

MEMO

REVENUE NARRATIVE STRATEGY

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief analysis of current messaging and narrative strategies related to public revenue and to provide recommendations based on past findings and ongoing research and testing.

GOAL

Those who believe in the government being a driving force for good need to a) recognize this moment as a chance to lift up the working people who make our state run, highlighting who we all know are “essential” and b) push for real, long-term changes that address the glaring inequalities that have been created by the same groups who will be leading the charge to divide us, undermine our faith in collective solutions, and cut government spending in response to the economic fallout from COVID-19.

What We Should Say

- The pandemic is showing how we depend on each other, whether we’re white or Black, Latino or Asian, Native or newcomer.
- We can now truly see the essential work of the nurses, home care workers, educators, daycare providers, first responders and working people who drove the trucks, stocked the food, and kept our buildings clean are what drive our economy.
- Now a small group of politicians and the wealthy few who back them are trying to use budget deficits caused by the pandemic to punish the people we depended on the most during the crisis.
- We can’t let the handful of people who got us into this mess now try to divide us by scapegoating Asian Americans and immigrants while putting the burden and blame on Black Americans and those struggling to make ends meet.
- We cannot allow the greedy few, who refuse to pay their fair share, to use this pandemic to take even more for themselves by calling for cuts to vital areas like healthcare and education.
- Now is the time to join together to rewrite the rules so that when the pandemic ends, we can ensure every one of us can care for our families, earn a fair return for our work and protect the people who protected us during the pandemic.

Why We Should Say It

- Inoculate against opposition using this crisis to divide us, scapegoat Asian Americans, immigrants or those struggling to make ends meet.
- Appeals to unity generally support policies that benefit the common good: health care, education, minimum wage hikes, etc.
- The #GreaterThanFear strategy of messaging to a coalition across race and class was successful in past state races.
- Even now, the awful rich are awfully rich.

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

As work continues to ensure Minnesota families are safe and healthy as we face the COVID-19 pandemic, we know there is a looming fight around the expense of the policies needed to alleviate the economic fallout. Our opponents will use this fight to argue for cuts to government spending on working people while attempting to lower their own taxes and funneling stimulus money into the pockets of the wealthy few. They have been clear that they see the “economy” (the stock market and corporate profits) as the most important factor in any decisions we make and will use “fiscal responsibility” to enact their long-term goals of cutting critical programs at a time when it is clear we should be expanding them.

What They Say

- We need to “open the economy” and get people back to work no matter the cost
- We can’t make the cure worse than the disease.
- This budget deficit shows we need to tighten our belts and make tough choices.
- Entitlement programs are simply too expensive and, to be fiscally responsible, we will need to cut from the places with the most to cut to ensure Minnesota’s economic health for future generations.

Why They Say It

- Their goal is to undermine faith in government to cut programs like education and healthcare
- They want to make the “economy” the most important factor in our decision making, over people’s very lives.
- Imply that “fiscal responsibility” means cutting social programs, not raising revenues from rich.

OUR THEMES

- Lift up essential workers: care providers, first responders, educators, retail workers, garbage haulers, etc.
- Lift up the most impacted: the elderly, the immunocompromised, those losing jobs or going hungry
- Assign motivation to our opponents: Profiteers and price-gougers are trying to take advantage; some politicians are trying to distract us from the profit grabs by fueling divisions along racial lines, in particular by pointing fingers at Asian Minnesotans & immigrants.
- Lift up what’s most important: our health, well-being, and ability to live good lives.
- Claim the need for shared responsibility: We all have a role to play, that includes the wealthy and big business. They’ll need to pitch in too. That means paying their fair share of taxes.