, response, and attack here. Being a parent, having children in public schools, coaching girls' sports, etc., all help to inoculate. Responding soothes concerns and allows candidates to pivot. Attacking Republicans undermines any advantage they have.

Keys to Democratic Positioning

1. **Welcome the conversation when asked.** Voters (falsely) assume Democrats are scared of talking about this because they're extreme or beholden to someone. Welcoming the conversation shows you aren't.
2. **Be prepared but authentic.** Exuding confidence is half the battle. Candidates should balance learnings from this playbook and what has worked with who they are.
3. **Lean heavily on values.** Safety, especially for kids, what's fair, ensuring everyone has the same rights, respect, and freedom.
4. **Highlight personal experiences that speak to these values.** Being a parent, coaching girls, playing competitively, etc.
5. **Don't dismiss voters' concerns.** The reason for their concerns may be propaganda, but their feelings are very real.
6. **Avoid using the other side's charged rhetoric.** Misgendering transgender youth with Republican terms like "biological men" is less effective than values-based language. And

by inadvertently solidifying unhelpful visual assumptions about transgender people, we end up having a tougher time navigating other policies related to trans youth.

7. **Push off left and right.** It shows reasonableness, that you hear the concerns, and are willing to work on solutions.
8. **Talk about all of us.** Emphasizing that you look out for everyone (which naturally includes transgender people) sets up a contrast with Republicans who focus on transgender people at everyone's expense.
9. **Pivot after addressing the question.** People want to know you take this seriously and have solutions, but they don't want this to be your top focus. Be mindful, though: If you pivot too quickly, it comes off as evasive.
10. **Take a "Protect Children, Respect Parents" approach.** Acknowledge what we all know: A good parent is going to know their kids best.

THE BIG PICTURE NARRATIVE: Whether a kid is in the classroom, on the playing field, or in a doctor's office, I will always work to make sure parents are respected and their kids are protected.

WHAT TO SAY:	WHY IT WORKS
Unlike the loudest voices on the Left and the Right, I won't pretend to have all the answers here. But I know that both sides have gone way too far.	• Pushes off both sides to establish moderation, independence • Sets up idea that you may not have every answer
We need a reset. That starts with making sure: • Kids are protected • Parents are respected • Everyone is treated with basic dignity and respect; and • Everyone has a fair shot and the same rights – no more and no less	• Leads with broadly shared values that apply to everyone • Inoculates on weaknesses around parental rights • Reassures that the candidate believes in <i>equal</i> treatment, not <i>special</i> treatment
In Congress, I'll work to give parents greater insight into what their children are seeing online and a say on what they're learning in the classroom,	• Provides concrete solutions that elevate parents without making them the end-all-be-all
...and protect their safety by cracking down on sextortion, AI-generated pedophilia, child predators, and the politicians on both sides of the aisle who protect them	• Broadens the definition of safety • Subtly accuses Republicans of hurting and sexualizing kids • Again, establishes independence

Crafting a Strong Response

A strong response sounds confident, values-driven, and direct – not defensive. It establishes the candidate understands why the issue matters to voters, states what they believe, and only then broadens the conversation.

A deeper dive into sports specifically can be found [here](#), but the basic approach and an example are below:

The Five Steps to Responding (and why they work in this example)	Example Response Using Sports
✓ Begins with values. ✓ Establishes they care about kids by identifying themselves as a parent.	As a parent, nothing matters more to me than my daughters' safety.
✓ Rejects the lie. ✓ Shows a level of indignance.	So, when my opponent lies about where I stand, I take it personally. Here's the truth:
✓ Asserts what you believe, saying "there should be rules" ✓ Puts onus on sports associations. ✓ Says they "should" set rules. ✓ Name-checks key values	I believe sports associations should set rules to make sure girls' sports stay fair and safe.
✓ Validates that "fairness" is a real concern for kids generally ✓ Pivots off of transgender issues to something larger	But our kids need more than a fair shot on the playing field. They need a fair shot in life. <i>SAFETY ALT: But protecting kids goes way beyond the girls' playing field.</i>
✓ Emphasizes focus on issues that matter far more that relate to fairness (and in the alt, safety)	In Congress, I'll lower costs and protect our health care. <i>SAFETY ALT: In Congress, I'll release the Epstein files, put sexual predators behind bars, and give parents more insight and control over their kids' online safety</i>

Going on Offense

Going on offense works best when it undermines the advantage Republicans are trying to create rather than simply accusing them of being anti-trans. In one test, a [Republican attack](#) moved the ballot from D+4 to R+15; a ["cost-of-living" counterattack](#) restored a D+3 advantage and an "obsessed" counterattack moved the race to D+7.

There are two especially useful lanes: show their relentless focus on this issue hurts everyone, and/or show their record leaves children exposed to more serious threats. Keep in mind, the exact hits you have will depend on the race and the opponent. Avoid having the candidate be the one communicating these hits unless necessary, as doing so can inadvertently further the belief that Democrats are overly focused on the issue.

A deeper dive can be found [here](#). Key elements to know are below.

ATTACK #1: The cost of living is skyrocketing, but Republicans are spending their time and our money going after transgender people in ways that hurt all of us.

How to do this:

- **Use actual quotes to demonstrate obsession and misplaced priorities, especially when they show the GOP elevating transgender policy over affordability:** President

Trump said a bill about transgender people was his “number one priority” and he wouldn’t sign any other bills until it passed, even if it would lower costs for Americans.

- **Show this literally costs taxpayers:** They have spent over \$100 million in just the last month enforcing harsh restrictions on transgender people and spent over \$200 million in 2024 talking about this issue.
- **Show they’re willing to hurt non-trans people** as part of their witch hunt. Some examples:
 - By overruling parents, charging them with child abuse, and dictating what care your kid can get
 - Criminalizing doctors, nurses, and even parents who disagree with them
 - Wasting our tax dollars by using “all available resources to prioritize investigations of doctors”
 - Threatening to defund entire schools and hospitals if they don’t execute on their harsh demands

ATTACK #2: Republicans are undermining our kids’ safety.

How to do this:

- **Lean on attacks that evoke feelings of disgust.** Attacks work best when they are surprising, specific, and directly connect to children’s innocence and safety – not when it sounds like a generic partisan attack or speaks about public safety more broadly.
- **Use race-specific, well-documented vulnerabilities when available:** Some examples are below. Attacks that show forced sexualization of children consistently test well.
 - Voted against releasing the Epstein files even after learning these predators trafficked girls as young as 14
 - Weakened background checks for adults working with kids, making it easier for sexual predators to gain access
 - Tried to block safeguards on the AI industry even as pedophiles regularly used these platforms to create AI-generated sexual images of real children
 - Blocked efforts to crack down on the platforms where sextortion of kids and teens has become one of the fastest-growing crimes against kids
 - Twice refused to give girls victimized by sexual deepfakes the right to take their abusers to court
 - Cut dozens of programs that helped prevent child sex trafficking

[Click here for an ad](#) from the 2025 New Jersey governor’s race showing how this can look.

Issue-Specific Guidance

SPORTS

Values in play: Fairness, safety, rules.

Voters (falsely) assume: There are few or no meaningful rules; transgender girls and women have a physical advantage, especially after puberty; and inclusion can cost girls roster spots, records, championships, or scholarships.

Important elements for soothing swing voters: Show that you understand why competition matters; explicitly say there should be rules to ensure fairness and safety; and

say sports associations should set those rules – not politicians. If discussing limits, distinguish high-stakes competition from kindergarteners playing at recess.

IF YOU SAY ONE THING: Sports associations should set rules to ensure girls' sports remain fair and safe – not politicians.

TO HIT THE OTHER SIDE: I'll work with anyone to find a solution that keeps sports fair and safe, but I cannot get behind my opponent's bill that mandates invasive gender checks, paving the way for abuse.

“GENDER IDEOLOGY” IN SCHOOLS

Values in play: Parents having a say, transparency, age-appropriate education, schools focused on learning, protecting kids' innocence.

Voters (falsely) assume: Democrats want schools introducing gender-related ideas early and without parents knowing; schools are advancing an ideological agenda rather than educating; and parents have too little control over what their children are exposed to.

Important elements for soothing swing voters: Say parents should be in the loop and have a say; frame school as a place for learning rather than political agendas; and emphasize useful, age-appropriate education. Do not make the answer a defense of why schools should teach gender-related material.

IF YOU SAY ONE THING: Schools should work with PTAs to make sure students are learning what they need for life, like math and science, not someone's ideology.

TO HIT THE OTHER SIDE: My opponent is threatening to defund schools when teachers respect parents' wishes by using a transgender child's name. We can disagree on things without disrespecting parents and taking it out on everyone.

GENDER-RELATED HEALTH CARE FOR MINORS

Values in play: Privacy, parents' rights versus government overreach, guardrails, thoughtfulness.

Voters (falsely) assume: These decisions are made rashly; there are no safeguards; not every child who says they are transgender actually is; young people will later regret care; and Democrats are pushing care while denying parents a say.

Important elements for soothing swing voters: Remind voters that health care decisions are deeply personal; put parents at the center; name concrete safeguards such as careful screening, consultation with health professionals, and a treatment plan; and contrast that careful process with politicians imposing a blanket ban.

IF YOU SAY ONE THING: Health care decisions should be made by parents and doctors who know the situation best – not by politicians.

TO HIT THE OTHER SIDE: My opponent wants to put government in charge of your family's health care decisions. They've even tried to make it a felony for doctors, nurses, and parents to help transgender patients. You should not spend years in prison for trying to figure out what care is best for your kid.

TAXPAYER-FUNDED CARE

Values in play: Accountability for taxpayer dollars, medically necessary care, personal responsibility, and keeping politicians out of medical judgments.

Voters (falsely) assume: While they struggle to get necessary care, transgender people receive free elective care; and gender-related care is cosmetic or unnecessary and therefore should not be covered.

Important elements for soothing swing voters: Show that you care about waste; agree taxpayers should not cover purely cosmetic or unnecessary procedures; and make the larger question who determines medical necessity – qualified doctors and nurses or politicians and insurers with incentives to deny care.

IF YOU SAY ONE THING: I'm happy to have this conversation, but let's not lose sight of the fact that if my opponent has their way, Medicaid, Medicare, the VA won't exist. I support medical experts weighing in on what care is necessary and should be covered – not the politicians who have driven up our premiums and cut health care for thousands.

TO HIT THE OTHER SIDE: My opponent wants to put government in charge of your family's health care decisions. They've even tried to make it a felony for doctors, nurses, and parents to help transgender patients. You should not spend years in prison for trying to figure out what care is best for your kid.

The Bottom Line

Our problem: Republicans have wrongly convinced many voters that Democrats are more focused, more extreme, and less attentive to cisgender people's concerns (fairness, parents, and children's safety). It is not that voters are uniformly hostile to transgender people.

The answer: confidently and concretely show that Democrats share those values and support reasonable safeguards (which is conveniently actual Democratic policy). Voters are not asking candidates to abandon their principles, and research shows that is often unnecessary to win. This formula allows candidates to then pivot back to what voters, regardless of background, want most: a lower cost of living for everyone.

APPENDIX

Candidates may also want to keep the conversation at a higher level in advertising. Here's an example of **a more general, values-based message** that shows promise:

"As a parent, nothing matters more to me than my daughters' safety. So, when my opponent lies about where I stand, I take it personally. Here's the truth: sports associations should absolutely have rules to keep girls' sports fair and safe, especially in elite competition. I believe parents should be at the center of every decision about their child – I know I want to be for my kids. I think schools should get back to teaching math and science – not politics. And I will work with anyone to get agreement and set some guidelines here so we can get back to the business of lowering costs for everyone."