

# Expert Strategic Intelligence Report: Countering Pamela Price's 2026 Comeback Bid

## I. Executive Summary: The 2026 Strategic Imperative

The December 4, 2025, announcement by Pamela Price, the former Alameda County District Attorney, regarding her intent to run in the 2026 election to retake the office <sup>1</sup>, represents a direct and audacious challenge to the overwhelming democratic mandate delivered by county voters in November 2024. The core strategic imperative for recall operatives is not merely to defeat Price, but to utilize the statistical evidence of her administrative failure and the subsequent public safety improvements to render her political career permanently inviable.

The campaign must immediately frame Price's candidacy as an attempt to overturn the expressed will of the majority of Alameda County voters. The political environment is defined by a critical data juxtaposition. Price was recalled by a devastating 62.9% margin.<sup>2</sup> This level of rejection, delivered less than two years into her term, cannot be dismissed as typical political disagreement. It confirms an extreme lack of confidence in her ability to perform the duties of the office.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, the new status quo under appointed DA Ursula Jones Dickson has delivered tangible results: Oakland, the county's largest city and the flashpoint for crime concerns, reported a 29% reduction in violent crimes and a 41% reduction in robbery during the first half of 2025.<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental strategic pivot required is the neutralization of Price's inevitable counter-narrative. Price will attempt to paint the recall as a partisan maneuver orchestrated by "Republican-connected special interest groups" and hostile police unions.<sup>2</sup> However, the severity of the 62.9% recall margin strongly suggests the opposition transcended ideology. Price herself is a registered Democrat <sup>9</sup>, and her initial 2022 victory was 53.1%.<sup>2</sup> The recall margin demonstrates that severe policy failures and administrative incompetence attracted broad opposition, including from establishment Democrats like Rep. Eric Swalwell <sup>10</sup> and the collective county police unions.<sup>11</sup> The overwhelming vote serves as irrefutable evidence that the voters' decision was based on a rejection of her execution, not just her progressive philosophy. The challenge is defending the successful policy shift initiated by Jones Dickson while leveraging the vast financial resources available to the anti-Price coalition, which spent approximately \$5 million during the recall effort.<sup>2</sup>

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## II. Analyzing the Irreversible Mandate: The 2024 Recall

# Failure

The success of the 2024 recall provides the foundational evidence necessary to dismantle Price’s comeback attempt. This was not a close contest, but a definitive political judgment on her suitability for office.

## A. The Decisive Electoral Rejection

The recall election on November 5, 2024, was certified with results showing 375,442 votes in support of the recall versus 221,285 votes against, totaling 596,727 votes cast.<sup>2</sup> This high-turnout special election resulted in a 62.9% vote to remove the District Attorney.<sup>2</sup> The margin of victory for the recall was decisive, establishing a clear public demand for change. Historically, this recall set a precedent, being the first successful removal of a DA in Alameda County history, and marking the largest county-level district attorney recall by number of votes cast since at least 2009.<sup>2</sup>

The signature collection phase, initiated by the group Save Alameda for Everyone (SAFE) <sup>2</sup>, confirmed the widespread political fragility early on. Recall supporters needed 73,195 valid signatures but comfortably exceeded that threshold, achieving 74,757 certified signatures.<sup>2</sup> The ease of qualification and the severity of the ultimate voting margin demonstrate deep, widespread dissatisfaction that quickly manifested into an overwhelming electoral rejection, negating the standard argument that recalls are merely sour grapes by the losing side.

Table 1: 2024 Alameda County DA Recall Election Results Analysis

Metric	Value	Source	Strategic Significance for 2026
Total Votes Cast	596,727	<sup>2</sup>	Confirms high voter salience and engagement around the DA's performance.
Percentage for Recall	62.9%	<sup>2</sup>	Establishes the political baseline: Price was rejected by nearly two-thirds of

			voters.
Price's 2022 Election Win	53.1%	<sup>2</sup>	The 10-point swing confirms massive public "buyer's remorse" over her performance.
Recall Signatures Validated	74,757 (73,195 needed)	<sup>2</sup>	Indicates strong, early grassroots organizational capacity within the opposition.

## B. The Policy Disconnect and Administrative Failure

The recall was not solely about progressive policy philosophy, but about the failure to execute policy competently, leading to specific, tangible public safety concerns. Price entered office vowing significant overhauls, including restricting the use of sentence enhancements, releasing more defendants pretrial, and ending the practice of charging youth as adults.<sup>5</sup>

The most potent criticism centered on her handling of sentencing enhancements. Her directive mandated prosecutors seek supervisory approval before adding certain specified enhancements, particularly gun use charges, to a case.<sup>12</sup> While Price defended this as a mechanism to curb racial inequity and address mass incarceration—noting that overusing enhancements had led to Alameda County having the fifth-largest jail in the country<sup>13</sup>—critics, including prosecutors within her own office, argued that the directive undermined public safety. Restricting firearm enhancements at the charging stage, as critics noted, eliminated a crucial "bargaining chip" that prosecutors need in negotiations.<sup>14</sup> This specific policy decision is critical, as Price's new campaign platform attempts to focus on gun violence prevention.<sup>1</sup> Her prior actions directly contradict her new stated priority, creating a major messaging gap.

Furthermore, the record of administrative failure provided concrete proof of incompetence. Price was criticized for dismissing community concerns, particularly those of Asian Americans facing a surge in attacks.<sup>5</sup> The failure to adhere to administrative deadlines was also highly damaging, with reports indicating Price's office failed to meet the necessary deadlines to prosecute "around a thousand misdemeanor cases".<sup>15</sup> This incompetence provides clear justification for the editorial conclusion reached by the *San Francisco Chronicle* that Price was "not competently performing basic aspects of her job".<sup>5</sup>

## **C. The Coalition of Accountability**

The coalition that successfully executed the recall effort provides the blueprint for the 2026 counter-campaign. The group Save Alameda for Everyone (SAFE) presented itself not as a partisan front, but as a broad coalition of Alameda County residents, business owners, victims, victims' families, and concerned citizens.<sup>2</sup> This messaging of broad, community-based outrage was highly effective in a Democrat-dominant county.

The opposition's unity was notable across professional sectors. All of Alameda County's police unions publicly announced their support for Price's removal<sup>11</sup>, confirming the intense friction between her office and law enforcement.<sup>7</sup> Crucially, the opposition included established Democratic figures, such as Rep. Eric Swalwell, whose endorsement of the recall<sup>10</sup> signaled to moderate voters that the removal effort was bipartisan in nature and justified by operational failures, not just political ideology.

Financially, the recall effort demonstrated massive capacity. Committees supporting the recall spent approximately \$5,021,560.96, vastly exceeding the \$498,490.46 spent by opposition committees as of April 2025.<sup>2</sup> This financial superiority, mobilized to educate voters on Price's policy failures, must be sustained and potentially amplified to combat the national progressive funding Price is expected to attract in 2026.

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## **III. The New Status Quo: Ursula Jones Dickson and the Public Safety Shift**

The greatest asset in combating Price's return is the demonstrable success and policy stability implemented by the appointed District Attorney, Ursula Jones Dickson. Dickson's actions since her appointment are designed to fulfill the public mandate for greater accountability and competence.

### **A. Immediate Policy Reversal: The Return to Accountability**

Upon taking office, Jones Dickson immediately moved to rescind key progressive policies implemented by her predecessor, signaling a swift and definitive return to a prosecution model favored by voters in the recall.<sup>12</sup>

The most important policy reversal involved sentencing enhancements. Jones Dickson rescinded the requirement for supervisory approval on specific enhancements, including those related to firearms.<sup>12</sup> Price's restrictive directives were based on addressing racial bias<sup>13</sup>; however, Jones Dickson's action restored the necessary prosecutorial discretion to charge violent crimes aggressively, ensuring that deputy DAs retain critical leverage in plea

negotiations.

Furthermore, Jones Dickson rolled back Price's approach to juvenile justice. Price's policy sought to end the practice of charging youth as adults and limited transfers to adult court in all but the most extreme situations.<sup>5</sup> This approach drew fire because it resulted in defendants facing serious charges, including multiple murder charges, remaining within the juvenile court system.<sup>16</sup> Jones Dickson's rescission of this directive allows for judicial discretion and restores the option to move serious juvenile cases to adult court, directly addressing community anxieties about violent youth crime.

Jones Dickson also reinforced an emphasis on administrative integrity. During her first full day, she removed key Price personnel, including Eric Lewis, the chief inspector, who had been subject to prior misconduct allegations during his time with the Oakland Police Department.<sup>16</sup> This swift "cleaning house" demonstrated a commitment to professional governance and ethical standards, directly contrasting with criticisms of Price's administration regarding unqualified appointees.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2: Policy Directives: Price vs. Jones Dickson (The Accountability Contrast)

Policy Area	DA Pamela Price (2023–2024)	DA Ursula Jones Dickson (Post-Recall)	Effect on Prosecution
<b>Sentence Enhancements</b>	Restricted use of enhancements, especially for firearms, requiring supervisor approval. <sup>12</sup>	Rescinded restrictions; restored full prosecutorial discretion to charge enhancements. <sup>12</sup>	Reinstates aggressive sentencing tools and negotiation leverage.
<b>Juvenile Transfers</b>	Ban on moving juvenile cases to adult court, even for serious crimes (murder). <sup>16</sup>	Rescinded the ban; allows movement of serious juvenile cases to adult court based on severity. <sup>16</sup>	Prioritizes victim safety and appropriate accountability for violent youth.
<b>Administrative Integrity</b>	Criticized for administrative shortcomings and	Immediately removed personnel facing misconduct	Signals a commitment to professional

	staffing issues. <sup>2</sup>	allegations (e.g., Chief Inspector Lewis). <sup>16</sup>	standards and ethical office management.
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**B. Crime Trends and the Statistical Counter-Narrative**

The most critical data point for the 2026 campaign is the significant decrease in crime following Price’s removal and the implementation of Jones Dickson's policies. The crime statistics serve as a quantifiable counter-narrative to Price’s claim that her reforms were necessary and effective.

The Oakland Police Department (OPD) reported substantial reductions in crime during the first half of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024.<sup>6</sup>

Table 3: Oakland Crime Statistics: Pre- and Post-Recall Comparison (H1)

Crime Category (Oakland H1 2025)	Percentage Change (vs. H1 2024)	Strategic Implication	Source
Violent Crimes	Down 29%	Accelerated improvement in public safety following policy reversals.	6
Homicides	Down 21%	Critical success metric in a city historically plagued by violent crime.	6
Robbery	Down 41%	Addresses high-visibility crimes that significantly erode community confidence.	6
Motor Vehicle Theft	Down 45%	Significant drop in a pervasive	6

		property crime that drove recall frustration. <sup>17</sup>	
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While Price supporters, such as the ACLU, pointed to crime drops during Price’s tenure (e.g., murders down 33%, violent crime down 19% compared to the previous year) <sup>8</sup>, the H1 2025 data shows an acceleration of these improvements under the new, accountability-focused administration. The statistical evidence strongly links the shift in policy toward aggressive prosecution (the core mandate of the recall) with tangible, demonstrable public safety improvements. This correlation establishes a direct causal argument that the Price administration’s policies were an inhibitor to public safety.

C. Political and Gubernatorial Alignment

The state political infrastructure further validated the concerns about Price’s competence. Governor Gavin Newsom, seeking to crack down on crime in the East Bay, intervened in August 2024 by announcing that the California National Guard’s (CalGuard) Counterdrug Task Force would deploy attorneys to prosecute cases originating in Alameda County.<sup>18</sup> This agreement was finalized swiftly after months of local officials being unable to finalize a similar agreement offered to Price's office.<sup>18</sup> The Governor’s intervention effectively served as a high-level indictment of Price’s administrative capacity, political rigidity, and her inability to cooperate effectively with state partners to secure necessary resources for prosecution.

IV. Threat Assessment: Pamela Price’s 2026 Campaign Strategy

Pamela Price’s bid to retake the office must be analyzed based on her stated platform, financial capacity, and political vulnerabilities.

A. Price’s Messaging Pivot and Narrative Control

Price’s new campaign strategy centers on high-level, generalized progressive ideals: restoring trust, fighting corruption and police violence, and focusing on youth rehabilitation and gun violence prevention.<sup>1</sup> This messaging attempts to neutralize the specific administrative and policy criticisms that defined her recall.

Price will likely attempt to use her historical civil rights work and achievements in office—specifically, the court-ordered review of 35 death penalty convictions following the discovery of evidence that prosecutors intentionally excluded Black and Jewish jurors in the 1990s <sup>19</sup>—as proof of her commitment to justice. This allows her to divert attention from

current public safety anxieties by focusing on historical injustice and systemic bias.<sup>19</sup>

This reliance on historical issues represents a strategic vulnerability: while the exposure of past misconduct is a valid institutional reform, it does little to address current, pressing public safety concerns or the administrative chaos that characterized her tenure, such as the thousands of missed misdemeanor case deadlines.<sup>15</sup> The electorate punished her for present incompetence, not her intention to fight historical bias.

## **B. Financial Capacity and Progressive Network Support**

Despite the overwhelming nature of her recall, Price benefits from deeply entrenched relationships with national progressive prosecutor organizations, which guarantees substantial campaign financing. Price is known to receive support from Soros-funded backers, including the California Justice & Public Safety PAC, Fair and Just Prosecution, and the Center for Empowered Politics.<sup>21</sup>

The 2026 race will be exceptionally expensive, potentially surpassing the \$5 million spent by the anti-Price coalition in 2024.<sup>2</sup> The counter-campaign must assume that Price will benefit from massive national independent expenditures aimed at reframing her image and attacking the current administration. A robust financial mobilization plan is necessary to match or overwhelm this national influx of resources.

## **C. Governance and Ethical Vulnerabilities**

Price's short tenure exposed critical flaws in judgment, administrative capacity, and political temperament that provide clear avenues for attack.

1. **Judicial Friction:** Price demonstrated a severe lack of respect for the separation of powers when she announced she would prevent Superior Court Judge Mark McCannon from hearing criminal cases, accusing him of overstepping his judicial boundaries.<sup>22</sup> This action is nearly unprecedented for a chief prosecutor and can be framed as dictatorial behavior and a rejection of the required cooperation necessary for the criminal justice system to function.
2. **Ethical Scrutiny:** The campaign must leverage the investigation launched by the state's Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) into whether a political action committee supporting her recall defense broke the law by failing to disclose donors or file properly.<sup>23</sup> This investigation directly undercuts her new message of fighting corruption and restoring trust<sup>1</sup>, framing her as ethically compromised and administratively negligent even in managing her own defense campaign.

## **D. The Statewide Context: A Failed Experiment**

The broader political environment in California has definitively shifted away from the model Price represents. Her defeat in Alameda County followed the 2022 recall of San Francisco DA



Chesa Boudin and the 2024 re-election loss of Los Angeles DA George Gascón.<sup>20</sup> These three high-profile failures of the progressive prosecutor movement in major urban centers signal a consistent statewide repudiation of policies perceived as soft on crime. Furthermore, Alameda County voters overwhelmingly supported Proposition 36 in 2024—a measure designed to inflict harsher penalties for some theft and drug crimes.<sup>15</sup> This alignment with "tough-on-crime" measures confirms that the county electorate is currently prioritizing public safety accountability over further progressive experimentation. Re-electing Price would be an act of defying the mandate of the recall and the broader California consensus.

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## V. Strategic Messaging and Counter-Campaign Blueprint

The counter-campaign must operate on three parallel, mutually reinforcing tracks: establishing the competence and success of the current administration, confirming the irreversible nature of Price's failure, and neutralizing her narrative of political victimization.

### A. Core Campaign Themes

#### 1. **Accountability Over Ideology: Price Failed to Do the Job.**

- This theme emphasizes the administrative and professional failures of her tenure. The campaign must continually highlight the failures to prosecute a high volume of misdemeanor cases<sup>15</sup>, the unprecedented friction with the judiciary<sup>22</sup>, and the lack of organizational cooperation, epitomized by the Governor's decision to intervene with state resources.<sup>18</sup> Price must be depicted as a political activist who lacked the professional competence required to run a massive legal organization.

#### 2. **The Results Are Clear: Safety Returned After Her Removal.**

- The primary offensive weapon is the statistical evidence of crime reduction under the new administration. The dramatic drops in Violent Crime (29% down), Robbery (41% down), and Homicides (21% down) in Oakland in H1 2025<sup>6</sup> must be the core talking point. The narrative is: "The moment accountability policies were restored, public safety improved. A vote for Price is a vote to reverse these life-saving gains."

#### 3. **Rejecting the Failed Experiment: A Vote Against the Mandate.**

- Price must be linked explicitly to the nationwide and statewide backlash against progressive prosecutors who, critics argue, valued offenders over victims. Her re-election attempt must be framed as an attempt to overturn the overwhelming 62.9% democratic decision.<sup>2</sup> The success of the recall and the passage of Prop 36<sup>15</sup> demonstrate the electorate's firm desire for a tougher approach, and Price represents a regression to a rejected model.

### B. Exploiting Policy Contrast and Narrative Gaps

The campaign must utilize the specific policy reversals initiated by Jones Dickson to create a stark and negative contrast with Price.

- **The Gun Violence Trap:** Price's focus on gun violence prevention <sup>1</sup> is a critical vulnerability. The counter-campaign must remind voters that her administration severely restricted the use of gun sentencing enhancements at the charging stage.<sup>12</sup> This allows for a powerful rhetorical attack: "How can you claim to fight gun violence when you systematically disarmed your own prosecutors?"
- **Victims' Voices:** The campaign must amplify the voices of victims and concerned communities, especially Asian Americans, who felt dismissed during Price's tenure.<sup>5</sup> The successful SAFE coalition <sup>2</sup> must be fully reactivated, ensuring that messaging focuses relentlessly on accountability for violent crime and the needs of those harmed by the criminal justice system, contrasting with Price's focus on offender rehabilitation.

### C. Resource Mobilization and Targeting

To successfully defend the office, the campaign must prepare for a significant financial outlay, mirroring or exceeding the \$5 million spent during the recall.<sup>2</sup> This funding will be necessary to execute aggressive earned media strategies and paid media buys that distribute the H1 2025 crime data and the narrative of administrative competence. Furthermore, the coalition must remain broad and visible, leveraging the support of organizations like SAFE <sup>2</sup>, police unions <sup>11</sup>, and moderate Democratic leaders to reinforce the message that the opposition is neither partisan nor narrowly focused.

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## VI. Key Data Synthesis and Projections

The political landscape in Alameda County is currently highly favorable for a candidate focused on accountability and competence.

### A. The Electorate's Post-Recall Mood

The successful recall, coupled with the county's overwhelming support for Proposition 36 (a measure increasing penalties for certain crimes) <sup>15</sup>, confirms that the dominant voter sentiment in Alameda County favors a more traditional, stringent approach to prosecution and public safety. Price must compete in this environment while carrying the burden of a historical 62.9% electoral rejection.<sup>2</sup>

### B. The Path Forward for DA Jones Dickson (or Successor)

Ursula Jones Dickson was appointed to serve until the June 2026 primary election, which will determine who fills the remainder of Price's term ending in 2028.<sup>1</sup> Jones Dickson's primary electoral strategy relies on campaigning through governance. The continuation of policy

reversals (restoring enhancements, addressing juvenile transfers)<sup>12</sup> and the ongoing downward trend in crime<sup>6</sup> are her most effective arguments. Every day of stable, competent administration further proves that Price's policies were the primary impediment to public safety.

The political determination is that the initial 53.1% support Price garnered in 2022<sup>2</sup> was eroded not by right-wing activism, but by a pervasive perception of institutional failure and public safety neglect that crossed ideological lines. The campaign's mandate is to ensure this perception remains the dominant framework for the 2026 election.

## C. Conclusion and Strategic Recommendations

The announcement of Pamela Price's 2026 bid must be met with a sustained, well-funded, and highly focused campaign that leverages the unambiguous mandate of the 2024 recall. The core strategy should be defined by the following actionable recommendations:

1. **Relentless Data Utilization:** Make the statistical comparison between Price's tenure and H1 2025 crime reductions (Violent Crime Down 29%, Robbery Down 41%) the central argument of all public messaging.<sup>6</sup>
2. **Highlight Policy Inconsistencies:** Use Price's prior restrictions on gun enhancements<sup>12</sup> to dismantle her new platform regarding gun violence prevention.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Focus on Competence and Temperament:** Frame the election as a choice between competent, results-driven management (Jones Dickson) and a return to documented administrative chaos and ethical liabilities (FPPC investigation, judicial friction).<sup>15</sup>
4. **Nationalize the Failure:** Explicitly link Price's campaign to the rejected progressive prosecutor movement, reinforcing that Alameda County voters, like voters across California, prefer accountability and effective governance.<sup>15</sup>

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