

Date: April 16, 2014

To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville, Erica Seifert, and Fredrica Mayer,
Democracy Corps
Page Gardner, Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund

The Urgent Economic Narrative for 2014

The economy is still the main issue in the 2014 election, impacting the mood of the country, driving likely voter turnout, and defining what is at stake. With voters uncertain of President Obama and the Democrats' direction on the economy, Democratic voters are 7 points less likely than Republicans to say they are 'almost certain to vote' in the off-year election in November.

But Democrats can change that equation if they show they understand people's financial struggles, get the narrative right, push back against an economy that works only for the 1 percent, and offer an economic agenda that puts working women first.

This short memo provides guidance on each of these.

Democrats have to be hard-hitting and focused on the economy. As a start, Democrats should bury any mention of '*the recovery*.' That message was tested in the bi-partisan poll¹ we conducted for NPR, and it lost to the Republican message championed by Karl Rove. The Democratic message missed how much trouble people are in, and doesn't convince them that policymakers really understand or are even focusing on the problems they continue to face. That framework gets in the way of a direct economic message.

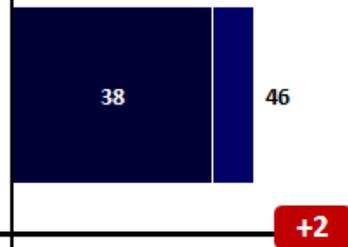
¹ This poll was conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps, NPR, and Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund, with Resurgent Republic. The survey of 950 2012 voters (950 weighted) and 840 likely 2014 voters nationwide was conducted from March 19-23, 2014.

Republicans edge Democrats when economic message makes even slightest reference to recovery

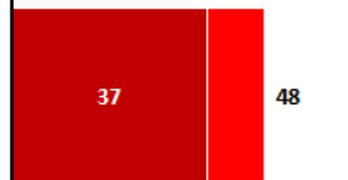
I'm going to read you a pair of statements. After I read both statements, please tell me if the FIRST or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own opinion, even if neither is exactly right.

Economic Policy Debate

The Democratic candidate says: The economy is recovering, but not for regular hardworking people. Incomes of CEOs and the top 1 percent are soaring, but in the real economy, people are working harder at jobs that don't pay enough to live on. We have got to do something. We must raise the minimum wage, help people afford job training and college, build a 21st century infrastructure, and stop unfair trade agreements that wipe out American jobs.



The Republican candidate says: The Obama Administration has had six years to get this economy going and their policies haven't worked. Monthly wages are going down, and there are not enough good-paying jobs to create opportunities for struggling families. We need to start making things in America again, and stop excessive regulations that are hurting the economy. It's time to produce more energy here at home, and educate people for the jobs of the 21st century.



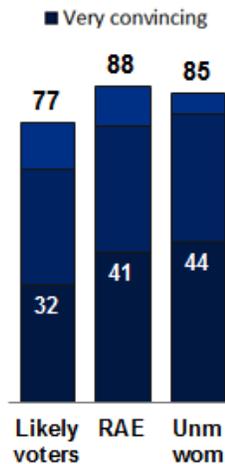
The more powerful set-up for Democrats' economic message is the contrast with CEOs and the 1 percent whose incomes have soared, while everyone else works hard just to get by. That reflects the experiences of real people in this economy. Indeed, the "ladders of opportunity" that were part of the President's inequality narrative do not get much response. What people relate to is the contrast with those at the top and the struggle with an economy that "does not produce jobs that pay enough to keep up with the basic cost of living." That is the story and policy framework we tested for [Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund](#). It is no more complicated than that.

Incomes of CEOs and the top 1 percent are soaring, but everyone else is working harder to just get by. The economy does not produce jobs that pay enough to keep up with the basic cost of living. Our economy will not grow until ordinary people can afford education and train for jobs of the future, unless pay is pushed up, we stand up for American jobs and ensure people can retire comfortably. If the middle class succeeds, America succeeds.

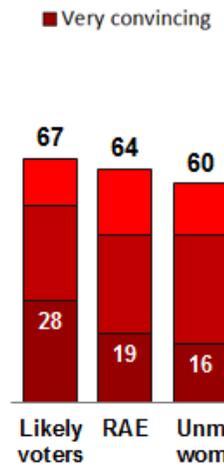
Middle class economic message stronger than Republican tax cut economic message

Now I am going to read you some things Democrats/Republicans are saying about their plans for the economy. After I read the statement, please tell me how convincing a reason it is to support the Democratic/Republican candidate in November.

(MIDDLE CLASS) Incomes of CEOs and the top 1 percent are soaring, but everyone else is working harder to just get by. The economy does not produce jobs that pay enough to keep up with the basic cost of living. Our economy will not grow until ordinary people can afford education and train for jobs of the future, unless pay is pushed up, we stand up for American jobs and ensure people can retire comfortably. If the middle class succeeds, America succeeds.



(TAXES) We need a tax code that encourages investment, not one that punishes success. We must end runaway regulations and big government bureaucracy that discourage investment rather than encouraging entrepreneurs, and we must sell more American products around the world. Obama and the Democrats have failed on all of these fronts. They say big government will help those who are trying to make it, but actually hurts the people who are trying to make it.



But with Washington so dysfunctional, voters are skeptical any change will happen. Republican voters are motivated by 'Obamacare', and Democratic base enthusiasm is sapped by the tough economy. Still, they are desperate to know what Democrats intend to do and progressives must give them something worth voting for. The base includes a very high proportion of unmarried women, and they respond very strongly, as do other voters, to a broad economic agenda, but one dominated by policies explicitly to help working women: "When women succeed, America succeeds. When the middle class succeeds, America succeeds."

These are the key elements of the working women's agenda – they drive Democratic support and increase turnout, not just among working women, but among a broad range of voters.

1. **Help women with better pay by making sure women get equal pay for equal work and making sure insurance companies no longer charge women more than men.** Unmarried women believe they struggle to earn enough, and ending paycheck discrimination will ensure equal pay for equal work, improving women's earnings at all income levels. And preventing insurance companies from discriminating against women means they will not pay more for health care. This is a very tangible economic agenda that gets the attention of unmarried women more than any other.
2. **Finally recognizing working mothers need help and offering a group of policies that can make a difference.** This includes ending discrimination

against pregnant workers and new mothers, providing paid leave so people can care for children and families, and expanding access to affordable childcare.

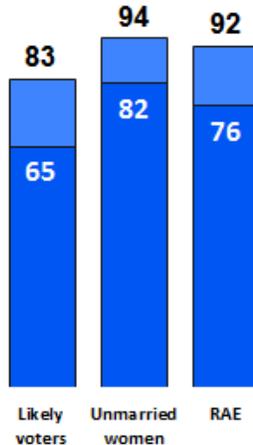
3. **Help working women get to better wages and better jobs by raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 and expanding access to scholarships and get school costs down.** This recognizes unmarried women's very real struggle with pay and offers affordable training and education to get jobs that pay better in the future.
4. **Protect Medicare to ensure there is no reduction in benefits and protect Social Security so seniors can retire at a reasonable age.** These policies recognize that retirement security is critical for unmarried women—a portion of whom are older women and widows.

Pay equity combined with equal health insurance generates most intensity with unmarried women...

Now I am going to read you some things being proposed by Democrats as part of their plan to deal with the economy. After each item, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose that policy.

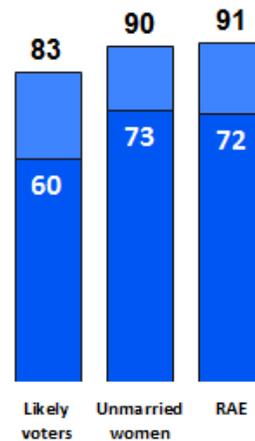
Women succeed with pay equity and equal health insurance

Help women succeed by passing legislation to make sure women get equal pay for equal work and make sure insurance companies no longer charge women more than men.



Help working mothers by protecting jobs, paid leave and childcare

Finally recognize that working mothers need help by protecting pregnant workers and new mothers from being fired or demoted, making sure they have paid sick days to care for their children and access to affordable childcare.

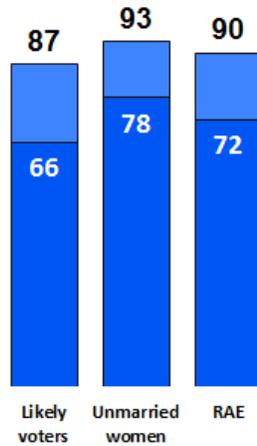


Recognized need to protect retirement, also minimum wage with education affordability

Now I am going to read you some things being proposed by **Democrats** as part of their plan to deal with the economy. After each item, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose that policy.

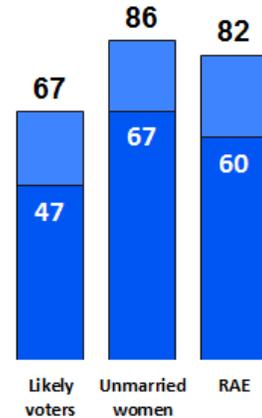
Protect Medicare and Social Security

Protect Medicare so there is no reduction in benefits and protect Social Security so there are no cuts in benefits from budget cuts for current seniors and future retirees so every American can retire at a reasonable age with relative security.



Help with higher pay by increased minimum wage, scholarships and affordable college

Raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 and expand access to scholarships and get school costs down so working women can continue their education and train for better jobs with higher wages.



Note: Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund is a nonpartisan 501(c)(4) social welfare organization that promotes civic engagement and policies to help unmarried women and other under-represented segments of the American population.