

A Shared Progressive Narrative for 2020

How to use this narrative: If we are to make the bold changes our country and our times demand, Americans must understand and embrace our values and our core beliefs about creating a just society. Narrative is fundamental to making the cultural change that is essential for social and political change.

This **Shared Progressive Narrative for 2020** is a tool for progressive communicators to communicate our shared *value-based story* about our *core beliefs* and to apply them to specific issues.

- Values are how we morally understand the world;
- Story is how we organize our understanding of the world;
- Core beliefs is what we aim to communicate. It's the goal of narratives, shaping worldview and cultural common sense.

The more we share the same core story, the more people will understand our core beliefs and we will drive the cultural change that we need to win on politics and policy.

REPETITION IS KEY TO MAKING CHANGE.

These narratives are designed to be easy to use in communication. They are presented in bullet form, so that you can use a bullet flexibly in different forms of communication. The bullets are short enough to stand on their own. We have found that this format is easier to actually apply in daily use than the kinds of longer paragraphs often tested in polling.

As you tell a story in your communications (whether an email blast; blog post/oped; or whatever), I'd encourage you to look draw from each section of the story:

- *Quest with values;*
- *Problem;*
- *Solution;*
- *Call to action.*

At the center of the **Shared Progressive Narrative for 2020** is our story about the economy, democracy and the role of government. The narrative includes multiple ways to tell our core story and includes bullets on a range of specific issues.

And as with any communications, you'll want to keep your audience in mind. Some versions or issues will be of more interest and have greater appeal depending on who the audience is.

Whatever you are writing and whenever you are writing, we think you will find the narrative a powerful source of clear language, an outline for the story you are telling and a source to talk about multiple issues.

What you'll find here:

- **Short narrative** – this is the core story, lifting a few key points from each section.
 - **Longer narrative** – including multiple versions in each section and specific issues.
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SHORT NARRATIVE: Emphasis on Economy and Democracy

Quest: We seek An America that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few. An America where all of us – no matter the circumstances of our birth – have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives in strong, thriving communities. An America where our government serves all of us, not just the wealthy and well-connected.

Problem: For years, wages haven't kept up with the cost of living. We all worry about how to secure a bright future for our family. The cost of living is way too high – many of us are living paycheck to paycheck, struggling under the cost of basics like health care, housing, transportation, groceries. We worry about how our children and grandchildren will get the education and career training they need to succeed. How we will retire in security?

This is not an accident. The powerful benefit by dividing the rest of us by our race or gender, where we live or where we come from, while they rig the economic rules in their favor. The super-rich and corporations use campaign donations and lobbyists to get even richer at the expense of everyday Americans.

Solution: We can come together across all of our differences to build an American economy and democracy that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few and well-connected.

We should make improving the incomes and economic security of everyday Americans our first priority. Our history teaches us that when Americans have good wages and economic security, when we can care for and support our families, educate our kids, afford our health care and housing, shop in our neighborhoods and retire in security, we build thriving communities.

We should rewrite the rules of our democracy so that every voice is heard and every vote counts. And people from our communities are able to run for office and represent us, not the wealthy and corporations.

Call to Action: Throughout our history, people have come together to create the best of America, moving us closer to the promise of liberty, justice and opportunity for all. Today all across the country, people are raising their voices, turning out, showing up, standing together to demand a better future for our children. Together we **can** build an America that works for all of us, where all our families and communities thrive.

LONGER NARRATIVE

Quest. We seek An America that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few. An America where all of us – no matter the circumstances of our birth – have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives in strong, thriving communities.

- America where our government serves all of us, not just the wealthy and well-connected.
- An America where people have time for family and community and have the security that they will be able to care for and support themselves and their family.
- An America where all of us – no matter our gender, race, age, our religion, or where we come from – have the opportunity to live meaningful, fulfilling lives in strong, thriving communities where we take care of each other.
- An America where our government serves all of us, not just the wealthy and well-connected.
- An America where we all have the freedom and opportunity to make the best of ourselves – to take a better job, start a business, get more education – the freedom to build secure lives and a bright future for our families.
- An America with freedom for all, not just for some. Whether it's the freedom to love who you want, the freedom of religion, the freedom to make decisions about our bodies, or the freedom to walk down the street without fear of harassment, discrimination, or even violence.
- An America where people have the power and know-how to make a difference in our communities.

Problem with whose responsible: **OVERALL PROBLEM and ISSUE VERSIONS**

*The following starts with statements that describe the **overall problem**, with an emphasis on the economy and democracy. We encourage all communicators to use these. They are followed by **issue versions**, which describe key issues in values terms. Note that each problem statement concludes with an aspirational statement. It's important that we don't disempower people by leaving them at the problem; we need to make it clear we can do something about it together!*

OVERALL PROBLEM: With emphasis on economy and democracy.

Problem: For years, wages haven't kept up with the cost of living. We all worry about how to secure a bright future for our family. The cost of living is way too high – many of us are living paycheck to paycheck, struggling under the cost of basics like health care, housing, transportation, groceries. We worry about how our children and grandchildren will get the education and career training they need to succeed. How we will retire in security? It's time we rewrite the rules so that America works for working people.

- The super-rich and corporations use campaign donations and lobbyists to get even richer at the expense of everyday Americans.
- The powerful benefit by dividing the rest of us by our race or gender or where we come from, while they rig the economic rules in their favor. But we can come together across racial and other differences to build an America that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few and well-connected.
- We are told that the economy is booming, but for most American families that's just not true. Though unemployment may be low, the cost of living is high, and too many people are living paycheck to paycheck. We worry about how to be sure our children and grandchildren get the education they need to succeed in college and career. How we will retire in security? It's time we rewrite the rules so that America works for working people.
- Too many people in our country are still excluded from opportunity because of their gender, the color of their skin, or where they were born. When people can't contribute to their full potential we make our communities and our nation poorer. But when each of us thrives, our communities thrive and our nation prospers.

ISSUE VERSIONS of problems:

- President Trump and his allies in Congress pretend to be on the side of everyday Americans, but they are pushing to take away our health care, slash Medicaid, Medicare and education – harming working families, vulnerable elderly, children and people with disabilities. They are ending the rules that prevent corporations from polluting our air, water and land, endangering our families' health. They're making it harder for families to afford health care or save for retirement. All to give huge tax breaks and boost the profits of the millionaires, billionaires and corporate CEOs who pay for their political campaigns. On top of that, they are dividing us, based on race, gender, religion and other differences, to keep us from standing together to demand that they work for all working people.

- Our nation isn't making the public investments we need to support families, provide opportunities for our children and help our communities to thrive, because big corporations and the wealthy use their power to rig the system so they don't pay their fair share. Instead of more tax breaks for the super-rich and CEOs we should raise their taxes and build the foundation for our economic prosperity.
- Our nation isn't building the foundations for a safe, healthy and prosperous future – great public schools, clean water, modern roads and transit, clean, renewable energy – because greedy corporations and the super-rich shirk their responsibilities to their communities, working people and country. Instead of more tax breaks for the super-rich and CEOs we should raise their taxes and invest in thriving families and communities.
- Too many people are dying and being injured by gun violence – in our schools, where we work, shop and worship – because the gun lobby opposes any common-sense measures to safeguard our families and communities from gun violence. We demand the freedom to be safe from gun violence.
- Big oil, gas and coal companies are putting profits before the health of our families, communities and our planet, disrupting our climate with rising sea levels, increasing droughts, floods, wildfires and extreme weather that take an increasing toll on our lives every day. We must demand that our elected officials say no to big oil and yes to our families and our future.
- Our criminal justice system is biased against people who are poor, Black and Brown, wrecking families and communities, while letting the wealthy and connected get away with almost anything. We need our criminal justice system to uphold our values, based on equality, prevention and treatment, while safeguarding our communities.
- Instead of encouraging all of us to vote and have a voice in our communities and country, some elected officials hold onto power by putting up barriers to voting in order to silence the voices of people who are Black, Brown, poor and young. Our democracy depends on every voice being heard.
- Huge, powerful corporations use their near monopoly power to hold down wages, hike prices and kill off competition from independent businesses and family farms. We need our elected officials to rewrite the rules to put working people ahead of CEOs.

***Solution:* OVERALL SOLUTION and ISSUE VERSIONS**

OVERALL SOLUTION: With emphasis on economy and democracy.

We can come together across all of our differences to build an American economy and democracy that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few and well-connected.

- We should make improving the incomes and economic security of everyday Americans our first priority. Our history teaches us that when Americans have good wages and economic security, when we can care for and support our families, educate our kids, afford our health care and housing, shop in our neighborhoods and retire in security, we build thriving communities.
- We should rewrite the rules of our democracy so that every voice is heard and every vote counts. And people from our communities are able to run for office and represent us, not the wealthy and corporations.
- Our success depends on the success of those around us. Our communities thrive when everyone thrives.

- The more people who have the opportunity to fully participate in our economy, the better we all do and the better our country does.
- Our government must work for everyday Americans, not the super-rich and CEOs. We need to rewrite the rules of our democracy so that every voice is heard, every vote counts and ordinary people are able to compete for office without taking big money.
- America was founded on freedom. That means freedom for all, not just for some. Whether it's the freedom to love who you want, the freedom of religion, the freedom to make decisions about our bodies, or the freedom to walk down the street without fear of harassment, discrimination, or even violence -- we need to protect these freedoms for all Americans.
- We need to rewrite the economic rules so that all of us are free to work with dignity and pursue our dreams. That means stopping corporate monopolies from holding down wages and killing off competition. Whether it's the freedom to stand together in union or to start a new business or family farm, we need to assure that our economy works for working people.

ISSUE VERSIONS of SOLUTIONS: *Always put issues in values terms.*

- Instead of more tax breaks for the super-rich and CEOs, we should create good jobs by investing in our communities to have better schools, fix our roads, bridges, transit system and clean, renewable energy.
 - Now is the time focus on a future where all our families and communities can thrive. We need to make sure we have great public schools, in all our communities, housing, health care and higher education that's affordable, modern roads and transit, clean renewable energy – the public investments that will build continued economic prosperity in the future.
- Instead of more tax breaks for the super-rich and big corporations we must safeguard the future of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, the public programs that provide a foundation of dignity and security for all.
- Instead of gutting regulations that stop Wall Street banks from ripping us off, chemical companies from poisoning our air water and dirty fuel corporations from wrecking the climate, our government should always put the health and financial well-being of our families and communities first.
- Instead of raising our health care costs and leaving us at the mercy of the insurance and drug corporations, we should guarantee quality affordable health care for everyone.
- We need to rewrite the rules so every job is a good job. When working people earn good pay and have decent benefits, can support and care for their families, and shop at local businesses, they boost the economy and create thriving communities.
- Instead of ripping families and communities apart, we need to create a commonsense immigration process that keeps families together, recognizes the hardships and contributions of people moving here, and creates a roadmap to citizenship for new Americans who aspire to be citizens.
- We need to free ourselves from gun violence by standing up to the gun lobby and taking common-sense measures to safeguard our children and our communities.
- We need our criminal justice system to uphold our values, based on equality, prevention and treatment, while safeguarding our families and communities. We should focus our actions and our resources on better education, job training and treatment instead of more prisons, police and judges.

- To safeguard the health of our families and communities, we need to invest in clean, renewable energy, creating good, local jobs, while holding corporations accountable for the pollution that is making us sick and destabilizing our climate. We need to put the health and very future of our families and communities ahead of polluters' profits.

***Call to Action:* Together we can build an America that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few, where our families and communities can thrive.**

- It's not whether government is big or small, it's who our government serves. It's time our government work for everyday Americans, not just the very wealthy and big corporations.
- It's time we joined together with people in our communities across racial and other differences to take action and bring about change.
- It's time to stand up for each other and come together. It is time for us to pick leaders who reflect the very best of every kind of American. Together, we can make our nation a place where freedom is for everyone, no exceptions.
- Throughout our history, people have come together to create the best of America, moving us closer to the promise of liberty, justice and opportunity for all. Today all across the country, people are raising their voices, turning out, showing up, standing together to demand a better future for our children. Together we **can** build an America that works for all of us, where all our families and communities thrive.
- When you said the pledge of allegiance was it for liberty and justice for the few, for the super-rich? For some of us but not others? Or for all? Together we can build an America with liberty, justice and prosperity for all for all of us.