



## **Wider Opportunities for Women**

### **BUILDING BRIDGES TO ECONOMIC SECURITY: TAKEAWAYS FROM THE LAKE RESEARCH POLL**

Our task is to communicate with a range of audiences and motivate them to action – policy makers, the press, the public. The national opinion research, conducted for WOW by Lake Research Partners, finds that the most powerful economic messages emphasize the **aspirational** themes of **building economic security** and **family economic security**.

These goals need to be woven in with a **policy agenda** and compelling **values** like recapturing the American Dream; strengthening and building the middle class; and creating good-paying jobs. Providing a **narrative** plays a key role in bringing these themes to life.

#### **ATTITUDES ON THE ECONOMY: HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL?**

- **AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ECONOMY AND THEIR ECONOMIC SECURITY.**

These doubts are driven by high unemployment, job insecurity, health care costs, wages that aren't keeping up with rising expenses and concerns about increasing taxes. Savings are being decimated and everyone's feeling the pinch. Retirement security is a major concern too.

- **CONCERNS CUT ACROSS GENERATIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS.**

Senior citizens, young adults, unmarried women and working families are perceived as having the most trouble making ends meet – as being the hardest hit. Even as they work hard and act responsibly, more and more families are living paycheck to paycheck and are increasingly on the edge of economic crisis. The recovery hasn't happened yet.

- **"ECONOMIC SECURITY" EMERGES AS AN APPEALING, POSITIVE, ASPIRATIONAL GOAL.**

Americans think of economic security as having a quality, good-paying, secure job, affordable healthcare and a secure retirement.

- **THE AMERICAN DREAM AND BUILDING THE MIDDLE CLASS STAND OUT.**

Americans define the American Dream as family economic security and being able to succeed through hard work. In this country, we work hard as individuals to get ahead for ourselves and our families and to provide a better chance for the next generation. Our economy will be strong again when our working and middle class families are strong.

- **AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THESE PROBLEMS AND WANT SOLUTIONS.**

Americans, young and old, understand that people are hurting and how much it really takes to make ends meet. Economic uncertainty has heightened deficit and spending worries; many are skeptical of government spending in this climate and they don't want more taxes. However, policies framed as "building economic security" stand out as effective programs and policies to help Americans make ends meet.

## **MESSAGING THE MOMENT: HOW SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT OUR AGENDA?**

How do we combine an aspirational frame, a real-life narrative, values-based goals and a policy agenda? Here are a few guidelines, whether you're writing a press release or opinion piece, talking to a reporter or potential supporter or appealing directly to policy and decision makers.

- **DEFINE THE PROBLEM.** This may include an appeal to how things should be and what your goal is.

**EXAMPLE:** The American Dream is about having economic security and the opportunity to succeed with hard work. It's about a good-paying, secure job, affordable healthcare and a secure retirement – not just living paycheck to paycheck. But that's what too many Illinois families are doing today as they try to recover from the worst economic crisis in decades.

- **OFFER A NARRATIVE.** This contextualizes and localizes the problem, and proves that it exists – sometimes with data or a personal story of someone struggling even as they play by the rules. It may include an explanation for how we got here and points to where we can go.

**EXAMPLE:** Working families are finding it increasingly difficult to cover rising costs – like keeping food on the table, or paying the rent. The unemployment rate is high, and those with jobs are often seeing their wages and benefits fall short of what it takes to get by. Meanwhile, the financial safety net, after years of underfunding and the recession, has eroded just when we need it most. Economic security, for many, is still a long way off.

- **PROVIDE A SOLUTION.** Saying what's wrong is not enough; people want solutions. The solutions are most powerful when they fit within the aspirational frame.

**EXAMPLE:** We need to create good-paying, secure jobs that provide affordable, quality healthcare and we need to invest in education and training that will help us build the middle class.