



**Wider  
Opportunities  
for Women**

## **Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign**



# **How to Advocate Effectively in an Economic Downturn**

\*Call 1-888-809-4012, pass code 464 1596, to listen to the webinar

# Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign



- **Encore webinar**
  - Slides and recording of the first webinar are available online at [www.wowonline.org/buildingbridges](http://www.wowonline.org/buildingbridges)
- **Questions**
  - Time at the end of the webinar for Q&A
  - Use the chat function to enter your questions during the presentation

# Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign



## Agenda

1. Overview: 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and What's Coming Up
2. Effective Messaging: How to Talk About and Advocate for Economic Security
3. Introducing a New Resource: The Building Bridges Toolkit
4. Q&A

# Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign



**Susan Rees**

Director of National Policy

Wider Opportunities for Women

# Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign



## Overview: 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and What's Coming Up

- Scope of the budget threat
- What you can do

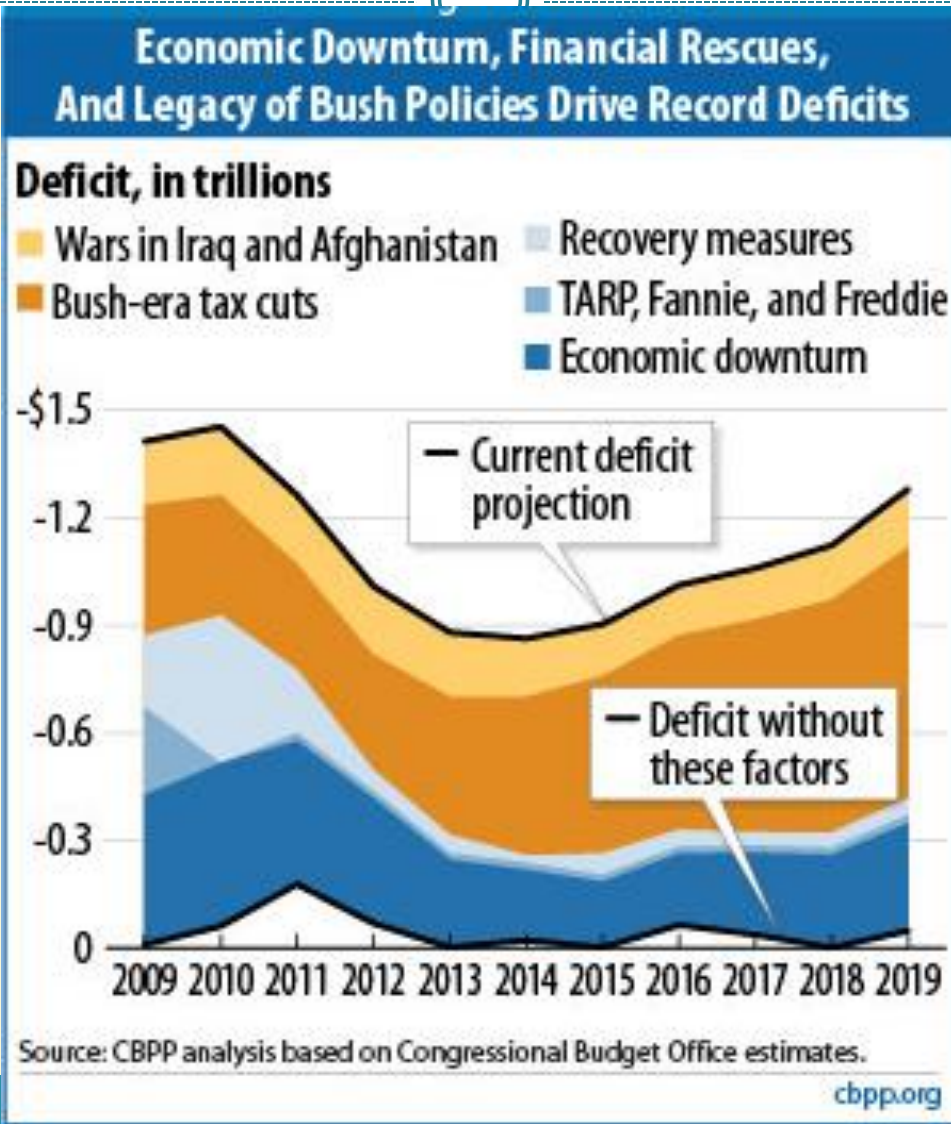
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## Budget Proposals

- Across-the-board cuts as high as 40% in non-defense areas
  - Domestic discretionary spending reflects 12% of the budget
- Vouchers to replace Medicare
- Block grant with reduced funding to replace Medicaid
- Social Security benefit reductions

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## Today on the House floor – FY 2011 Continuing Resolution

- Maximum Pell grant – reduced by \$800 from \$5,500
- Teen pregnancy prevention – eliminated
- Job training grants to states – \$1.4 billion, or -50%
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance – reduced -66%
- Senior Housing – reduced -67%
- Senior Community Service Employment - reduced -63.6%

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## We can win – we have before

In polls, majority of people reject cuts in specific programs

- There is high support across generations for programs like Social Security

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Policy Area	Total % Favor	% Strongly Favor
Maintaining the Meals on Wheels program that delivers meals to seniors in their homes	93%	75%
Covering the expenses of in-home care for low-income seniors	92%	63%
Offering low- and middle-income families assistance to help pay for child care expenses	75%	46%

Wider Opportunities for Women: Report from a Nationwide Survey of 1,000 Adults with Oversamples of African-American Adults, Latino Adults, and Low-Income Adults



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**“We are especially opposed to the severe cut in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V) which is so valuable to the nutrition programs and which was just recognized by a GAO report as being an appropriately targeted and successful job training program. SCSEP remains the only federal job training program that explicitly serves low-income adults, age 55 years and older-an economically disadvantaged and "in need" population.**

**From Senior Community Centers’ perspective, our philosophy is that meals are our core service and we will not cut even in the face of funding cuts. The meals are critically important to our clients’ health, independence and well being. What may happen though is that some of our other programs that meet basic needs – healthcare, case management, civic engagement – may have to be trimmed to support meals. It is too early to know all of the ramifications.”**

**- Paul Downey, President/CEO, Senior Community Centers, San Diego**



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**“LIHEAP, with a proposed reduction of 56% (67% in the House CR) in the formula funding, has allowed economically vulnerable families and individuals to pay heating bill during a winter that has seen much colder weather than normal. The loss of these funds in the next year will leave tens of thousands of Alabamians facing escalating utility bills, and having to make hard decisions about whether to heat their home or provide food for their families.”**

- Ron Gilbert, Community Action Association of Alabama

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**Andy McDonald**

Managing Director,  
National Advocacy Practice  
BerlinRosen Public Affairs



# Effective Messaging: How to Talk About and Advocate for Economic Security

1. Public opinion research review
2. Language Do's and Don'ts
3. Examples of good messaging
4. Talking with legislators
5. Next steps

# Public Opinion Research Review

- Lake Research Survey, May 2010
- Poll of 1,000 adults nationwide with oversamples of 100 African-American adults, 100 Latino adults, and 100 adults with incomes \$10,000-15,000 annually. Relevant cases in the base were folded into the oversamples.

# Attitudes on the Economy

- Americans are concerned about the economy and their economic security
- Concerns cut across generations and demographics
- “Economic security” emerges as appealing goal
- “The American Dream” and “building the middle class” are reasons to support economic security
- Americans understand the problems and want solutions



Lake Snell Perry Mermin Meadow Goff Ulibarri

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# Attitudes on the Economy

- Most Americans believe a family of four needs more than \$50,000 a year to make ends meet.
- 45% of Americans think a family needs \$60,000 or more a year to make ends meet.
- A majority believe a senior citizen living alone would need at least \$30,000 to get by.
- When asked how well a senior citizen could afford living on \$17,000 a year, two-thirds say it would be quite difficult.



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# Concerns Cut Across Generations and Demographics

- Nearly six-in-ten Americans (58%) rate their family's economic security as just fair or poor
- Particularly negative:
  - Pre-retirement Americans (aged 40-64)
  - Latinos
  - African Americans



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# Concern About the Economy and Economic Security

- High unemployment
- Health care costs
- Expenses going up
- Wages not going up
- Rising taxes
- Also, retirement security

# “Economic Security” Is Appealing Goal

- Powerful and aspirational

BUT

- Must link to compelling values
- Link to policy agenda

# Reasons to Support Economic Security

- Recapturing the American Dream
- Strengthen and build to the middle class
- Good-paying jobs
- Creating jobs for older workers
- Creating and strengthening services for frail elders
- Supporting families in economic crisis approaching retirement



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# Americans Want Solutions

- Americans strongly support policies that help middle- and lower-income families make ends meet
  - In-Home care for low-income seniors (92% support)
  - Jobs programs for seniors (84% support)
  - More flexible workplace policies (86% support)
  - Meals on Wheels (93% support)
  - And more

# Support Is Holding

## Pew Research Center Poll, February 2-7, 2011

Q. If you were making up the budget for the federal government this year, would you increase spending, decrease spending or keep spending the same for:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Aid to US needy	42%	34%	20%
Social Security	41%	43%	12%
Medicare	40%	43%	12%

# Language Do's and Don'ts

## DO'S

- “Economic security”
- “Making ends meet”
- “Living paycheck to paycheck”

## DON'TS

- “Standards”
- Acronyms
- Technical jargon

# Building Your Message

- Identify and lead with an aspirational theme such as “Economic Security”
- Define the problem
- Create a sense of urgency
- Tell a story, rooted in core American values
- Provide a realistic policy solution

# The Florida Times-Union

## Candidates silent on the growing issue of poverty

*More than 14 percent of Floridians now live in poverty and more are expected to join their ranks.*

**October 16, 2010**

**By Deirdre Conner**

With poverty in Florida and nationally reported at near-record highs, the timing seemed perfect for the Florida Association for Community Action to host its first-ever symposium and election debate about the issue.

It took place Thursday night in Tallahassee with 125 people in attendance.

The only people missing in the crowd: the soon-to-be elected officials.

Not one of the invited candidates showed up...



# Aspirational Messages

“The CLASS Act would help disabled Americans, preserve the dignity of people who, despite their functional impairments, wish to continue living the American dream — working, supporting their families and living at home.”

-- Rep. John Dingell, 2/1/11

"Now is the time for common-sense solutions that create jobs and strengthen the middle class.”

-- Sen. Harry Reid, 2/4/11

# Woodstock Institute Blog: BEFORE

## Overdraft fees, other products, increase economic insecurity in retirement

*Checking accounts with high-cost overdraft fees are increasing older persons' economic vulnerability, says a new report from Woodstock Institute, "Improving Economic Security Later in Life: Meeting the Credit and Financial Services Needs of Older Persons." The controversial overdraft fees, recently under fire from Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), particularly burden beneficiaries of Social Security payments and low-income older persons.*

*Automatic enrollment in overdraft programs means that many older persons are being charged high fees for products that they do not want or need...*

# Woodstock Institute Blog: AFTER

## Overdraft fees, other products, increase economic insecurity in retirement

*The last few years have been tough for Joan Jones and her husband, John. Throughout their lives, they have played by the rules – they saved for retirement and spent their money wisely. But like so many of us, the recession hit their savings and the value of their home hard. With the cost of basics like groceries and electricity continuing to climb, now, every dollar counts more than ever.*

*That's why Joan was floored to learn in one year alone, they had been charged a staggering \$400 in overdraft fees on their credit card.*

*Banks have a magic wand to turn a \$5 sandwich into a \$40 splurge: overdraft fees...*

*Fortunately, seniors understand the simple fix to egregious fees: reign in the banks' ability to use fine print to sign up customers without their consent and put their economic security at risk.*



# Colorado 9 to 5 Op-Ed: BEFORE

## Record Poverty Could Linger for Years without Adequate Government Investments

*Earlier this year Colorado Springs business owner Amy Mullins struck gold: with a boost from a federal jobs program, she was able to hire two new employees. Soon, the revenues at her medical lab testing facility increased by 32 percent.*

*“As of May, I would not have been able to hire these employees on my own, and could not have possibly entertained keeping them,” said Mullins.*

*Unfortunately the very program that helped Mullins to hire workers and expand her business is set to expire at the end of this month. Unless Congress acts quickly to extend it.*

*Last year’s economic recovery legislation created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency Fund by, and in that brief time it has created new jobs or prevented existing ones from disappearing for nearly 250,000 adults and youth nationwide, including nearly 1,600 Colorado residents.*

*Now is exactly the wrong time to end a program that creates jobs. So many Americans hit hard by the recession are struggling to live paycheck to paycheck...*



# Colorado 9 to 5 Op-Ed: AFTER

## Congress Should Act To Create Jobs, Strengthen Colorado's Middle Class

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# Talking with Policy Makers

- **Goal: Education**
- Prepare in advance
  - Develop effective messages
  - Research legislator's position and interests
- Deliver messages clearly and concisely
- Be polite, but firm
- Messengers matter
- Anticipate pushback

# Reality Check: Budgets are Tight

- Members of both parties say there's no money
- Policy solutions and messages must take into account budget realities
- Research the hidden public costs of “cuts”
- Appeal to core American values

# Messaging in the Downturn

**“Food stamp rolls reach historic levels,” *Stateline*, February, 7, 2011**

*“The demand for food stamps is expected to remain high throughout the country as the unemployment rate hovers near 9 percent in 2011...”*

*“Supporters say the program not only puts food on the table, but helps stimulate the economy. Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, figures that boosting food stamp payments by \$1 increases the Gross Domestic Product by \$1.73. The USDA says the benefits are even higher, contending that every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as \$9 in economic activity.”*



# Messaging in the Downturn

**“Lawmakers, activists weigh proposed Medi-Cal cuts,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, February 7, 2011**

*As state lawmakers continue to weigh Governor Jerry Brown’s proposed budget aimed at closing a \$25.4 billion financial hole, health care providers say \$1.7 billion in cuts to Medi-Cal will harm some of the state’s sickest residents and ultimately fail to save money.*

*Vista Community Clinic Executive Director Barbara Mannino said the 10-visit limit targets people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension or seizure disorders. Last year, 500 of her 14,500 Medi-Cal patients came to the clinic more than 10 times, she said.*

*“People who come in more than 10 times a year need to come in,” she said. “Limiting visits will only force them into the emergency room at a higher cost of care. Shouldn’t we be paying for a \$100 doctor visit instead of a \$1,500 emergency room visit?”*



# Messaging in the Downturn

## National Employment Law Project Press Release, Feb. 7, 2011

*“These funds will go straight to workers who are barely hanging on and need the assistance for essentials like food and health care and a place to live. The resources will be spent in local communities, boost economic activity, help keep businesses running and prevent further job loss. States that fail to act will be taking a step backwards when they desperately need to be supporting the unemployed and the creation of new jobs,” said Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project.*

*“At a time when state budget crises are forcing so many states to cut their own payrolls and local programs many residents rely on, it would add insult to injury to deny unemployed workers the extra benefits they desperately need and that are paid for entirely by the federal government,” said Owens.*



# Messaging in the Downturn

**“Local leaders react to budget proposal,” *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, Feb. 8, 2011**

*Linda Levin, executive director for ElderSource, the agency for aging in Northeast Florida, said she couldn't imagine how the Department of Elder Affairs funds were going to take a 5.4 percent reduction, as Scott's budget shows. There's been no increase in funding to this department for 10 years, she said.*

*"With the cost-of-living increases, that's amounted to cuts," she said, pointing to waiting lists for services that have continued to grow and threaten to push more people into nursing homes that are even more expensive for the state.*

# Next Steps To Increase Your Voice

- Identify concrete program goals
- Evaluate and consolidate your messaging
- Look for opportunities to get your message out
- Expand your network
- Join the big fights



[www.wowonline.org/buildingbridges](http://www.wowonline.org/buildingbridges)



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**Wider Opportunities for Women**

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**NEWS SPOTLIGHT**

WOW's DC Metro Area Program Featured in "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" Section of DC's Real Estate Biznow

WOW's DC BEST Featured on WJLA-TV (ABC News)

WOW's DC BEST Featured in the

**Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign Toolkit**

**Sign Up for WOW E-Updates**

**SPREAD THE WORD** about Building Economic Security!

Last fall, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) released the findings of nationwide opinion research in five regional meetings across the country. These meetings provided a venue for advocates and service providers to hear tested messages that the public is receptive to and to create education and outreach strategies for their specific niche, but with a shared goal and language of economic security.

Now, the content of these meetings and more is available to you.

This Building Bridges to Economic Security toolkit is your one-stop shop for all materials related to the Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign. In the toolkit you will find:

*Building Bridges — A Fresh Look at Economic Security for America's Families*



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**Questions?**

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## Contact Us!

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## WOW on Social Media

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- Thank you for participating!
- First in a series of webinars
- Give us your input on future topics! Take the survey at:  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7838XQG>