

Chapter 5 The Democratic Message

A message provides a context for how Democratic actions on key issues fit into the beliefs and fundamental values of our communities, our state, and nation. Messages are based on a common theme or series of themes, focusing on specific issues.

Messages come in two forms, oral and written. While their development is similar, their content and delivery differ. Oral messages are short and typically limited to no more than three issues at a time, while the written message may go into greater detail and cover up to three issues. In some cases, more than three issues may be covered in written messages.

Message Components

Themes: A theme is a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in a campaign. Themes are typically set by the campaign. A few examples are, but not limited to: Public Service, Better Government, Open Government, Take Back the 9th, Putting People First, The New Deal, The New Frontier, Leave No Child Behind, Opportunity for All, A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats, Keep Hope Alive, and Turn District 22 Blue.

Issues: An issue is a matter of public concern and the list of Democratic issues is extensive. A few examples are, but not limited to: Protecting Social Security, Protecting the Right to Privacy in our Homes, Public Education, Health Care Accessibility, Choice, Equal Rights, Environment, Free Speech, Jobs, Living Wages, Investing in Public Education, and Giving Patients the Right to Choose a Doctor.

Values: Democrats support principles, ideals, standards, and qualities considered worthwhile, and policies that honor parents, nurture children, and provide opportunity for every responsible individual. A few examples are Freedom, Opportunity, Prosperity, Community, Service, Cooperation, Trust, Honesty, Empathy, Responsibility and the Strength to Carry out that Responsibility, Protection, Fairness, Fulfillment in Life, and Open Communication.

Effective Oral Messages

An effective message is a short communication that conveys an idea or series of ideas. The message must be framed in such a manner as to invoke a mental picture to convey the fundamental beliefs of our Party.

An effective message:

- Will be meaningful with local facts or individual anecdotes
- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will be about Democratic values, not programs
- Will be theme consistent
- Will be short
- Will be repeated over and over (no fewer than three times)

Effective Written Messages

A written message conveys an idea or series of ideas and allows for greater detail and depth. Like an oral message, the written message must be framed in such a manner as to invoke a mental picture to convey the fundamental beliefs of our Party.

An effective message:

- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will be theme consistent
- Will focus on Democratic values more so than programs
- Will use color (when possible)
- Will use pictures relevant to the material (when possible)
- Will contain no more than three issues

Effective “Pocket” Messages

A “pocket” message or “push card” is a small piece of material that is handed out. It conveys an idea or series of ideas in short statements.

An effective “pocket” message:

- Will be readable (ample blank space around easily read print)
- Will use color (when possible)
- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will use pictures or logos only as an accent
- Will usually contain no more than three issues

An example of an effective “pocket” message was a wallet-sized hand-out card developed by the Texas Democratic Party titled, *What it Means to be a Democrat*.