

THE DEMOCRATIC 2022

# WinBook

A messaging guide for  
triumph over a radicalized Right

Margaret McTigue • David Miller • Ken Neumann • Marshall Ross

Margaret, David, Ken, and Marshall are Midwestern Business People Fighting  
With You to Save American Democracy

This document and its contents are intended for use only by Democratic candidates  
and their supporters.  
No distribution beyond that audience is authorized by the *WinBook* authors.

## To Democrats running in 2022 Federal, State, and Local elections:

### **This isn't a normal election cycle.**

"... fueled by manufactured outrage instead of coherent ideas and trolling instead of governance." That's what Journalist Dan Rather recently said about the Republican Party in his writings in *Steady*.

It's hard to argue the point. Which means our own messaging can't take a typical approach. With our fundamental rights in genuine peril, with American democracy in the crosshairs of demagogues and authoritarians, Democrats must *unify* their messaging like never before and *emotionalize* it like never before.

Before we can win with policy, we need to neutralize the fake outrage.

That's what the WinBook is about: A messaging strategy designed to raise eyebrows, win hearts, and mobilize Democratic voters for turn out.

In it you'll find quick, hard-hitting talking points around critical issues designed to ...

- Rebrand the GOP as unfit to govern and, in the eyes of White swing voters and true independents, dangerous to American Democracy and American life.
- Energize Democrats and Dem-leading voters to show up on election day and recruit their friends, neighbors, and families to register and join them.

### **And, yes, the WinBook will also help you deal with The Crazy.**

Crazy will show up in debates, on social media, in editorials and town hall meetings. *You can't simply ignore it. Or just rise above it.* Not anymore. If you do, you'll lose.

Crazy's all the GOP has now. All it appears to want. So, before you can get your ideas out, you'll need to use some judo. You'll need to turn crazy back in on itself. The WinBook will show you how.

## The messaging strategy and how to use it:

### **We're in a fight for our rights. Only the Democrats are on your side.**

That's the overarching and guiding theme behind the strategy and the suggestions that follow. It's not a slogan, or a copy point per se, though you can adapt and use it in those ways based on your individual campaign's needs. A key to this messaging is the repetition of "Only Democrats." You will note that this also is a part our formula for calling out crazy talk.

What's most important is what we want voters to take away from our messaging. How we want them to *feel*. In the end, it's not about what they think. It's about what they *feel*.

And for that, we need a framing structure. A way to craft an argument for emotional impact. A way to turn up the urgency to participate.

## Structuring the message

- 1) **The premise:** What's at stake. What voters have to lose. The America that has protected and nurtured us for our entire lives is now at risk of being destroyed.
- 2) **The Democratic commitment:** Make it clear why the Democrats, and you, represent the only path possible to save what we have and to make the improvements we want.

Here's an example of how the structure works:

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The GOP wants to criminalize abortion and turn frightened, desperate women and the healthcare providers who help them into hunted felons.

**Commitment:** Only Democrats will protect a woman's right to choose when to start a family. And only Democrats believe abortion should be legal, no matter which state a woman calls home.

*Did you feel the sense of stake there? The legal and emotional consequence of what the Republican Party is trying to do? And notice how definitive the Democratic message is. The phrase, "Only Democrats will ..." is an important element. It not only creates separation, but it signals to swing and independent voters just how clear the choice is. No fence sitting this time.*

**More examples of the structure at work. Use them as you want, in your stump speech or in friendly or neutral speaking moments.**

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The GOP believes children and teachers being gunned down at school is a perfectly acceptable price to ensure that anyone – including criminals, terrorists, and the mentally ill – can purchase and carry a gun without limits.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats will pass commonsense gun laws that will help all of us live safer lives. Including responsible gun owners.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The Republican Party claims to cherish free speech while banning books across the nation. That's not freedom. Nor the American way.

**Commitment:** We're all for age-appropriate education. But only the Democrats believe speech must be truly free, even the speech of its political rivals.

*Important note:*

*The GOP has allowed the extreme fringe of their party to promote as acceptable ideas that most of us would consider to be wholly un-American. When you can, take back the flag. In this example, book bans are framed as un-American. Don't shy from calling out radicalism. And counter it with a reasonable solution – in this instance, age-appropriate material in classrooms.*

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The Republican Party labels same-sex love a "lifestyle choice" to rationalize discrimination, hate and their quest to re-criminalize same-sex marriage, and homosexuality.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats will protect the hard-earned rights of our LGBTQ communities.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The GOP has sold its soul to Christian Nationalists who want to end the separation of church and state that the Constitution demands.

**Commitment:** America was founded by immigrants escaping the tyranny of state sponsored religion. The Republican Party doesn't understand this First Amendment protection, which provides that all Americans are free to follow their own religious beliefs, but they do not have the freedom to *impose their beliefs on others*. Only the Democrats will fight for the Founders' vision of religious freedom.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The GOP says, sure, you can vote, but we get to tell you when, where, and how to vote. And then we pick the winner. That's not democracy. Or freedom.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats will stand up to voter suppression and laws that give Republicans the power to toss legally cast ballots they don't like. Only the Democrats still believe in Majority Rule.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** Through their attack on reproductive rights, their rejection of childcare subsidies and paid maternity leave, the Republican Party has made its stance clear: women's rights are second to men's.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats believe women and men are equals and will continue to fight for and expand the freedoms women have fought so hard to gain.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The GOP has no plan to help you access quality, affordable healthcare. In fact, they want to take it away.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats believe access to quality healthcare is an American right, not just a privilege for the wealthy.

\*\*\*

**Premise:** Prominent members of the GOP have sided with White supremacists, religious nationalists and antisemites time and time again while the rest of the Republican Party stood silent.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats will speak out against hate and suppression in every form, everywhere.

*Don't be afraid to go here. Because it's true. And America must know it.*

\*\*\*

**Premise:** The Republican Party is so sold out to the NRA that it has no independence when it comes to commonsense gun legislation. Republicans *say* next to nothing. And the GOP guarantees killings will continue by *doing nothing*.

**Commitment:** Only the Democrats are speaking for what the overwhelming majority of the American people want. Two commonsense gun bills have passed the House while Republican senators block them, and our children continue to lose their lives.

## How to debate a Republican voter:

Although a few prominent Republicans are demonstrably evil people, the great majority of people who call themselves Republicans are not. They are the victims of a profit-for-hate right wing media complex led by Fox News and the Republican National Committee that together push false narratives and pervert American values to boost ratings and keep power.

If one of these folks shows up at a town hall meeting or candidate's debate and asks a question that feels like a hateful attack or just plain crazy, go hard on the issues, but easy on the person.

In reply to a bogus argument made by a Republican reply, "I understand what you're saying, but that's a lie the Republican Party's told you and the rest of us. Here's the truth..."

Or say, "I hear you, but that's crazy talk we get from the GOP fringe. In reality..."

Then adapt one of the following rebuttals in the next section, "How to rebut GOP crazy talk."

Remember: When you're addressing a voter, go hard on the issues, *easy* on the person. You'll notice that the rebuttals in this WinBook are directed at the GOP, the Republican Party, or "my extremist opponent." Focus your attacks on those three targets.

## How to rebut GOP crazy talk:

The third part of good messaging is being able to answer the crazy talk and reframe the issues to support true American ideals and ... sanity. When your opponent, or an audience member, makes a wild wedge-issue claim or bizarrely mischaracterizes the Democratic position, it's time to employ the four Rs:

- 1) **Reject the statement.** And when it's nonsense, say so. Don't be shy about calling an idiotic statement idiocy. Or calling a lie a lie.
- 2) **Rebut the attack with a quick truth.** What do Democrats *really* believe and do? Try to use the phrase, "Only the Democrats" to create a sense of moral ownership of the issue.
- 3) **Rebrand the Republican Party as unfit to govern.** Push back with worst-case examples of where the GOP could take us. Remember, we need Dems and Dem-leaning people to know what's at stake and turn out. So... Turn up the heat.
- 4) **Reiterate why "Only the Dems" have this issue right.** Finish your argument with quick reminders of what's different about the Democratic point of view. In many cases, there is more than one fact supporting your response, proving the claim meritless, and making your candidacy the "only way to vote." Pick your favorites.

NOTE: feel free to create your own phrasings of the ideas that follow; say things that feel most genuine and natural to you. This is your WinBook. Mark it up and make it your own. And watch the news for changes that might influence the following talking points. For example, should some form of watered-down gun reform legislation pass, you can say:

"While the Republican Party works with the NRA to limit the scope of gun legislation, only Democrats will vote for EVERY commonsense idea to boost gun safety, save American lives, and respect the 2nd Amendment."

**CANDIDATES! IF YOU'RE HEADED INTO A DEBATE WITH AN EXTREMIST REPUBLICAN—AND NEARLY ALL REPUBLICANS ARE NOW EITHER EXTREMISTS OR ENABLERS:**

1. USE THE MATERIALS IN THE LAST SECTION TO PREPARE YOUR REMARKS
2. PRINT OFF, UNSTAPLED, THE 1-PAGERS THAT FOLLOW SO THAT YOU CAN IMMEDIATELY FLIP TO THEM TO REBUT THE CRAZY TALK



## **Guns and the Second Amendment**

### The claim

**“My opponent wants to take away your guns!”** or

**“Democrats want to wipe out the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment”**

### Reject it

With all due respect, that’s an absolutely ridiculous statement. It’s totally false.

### Rebut it

Democrats and Independents own guns too. We hunt. And we are prepared to protect our families. But only Democrats have the courage to protect our society as well and *vote* for reasonable legislation that will make it harder for criminals, terrorists and the mentally ill to get guns.

In fact, an overwhelming majority of Americans, including gun owners, agree with common sense ideas like universal background checks and strong red-flag laws.

### Rebrand the GOP

The GOP protects the gun rights of terrorists and the criminally insane. My extremist opponent views those rights as more important than the rights of our children to safely go to school. More important than the rights of hard-working families to enjoy a night at the movies or to worship without getting gunned down.

By resisting every commonsense reform – reforms most gun owners agree with – the Republican Party owns this bloody era of repeated mass shootings.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones ...

Only the Democratic Party supports the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment ... and sanity. My opponent does not.

Who in this audience wants to see her kid shot in class? Or a family member or friend shot with an assault rifle in a house of worship?

Only the Democratic Party thinks the rights of innocent Americans are more important than those of criminals, terrorists, and wackos.

## Critical Race Theory

### The claim

**My opponent wants to teach Critical Race Theory in the schools. Democrats want our kids to feel guilty about being White and hate America.**

### Reject it

CRT is really just Crazy Republican Talk. Critical Race Theory has never—ever— been taught in our public schools, and nobody, including me, supports doing so. NOBODY.

### Rebut it

I doubt if my opponent even KNOWS what CRT is or where it came from. And yet, he's spewing this nonsense to send us down an imaginary rabbit hole, so he doesn't have to answer to real issues.

CRT is a 40-year-old law school analysis that's NEVER been taught in our schools. We don't need to teach kids law school theories; who wants a bunch of little lawyers around anyway?

BUT we don't need the Republican Party (or: my extremist opponent) creating imaginary monsters to justify censoring our history, either.

Only the Democrats believe Americans are strong enough and tough enough to handle hard truths about our past. Only the Democrats try to bring us together to make a more perfect union.

### Rebrand the GOP

Republican extremists—including my opponent— want to censor books and sanitize our history. They don't trust you to think for yourself.

The Republican Party (or: My extremist opponent) wants to rile us up and divide us. In league with White supremacists and American Nazis, they want to make us afraid of each other.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones ...

No white person living in America today is responsible for slavery. No one in America should be ashamed of the color of his or her skin. Only the Democrats celebrate our diversity and see it as one the country's great strengths.

While Democrats fully support age-appropriate school materials, only the Democrats oppose censorship of kids' schoolbooks to sanitize US history.

## Abortion

### The claim

**The Democrats want to kill babies. The Democrats want to murder unborn children.**

### Reject it

What an idiotic thing to say! Only lunatics — with assault rifles OK'd by the GOP in thrall to the gun lobby — want to kill babies and children.

### Rebut it

A woman's management of her own health has been a Constitutional right for 50 years. Every woman in this room has had this right for all or most of her life. Only Democrats support this fundamental right.

The Republican Party (or: My extremist opponent) wants to criminalize women who make the hard choice to have an abortion. Only the Democrats think that's insane.

### Rebrand the GOP

The Republican Party (or: My extremist opponent) wants to force your sisters, daughters and granddaughters who have been forcibly raped to carry their pregnancies to term. They want to criminalize innocent victims and punish any doctor or person who tries to help. Only the Democrats think that's just plain wrong.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones ...

Only the Democrats support a woman's right to manage her own health and decide when to be pregnant, a right every living woman in America has had for half a century.

An overwhelming majority of Americans think *a woman's right to manage her own reproductive health is a human right*. Only the Democrats stand with the majority of Americans on abortion.

Only Democrats believe the best way to reduce unwanted pregnancies is to stand with women. Support sex education and good contraceptive practices. And when woman wants a family, let's *actually* be pro-life with access to prenatal healthcare; family leave; and family healthcare.

We know that once a kid is born, he or she can be killed by poverty, poor nutrition, and lack of health care. Only the Democrats voted to end most childhood poverty. Republicans killed the bill.

## **Border Security**

### The claim

**Democrats are helping thieves and murderers enter our southern borders illegally.**

### Reject it

There is no truth to this whatsoever. This is GOP fear mongering. The vast majority of people at our southern border are law abiding, many are escaping drug gangs and political persecution. They just want a better life for their families. Like so many of our own ancestors.

### Rebut it

The Republican Party has effectively done nothing to relieve immigration pressures. In the first two years of the Trump administration the GOP controlled the House, Senate, and White House, and despite all the bluster about border control they did nothing. They throw dirt because they have no plans or answers.

Instead, the Republican Party has cruelly separated families, put kids in cages, and sent asylum seekers back to the violence in Mexico and South America.

Only the Democrats work to protect our borders and fight the criminals who drive migrants from their homes in the first place.

Only the Democrats are both humane and tough on border security.

### Rebrand the GOP

Republican extremists—including my opponent— have no plan and no track record to run on. So they scream about border security. Like dictators in eastern Europe, they thrive on fear.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones ...

So, when you hear my extremist Republican opponent complaining about the border, realize it's simply deflection. The GOP has no concrete proposals for tax reform, improved broadband access, better roads, and bridges. Only the Democratic party has actual programs for improved health, safety, education, infrastructure, and a more fair tax system.

At every turn, we have answered the GOP attacks with thoughtful rational plans. Only the Democrats think you have a brain and are willing to use it.

## Support for LGBTQ Rights

### The claim

**Democrats want to let perverts get into our kids' bathrooms. Democrats want to groom kids to be gay or the victims of pedophiles.**

### Reject it

What you just heard, ladies and gentlemen, is the voice of fear and hate. Loud and clear: hate.

My extremist opponent is trying to marginalize me with name calling because she/he won't just come out and openly harass the LGBTQ community directly.

### Rebut it

The truth is ... most pedophiles are heterosexual.

The Republican Party (or: My extremist opponent) is once again turning to hateful language and fear. If they are really concerned about your kids' safety at school, ask them why they think it's OK for an 18-year-old to buy an AR15 and kill 19 innocent grade schoolers?

They don't want to admit that they're demonizing gay and trans kids, so they call Democrats names.

### Rebrand the GOP

The GOP (or: My extremist opponent) wants you to adopt their extreme religious views.

I've read the Bible and Jesus preached that God loves everyone. Treating others kindly is "like unto" loving God. So, not only don't they understand the Constitution, they don't understand the Bible.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones ...

Only Democrats side with the true Judeo-Christian point of view: all children deserve love and support and good care. No child should be harassed and bullied.

Every American has the right to a life of opportunity, free of harassment. Only the Democrats stand up for the dignity of our LGBTQ fellow citizens.

Only the Democratic Party is determined that we will not let hate win.

## Taxes, Inflation, Business Climate

### The claim

**The Democrats create huge taxes and deficits with their big spending. And they're anti-business.**

### Reject it

Totally wrong. Under Joe Biden, the US deficit is down by hundreds of billions of dollars.

Inflation's been caused by COVID's disruption to our supply chains and by Putin's war against Ukraine, which drove up oil and food prices. Not just here, but around the globe. My opponent knows this and wants to mislead you.

### Rebut it

My opponent probably wants to hide the fact that America's debt under Donald Trump was more than under any other president in US history except Lincoln and George W. Bush. Lincoln had to pay for the civil war. And Bush had to pay for two Middle Eastern wars.

My opponent probably wants to hide the fact that America's deficit under Trump went up \$1.9 trillion dollars thanks to tax cuts, almost all of which went to the very rich.

My opponent probably wants to hide the fact that the current Republican tax plan would raise taxes on more than half of all Americans, while leaving huge tax breaks for the rich in place.

### Rebrand the GOP

The Republican Party is the real party of big spenders. Every recent Republican president has ballooned the deficit to record levels.

The GOP is the real anti-business party. They attack companies whose views don't agree with extremist right-wing ideology. Just ask Walt Disney Company. Or Major League Baseball.

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones

Only the Democrats just engineered the biggest increase in private sector jobs in our country's history.

Only the Democratic party wants the economy to work for everyone, not just the rich.

## **Crime and Police Funding**

### The claim

**Democrats Don't Support the Police; Democrats Are Soft on Crime and Criminals.**

### Reject it

Totally false. Democrats are working to get the police more support and make their jobs easier by getting guns out of the hands of mass murderers.

### Rebut it

Democrats just elected a tough-on-crime mayor of New York City.

Democrats tried to pass laws to keep guns out the hands of crazy people. Republicans voted unanimously to keep assault rifles in the hands of the criminally insane. *Cops hate the fact that criminals have assault rifles.*

Only the Democrats support common sense background checks supported by 90% of Americans.

It's a lie to say African Americans don't want more police protection. They do, just as many of the rest of us do. And only the Democrats are trying to get more help for the police.

### Rebrand the GOP

The Republican Party (or: My extremist opponent) talks tough on crime while enabling school shooters. Who's soft on crime?

The GOP wants to go easy on terrorists who assaulted our Capitol and killed Capitol Police officers. They call the domestic terrorists who were arrested "political prisoners." Who's soft on crime?

Donald Trump tried to extort the president of Ukraine, and the Republican Party gave him a free pass. Who's soft on crime?

### Reiterate why you and the Dems are the only ones

Only the Democratic Party fully supports giving police the tools they need to help us be safe and to help *them* stay safe.

Only the Democrats oppose the mass killing of our kids and churchgoers by proposing commonsense gun safety.