

The campaigns are underway with both sides outlining their vision for the next four years, Trump claiming that America is on the way down, Harris with a much more positive outlook on our prospects, both candidates as yet providing details on how they plan to accomplish their goals. This is especially critical for Ms. Harris's base as well as undecideds and other potential additions to the base who are looking for details, whereas Donald Trump's base is more apt to go along with his mere statements that he will do something.

We must overcome the negative bias that many have about the present economy. Their current consumption habits do not support this bias. As Elizabeth Bernstein said in her August 13 Wall Street Article "The World Isn't Going to Hell, But Many People Feel That Way", "We often remember the past more fondly than is perhaps warranted...because the emotional power of a positive experience stays with us longer than the emotional power of a negative one."

There is action being taken to influence voter preparedness for this election---there is a growing movement by the media to consistently fact check Trump's speeches and report to the public---and the American Bar Association has announced a bi-partisan Task Force to address the demagoguery that we see damaging our democracy---more new voter registrations, more expressions of interest from those previously on the sidelines---all good signs.

Media literacy is paramount, but being media literate, having the ability to separate fact from fiction, implies that information has been read, viewed, or heard on which to base this determination. But more and more as I read journalists' reports of discussions with the man on the

street or other focus groups, I realize that, in many cases, preferences for one candidate or another are not based on any information that they have read or viewed whatsoever, factual or false.

As I've said before, when journalists ask focus groups to name one accomplishment [President Biden] has done, a large number of people can't name a single thing he's done in his first two years as President--- apparently no knowledge whatsoever, favorable or unfavorable, of The American Rescue Act, The Infrastructure and Jobs Act, The Chips and Science Act, The Inflation Reduction Act or anything else.

So, there's more to it than just being media literate. We all must have access to unbiased or relatively bi-partisan media. Unfortunately, the more biased the media the more available it is to us, e. g. cable news, conservative Fox News or liberal MSNBC. and highly partisan email blasts typically from some source like conservative Newsmax, Trump's X or Truth Social posts, or liberal Heather Cox Richardson. This is particularly problematic in more rural areas where access to highly respected newspapers is not readily available

And, even when and where unbiased news is relatively accessible, there is apparently a good portion of the voting public whose work schedules keep them too busy to access it, or they are too apathetic or negative about the state of national affairs to bother getting involved.

How do we reach them? The conservatives, evangelicals, MAGA Republicans, and Donald Trump himself do the better job of constantly repeating their message, loud and compelling to their largest audience, their base, to the point that it's almost impossible for the liberal media to break that barrier.

But we now have a team, Harris and Walz, that the public is warming up to, if only as a change from the aging President. And the team is

proving themselves capable of staying on message---looking ahead instead of looking back---and repetitively offering it loud and clear.

Ms. Harris has finally drafted an economic plan that she confirmed at the Convention, and she must hold frequent future press conferences and campaign talks regarding the details. Regardless of the questions she's asked by the press, she must take every opportunity to get some form of her basic message heard.

As the initial allure of the looking forward theme tapers off, she surely should focus or continue to focus on the four issues of most concern to the voters---the economy, abortion, crime, and immigration---truthfully and with details.

Were I her campaign manager, this is what I would advise.

Address Trump's record of failing to accomplish what he claimed he would when in office---two big specifics, cancelling the affordable care act and building up the infrastructure---while saying what he would do, he failed to consider how he would go about them, and he ended up doing nothing about either.

And this is where the Harris/Walz team has a real opportunity—telling what they can do and how, as well as what they can't do and why. This latter is particularly important. Americans can be very forgiving on those all too rare occasions when their elected official give reasons for why they can't accomplish what their constituents are looking for or why they failed to accomplish them, instead of trying to cover up which is usually unsuccessful.

We are accustomed to elected officials' habits of lying---we say "oh well all politicians lie." That is simply not so. Yes, Both Trump and Biden lie, albeit not to the same extent, but many, while they may at times be

mistaken, do not lie. Look around. Start with some of your local officials and state officials and give them the benefit of the doubt.

The economy---#1 voter concern.

As I've said before the truthful message that I would have the Harris/Walz team tell, avoiding or discontinuing any lies or misinformation that unfortunately have already been stated, would be:

"I have been trying to tell you about some of the many things we're doing to build factories that will bring a wide variety of more and better paying jobs to counties across the nation. I will diligently focus on implementing these projects. Admittedly, however, it will take months and in some cases a couple of years or more before they're up and running and providing unparalleled new opportunities for you for high paying middle class jobs."

"In the meantime, I fully realize that this doesn't help you pay your current bills that have been affected by worldwide inflation over the past few years. We have now solved the inflation problem and are back or close to normal, so your costs for groceries will not continue with excessive increases. But they will stay higher than pre-pandemic levels and are likely to remain so."

"Unfortunately, much of this global problem is, and has been historically, out of the control of the administration. In a representative democracy like ours with a market economy, neither I nor any President can just snap our fingers and make an Executive Order that will force lower prices. And let's not forget that the inflation leading to our current higher grocery and gas bills was/is an equal problem in all the other countries in the developed world not presided over by President Biden---the primary cause according to most economists being supply chain problems related to the pandemic. If the spending

related to the American Rescue Plan and other job creating legislation under the Biden administration contributed to the inflation, remember that much of this spending went directly into your pockets to help with your childcare and otherwise keep you out of poverty.”

“But let me tell you what I can and will do to address the high grocery costs. To help you pay these, we are working on raising the minimum wage where applicable, e.g. workers in the large fast food companies, but perhaps not in small business who might have to close their doors if subjected to higher minimum wages. And, I will carry on with President Biden’s support for unions. We’re doing the best we can and I guarantee that I personally will keep you posted on our progress on a monthly basis.”

“I’ll work to get you some guaranteed paid family leave if you don’t already have it, but we’ll never be able to legislate 12 weeks—the opposition will test us for the rational for making employers pay you for one quarter of the year that you’re not working.”

“And what is Mr. Trump planning to do to help you out---removing the tax on tips. Sounded good to me at first and I agreed, but it’s not good. I can’t see any rational reason for exempting any pay, beyond the minimums already in place, from taxation just because it’s in cash instead of check form. Is there any reason that the dishwashers’ pay should be taxed, but not the waiters’? Sounds unfair to me.”

“And Trump’s high tariffs on imports from China, as history tells, us will only increase the prices that you pay for their goods and contribute to further inflation.”

“And, while you don’t have to introduce this next subject, student loan forgiveness, if questioned, stop advocating unless you can rationally explain why getting in over your head for a student loan is any more

permissible than getting in over your head for buying a house or other expenditures---the exception being forgiveness for a loan covering education at a for profit college like Trump's that the government accredited, but should not have. Then again, any reasonable plan to work off any college loan through public service could be considered."

"Say that our negotiated insulin and prescription drug price decreases are starting to kick in, and we're doing everything possible, short of price controls that would only have a negative effect."

"Don't talk about suppliers of household goods who are currently making excessive profits and should cut their prices---no evidence, too easy for Trump to refute and ridicule."

"We are also working to prohibit hidden charges that show up on your healthcare bills."

"And, because of your critical need for more housing, I will request funding for 3 million new housing units."

"And more significant to enable you to balance your household budgets will be my tax reform efforts. I am going to increase the taxes on the highest earners, but avoid increases for those households making less than \$400,000. Whereas Mr. Trump's plan for lower taxes will follow what he did when in power, the bulk of the reduction going to the big earners, piling on more national debt, with little or no help for you."

"Regarding corporate tax increases, yes I favor, but before making a final decision on any increase, we will make a thorough study to ensure that any increases don't simply result in higher prices to you for their products and services, lower wages for some of you, and fewer job openings."

“Regarding the three other concerns expressed by many, as a minimum you must continually repeat your popular position on abortion as opposed to Trump’s flip flopping on this issue.”

“Continually refute Trump’s misinformed claim about the increase in urban violence and violent crime in general---especially contradict his claim that immigrants are responsible for higher crime rates.”

“Give a basic outline of our obligation to asylum seekers and refugees, specifically what we have just been doing, successfully at that, to comply with legal obligations, national and international, and still reduce immigration, and what we could be further doing had Trump not stymied the bi-partisan immigration reform bill.”

“Warn your audiences of what might well happen when, if elected, Trump takes advantage of the new immunity against criminal prosecution that SCOTUS has given him---Richard Nixon surely would have gotten away with Watergate had this immunity been available to him”

“Adjust your claims about Trump’s relation to Project 2025 so you phrase it in a way that he can’t continue to claim that he knows nothing about it.”

“Stop talking about Trump taking away your social security--- currently there’s no good evidence to support this. Play to the enlightened audiences as well as those who are not well informed. In short don’t play Trump’s game of lies and exaggerations. Make sure that what you say can be successfully fact checked and tell a doubting audience to do so.”

“Close all of your conferences and other public appearances with a strongly worded statement regarding Trump’s January 6 sedition and his lack of morality, integrity and character---unfit for the office.”

And now, back to my readers and myself with a closing thought---why do we get so concerned and shy away from discussing politics, especially as related to the upcoming elections, with friends and neighbors, afraid we will ruin a friendship if we don't agree. If we can't discuss this for fear of losing friendships, then perhaps we don't know how to listen. If we can overcome our concerns and do enter into discussions, we will find in many cases that there are more issues on which we agree than on which we disagree.

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Step Forward America

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