

FAITHS UNITED to SAVE DEMOCRACY

Faiths United to Save Democracy Messaging Guide

Volume 1 (Winter 2024)

We care about democracy and our communities. We want to help turn out the vote and will be there to help protect voters during the election season. We have created this short messaging guide to help address some of the messaging challenges we hear people facing while trying to do this work.

This is the first in a series of guides we will create to help people of faith engage in critical voting work. These guides are meant to provide you with touchstone messages that you can modify for your context and community. Messaging is most effective when voters hear repeated messages from various sources, and you may hear other groups using the same frameworks/language and that is a good thing! Repetition is our super-power and we want to break through the noise.

These messages are crafted to be non-partisan and 501c3 compliant. To that end, you will notice the messages do not try to make the case for a particular candidate or issues associated with a particular political party. We can uplift a shared vision of the future, but we should avoid attempting to make a case for a particular candidate or party. We have a lot we can talk about including voter registration, voter mobilization, voter protection, the theologies of democracy and voting, and civic discipleship. Our messages should encourage everyone to engage in the sacred duty of voting. Leave making the case for candidates or addressing candidate weaknesses/strengths to the actual political parties. This will keep you clear of potential grey areas.

Quick Messaging Tips:



Voters are mobilized by messages that lay out what we are “for” more than what we are against. Avoid starting messages with a negative or using the phrase “when we don’t vote.”

Starting with a negative framework will demotivate voters and could hurt turnout. Research shows that people remember the sensation of feeling something negative more than your message and do not remember your call to action as easily. Also, repeating the phrase “when we don’t vote” reinforces the option of not voting and further normalizes non-participation. Messaging is more persuasive and mobilizing to voters when you start with shared values and share a future vision first. Then you can name a problem and end by providing your solution. *See the Freedom message and Replace and Embrace section in this guide.*



Message testing revealed that people are not mobilized when accomplishments/legislative records are listed. These accomplishment listing messages can have a tone of “we did this for you” and many people aren’t feeling the benefits of those accomplishments so it can further disenfranchise voters. The more compelling messages speak of a future agenda. Additionally, listing

accomplishments of administrations in messaging could be seen as partisan. It is better to say “when we vote, our communities receive the critical XYZ that we need.” *See the Better Life Message in this guide.*



Leverage the power of the whole person. We have heard the economy is at the forefront of most voters’ minds. However, messages about the “economy” are often vague and winning messages contextualize the concept of the economy to everyday lives. In reality, every issue is an economic issue in our society. The economy is people going about our lives, trying our best to provide a decent life for ourselves, our families, and those in our communities. The messages in this guide model how to talk about the impact of the economy in the ways people experience it. People live intersectional lives so try to tap into multiple areas of people’s lives when drafting messages.

Messaging Guidance

Want to talk about the economy? Use the “Better Life” message. This message resonated with and mobilized voters of color and Gen Z voters. Gen Z voters did not respond well to messages about building the middle class.

Better Life Message: We need leaders who care about our whole lives—from putting food on the table to seeing our kids grow up happy to having clean air to breathe and safe places to live. It’s time we have leaders who will re-write the rules, demanding corporations pay what they owe, so that Americans can earn a good living and have a good life—with education and healthcare, housing, and jobs that every family needs.

You can modify this basic message with the issues that are relevant to your community or the people you are engaging.

Example for Gen Z: We need leaders who care about our whole lives—from putting food on the table to following our passions to having clean air to breathe and safe places to live. It’s time we have leaders who will re-write the rules, demanding corporations pay what they owe, so that our generation and all Americans can earn a good living and have a good life—with education and healthcare, housing, and jobs that every person needs.

Want to talk about freedom? Use the “Value Freedom” Message to show we have a choice between more freedom or less freedom/more rights or fewer rights.

Value Freedom Message: As Americans, we value our freedoms. Freedom to earn a good living and care for our families. Freedom to cast our votes and elect our leaders. We can choose more freedom and more rights that support us all. Together we must ensure that everyone in our communities can and actually do exercise their sacred freedom to vote and decide the future that we want.

Freedom + Populism Message (many can win together)

Our vote is our voice. By voting, we are electing officials that represent issues that we care about.

Our vote matters. We can change laws & policies that will benefit our communities.

Our vote is our power. We have the power to leverage our votes and hold elected officials accountable to our values and priorities. Together, we must ensure that everyone in our communities can and actually do exercise their sacred freedom to vote and decide the future that we want.

Want to talk from a solidarity/interfaith perspective? Use the Race Class Narrative message.

Our strength comes from our ability to be there for each other –to knit together people from different places, races, and faiths into a bigger we and stronger community. For this to be a place of freedom and justice for all, we cannot let politicians divide us against each other based on what someone looks like or how much money they have. We must pick leaders who honor the Imago Dei –the image of God in all people and treat others as they want to be treated. We must pick leaders who are committed to building a more just and inclusive multi-racial democracy. Together, we can make this a place where freedom and community are for everyone, no exceptions.

Most of us seek to treat others the way we'd like to be treated. And that cuts across race, across place, across what's in your wallet. But then a handful of politicians try to divide us against each other – hoping that if we fear our neighbor – we might look the other way while they undermine our public schools, take away our healthcare and threaten programs that help feed us. But we are called to love our neighbor and when we stand up for each other, we know we can demand a nation that works for all of us.

(Interfaith Solidarity) Treating others as we want to be treated and honoring the Imago Dei -image of God in everyone- means respecting people's rights to live free, raise kids in safety and seek a better life. No one should fear for their safety because of the color of their skin, what language they speak, or how they pray.

We need leaders who care about our whole lives—from putting food on the table to seeing our kids grow up happy to having clean air to breathe and safe places to live and worship. It's time we have leaders who will re-write the rules, demanding corporations pay what they owe, so that Americans can earn a good living and have a good life—with education and healthcare, housing, and jobs that every family needs.

Replace and Embrace Messaging Tips

Replace: Avoid using the phrase “when we don't vote” or starting your message with a negative. Research shows that people remember the sensation of feeling something negative more than your message and do not remember your call to action as easily. **Embrace:** Messaging is more persuasive and mobilizing to voters when you start with shared values and share a future vision first. Then you can name a problem and end by providing your solution.

Examples:

Replace: “When we don't vote” **with** “leaving no power on the table.”

Voting is so much more than the presidential election. From how police engage with the community to whether public transportation is affordable, safe, and clean to whether affordable housing is being built, elections shape our communities and impact our lives. Leaving no power on the table means using your vote in every race and every election because it matters.

When you vote, you're not just electing government officials. You and fellow voters are expressing your needs, preferences, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction. Voting is one of the main tools we have to create a government that works to support our families and neighbors.

Replace: “When we don't vote, leaders who deny the outcome of an election they don't like are elected”
with “As citizens, we determine the outcome of the election through voting—not politicians”

As citizens, we determine the outcome of the election through voting—not politicians. We need elected leaders who care about our whole lives—and that includes the democratic procedures that create the safety and stability of our nation.

Replace: “This election with two older candidates at the top of the ticket is a transition to a new generation of leaders in the next” **with** “our state, municipal, and county-level elected officials make a wide range of decisions that affect your daily life.” This shifts the focus from the two candidates to a broader set of voting possibilities.

Voting is so much more than the presidential election. From how police engage with the community to whether public transportation is affordable, safe, and clean to whether affordable housing is being built, local elections shape our communities and impact our lives. Our state, municipal, and county-level elected officials make a wide range of decisions that affect our daily lives. Leaving no power on the table means using your vote in every race in every election because it matters.

*Messaging Sources include : ASO Communications, Research Collaborative, Faith in MN, and Legal Defense Fund. Messages were tested with voters/potential voters of color and multi-generational voter cohorts.