

NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE PROJECT

JULY 2, 2018

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

A consortium of allied progressive groups commissioned comprehensive research including focus groups, social media analysis, and a national survey of independent and Democratic voters. Led by MoveOn.org, and in partnership with the Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Center for Popular Democracy Action, SEIU, and the Working Families Party, this project set out to develop an overarching narrative that succinctly captures the contours of the current political environment to determine what the 2018 election is “about.”¹

We found there is not one progressive message that captures the current mood. In focus groups as well as in the survey, more than one narrative stands out as voters are focused on both their own daily struggles and desire to end the chaos and division that has been sown and danger posed by the current Administration. In a research project focused on mobilizing progressive voters in the 2018 elections, three narratives speak to voters’ concerns and aspirations regarding the direction of our country. These messages—centered on our communities under attack, protecting our freedoms, and fixing the economic system that favors the wealthy and big corporations—are powerful across demographic groups and produce a positive shift in enthusiasm for participating in the coming election.

The thread that really ties these narratives together is change; namely, electing those leaders who will protect our communities and freedoms that are under attack and work to unrig our economic system. Our biggest hurdle we must overcome is voters’ weariness about the current state of affairs, with many making the conscious decision to tune out the drama. Offering proof points around new leaders who can create change is central engaging these voters and turning out lower propensity audiences.

¹ GQRR conducted a national survey among 2400 registered voters with excluding strong Republicans (using the TargetSmart partisanship scores). The survey was conducted from April 17–29, 2018, with 900 live telephone interviews and 1500 online interviews. The sample consisted of a base of 2000 interviews with oversamples of 200 each among African American and Latinx voters. Fifty nine percent of live interviews were conducted on cell phones. While margin of error cannot be calculated among web respondents, a total probability sample of 2400 has a MOE of +/- 2.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval. Margin of error is higher among subgroups. Focus groups were conducted among Latinx voters in Las Vegas, NV; African American voters in Southfield, MI; white independent men and Latinx voters in Orlando, FL; and white independent women and mixed race millennials online.

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(COMMUNITIES UNDER ATTACK) As President, Donald Trump has relentlessly attacked Americans of all stripes—including women, people of color, Muslims, immigrants, and LGBTQ people. Americans are under attack, yet the Republicans in Congress do nothing. We need to get out and vote this year to put new leaders in Congress who will stand up to Trump’s attacks and protect our communities.

(FREEDOM-PROTECT) America values freedom. That should mean 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 get out and vote to protect these freedoms for all Americans.

(RIGGED) We need a country that works for the middle class and working families, not just the wealthy and big corporations. Though unemployment may be low, the cost of living is high, and too many people are living paycheck to paycheck. Trump and Republicans in Congress are making it more difficult for working people to negotiate better wages and benefits. We need to get out and vote to elect leaders who will boldly rewrite the rules of the economy so it works for working families and the middle class again.

These three messages increase motivation over the course of the survey with a broad group of low propensity progressive voters (in particular, self-ascribed Democrats, liberals, Latinx, and African American voters). Each of these audiences, as a whole and in terms of lower propensity, rate these narratives higher than the overall average. Those who shift toward more motivated from start to finish are disproportionately younger, female, African American, Latinx, and less likely to have a college degree.

Table 1: Narrative ratings among key audiences

Narrative (% rate 10 out of 10)	Rigged	Freedom – Protect	Communities Under Attack
Total	43	47	44
Democrats	56	57	61
Low-propensity Democrats	54	56	54
Liberals	57	62	62
Low-propensity liberals	53	61	55
African American	64	58	62
Low-propensity African American	62	56	57
Latinx	51	52	48
Low-propensity Latinx	51	50	50
Low-prop shift twd more motivated	50	53	45