

Where the Potential Democratic Vice Presidential Candidates Stand on Corporate Power

The reinvigoration of antitrust law and enforcement has been a particular bright spot of the Biden Administration. Federal enforcers at the Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and DOJ Antitrust have effectively used the powers of their offices to rein in corporate abuses, slow corporate consolidation, and reassert public control over markets across several industries, and the Biden administration's executive order on competition policy has led to new rulemaking across the cabinet agencies.

Research shows that voters highly approve of efforts like these to rein in abusive corporations and empower workers. The good news is that Democrats have a deep bench of talent who have taken concrete steps to fight for consumers, workers and small businesses in their roles as attorney general or governor. Vice President Kamala Harris, as the presumptive nominee, has an opportunity to effectively campaign on the administration's record along with her eventual vice presidential choice.

To that end, here is where the potential **state-based** Democratic vice presidential candidates **stand on issues relating to corporate power and consolidation**, informed by Fight Corporate Monopolies' work organizing advocates and advising state leaders on anti-monopoly policy. While this list might not be fully comprehensive, we've rated their track record on standing up to corporate power on a scale of one to five stars.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz

Roles: Governor (2019-present)

Good: After they earned an unexpected trifecta in Minnesota in 2022, Democrats have effectively and swiftly used their slim majority – consisting of just one vote in the state Senate – to pass an extensive list of anti-monopoly legislation, which Walz has

signed into law. For example, he signed a major labor law reform that included new protections for workers in several industries, a paid sick leave mandate, and a ban on non-compete agreements, among other items. He also signed an economy-wide ban on junk fees, the nation's most extensive right to repair law, and a new law to rein in hospital consolidation.

Bad: He vetoed a bill that would have set minimum labor standards for rideshare drivers, and helped the Mayo Clinic – a major health care industry player in the state – block a bill that would have created a board to set working standards for nurses.

RATING: Four stars ★★★★★

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro

Roles: Governor (2023-present); State Attorney General (2017-2023); State Representative (2005-2012)

Good: As AG, Shapiro proposed a rulemaking to define certain forms of anti-competitive conduct, which was seen as a backdoor attempt to create an antitrust statute in Pennsylvania, which the state currently lacks. He also sued Uber for violating data breach notification laws; sued gas companies for deceiving landowners about the terms of the royalties they would receive in exchange for leasing their land; and collaborated with the Washington, D.C. AG and Uber Eats to secure disclosures about price discrepancies.

He brokered a new contract with the hospital monopolist and insurance provider University of Pittsburgh Medical Center that forced UPMC to serve patients covered by rival Highmark insurance. UPMC had attempted to cut them off as a way of consolidating the insurance market. Shapiro also joined the multi-state Google search antitrust case, as well as the 48-state lawsuit against Facebook.

As governor, Shapiro signed into law new restrictions on pharmacy benefit managers, implemented an executive order requiring union labor on government projects, and announced a joint task force with New Jersey to strengthen labor law enforcement.

Bad: Some of his settlements as AG were seen as inadequate, particularly the settlement of an opioids case with Johnson and Johnson and other pharma companies for \$1 billion, as well as a settlement with the consulting firm McKinsey for its role in the opioids crisis.

Unknown: He has not taken a public position on key bills moving through the Pennsylvania legislature to create a state antitrust law and rein in health care system consolidation.

RATING: Four stars ★★★★★

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear:

Roles: Governor (2019-present); State Attorney General (2016-2019)

Good: As governor, Beshear signed into law pharmacy benefit manager reforms that have saved Kentucky hundreds of millions of dollars, and which originated with an investigation he started as state attorney general. As AG, he also filed nine lawsuits against corporations involved in the opioid epidemic.

As governor, he vetoed a bill to provide data center tax breaks to Big Tech firms (though it later became law in a separate bill that the legislature passed over his veto). He signed the nation's first executive order allowing college athletes to receive compensation, as well as an executive order declaring a state of emergency due to the baby formula shortage, which was aimed at protecting families from predatory pricing. Beshear also backed the 2023 UAW strike, joining workers on the picket line.

Bad: He supported the largest corporate subsidy in state history, providing \$250 million to Ford for electric vehicle battery plants.

RATING: Three and a half stars ★★★★★

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker

Roles held: Governor (2019-present)

Good: Pritzker has advocated for and signed a series of laws addressing consolidation in health care, including a law capping the price of insulin and epipens; two laws addressing PBM practices; a law to eliminate predatory health insurance tactics; and a law creating a health care merger notification system. He has said, "Illinois will always stand up to Big Pharma."

On labor, Pritzker signed a law eliminating some noncompete agreements, banned right to work laws on local level, signed a law to make it easier for workers exposed to toxic chemicals to get redress, required charter schools to include union neutrality clauses in their contracts, and signed a law preventing temp agencies from sending workers to a striking workplace without informing the worker of the strike.

He vetoed a utility monopoly "right of first refusal" bill, saying it would eliminate competition, and he has been skeptical of sports stadium subsidies for the Chicago Bears and Chicago White Sox.

Bad: He has advocated for the use and expansion of other corporate subsidies, including the creation of an incentive program for Big Tech data centers.

RATING: Three and a half stars ★★★★★

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer

Roles: Governor (2019-present), State Senator (2006-2015), State Representative (2003-2006)

Good: Whitmer's chief accomplishment in the corporate power space is signing a bill that made Michigan the first state to repeal an anti-union "right to work" law. She also signed into law restrictions on pharmacy benefit managers and a ban on surprise medical billing.

Bad: Whitmer's administration has been extremely reliant on corporate subsidy deals – they totaled \$335 million in 2023 alone per one estimate, and could total nearly \$10 billion across her entire administration – despite little evidence they have provided any lasting benefits to Michigan residents.

RATING: Three stars ★★★★★

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly

Roles: U.S. Senator (2020-present)

Good: Kelly was a prominent advocate of the CHIPS and Science Act, and served as a chief negotiator of the Senate-passed version of the bill. (Arizona is a leading U.S. chip-making hub.)

He was one of 26 senators to sign a letter calling on the Department of Justice to investigate antitrust violations in the meatpacking industry at the height of inflation. In late 2023, Kelly introduced legislation that would force Big Tech and major ISPs to contribute to an FCC fund that subsidizes internet bills in rural communities.

Bad: Kelly's office is one of many staffed with Big Tech-funded AI policy fellows. In 2021, he made headlines as one of three Democratic senators to withhold support on the Protecting the Right to Organize Act. Amid the veepstakes, Kelly said he would vote for the PRO Act today.

Kelly's campaign promises and rhetoric has also differed from his actions. For instance, campaigning on oil price gouging, but did not join other Senate Democrats in calling for prosecution of Big Oil's collusion with OPEC. Kelly also claims to refuse corporate PAC money, and has twice introduced the Ban Corporate PACS Act, while reportedly holding fundraisers where Wall Street and Big Pharma lobbyists were instructed to make contributions by other means.

RATING: Two and a half stars ★★★★★