Getting the Message Right: How to Stop Trump’s Proposed Cuts to Affordable Housing

May 19, 2017
Speakers

- Moderator: Elayne Weiss, National Low Income Housing Coalition
- Rebecca Vallas, Center for American Progress
- Jeremy Slevin, Center for American Progress
- Tiffany Manuel, Ph.D., Enterprise Community Partners
- Amy Clark, National Housing Conference
Background and agenda

• Trump budget expected May 23; Congressional budgets in June (could slip)
• Expected to include major cuts to a range of critical programs for struggling families—including affordable housing—to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations

• Agenda for today’s presentation
  – CAP’s message research
  – How to talk about the budget
  – #HandsOff campaign
Focus groups in Southfield, MI (white non-college women and African Americans) and Denver, CO (white non-college men and Hispanics) in January

Online ‘qual board’ discussion among more than two dozen college-educated voters across the country (half Trump and half Clinton voters) Survey conducted April 8th – 13th, 2017

- Interviewed 1200 registered voters on landlines and cell phones
  - 144 African American Registered Voters
  - 132 Hispanic/Latino Registered Voters
  - 427 White Non-College Graduate Registered Voters
  - 399 White College Graduate Registered Voters

- Overall margin of error: ±2.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval
Which of the following terms do you feel best describes you and your immediate household?

- Wealthy
- Upper-middle class
- Middle class
- Working class
- Poor

**Figure 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Wealthy</th>
<th>Upper-middle class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White non-college</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinking about your own family - both your immediate family living with you and your other close relatives like aunts, uncles, cousins and so on - as far as you know, is anyone in your family currently receiving government assistance for housing, health care, food, disability, or unemployment?
How would you rate the overall performance of the following - excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

- Donald Trump as President
  - Excellent: 41
  - Total excellent/good: 55
  - Poor: 16
  - Total just fair/poor: -14

- Republicans in Congress
  - Excellent: 31
  - Total excellent/good: 65
  - Poor: 4
  - Total just fair/poor: -34

- Democrats in Congress
  - Excellent: 34
  - Total excellent/good: 62
  - Poor: 5
  - Total just fair/poor: -28
Based on what you've heard so far, do you think President Trump's tax and spending proposals will help you and your family, hurt you and your family, or don't you think they will have an impact on you and your family?
Who do you think will benefit more from President Trump's tax and spending proposals – the middle class, or the wealthy and corporations?

- Working families, or the wealthy and corporations?
  - Working families: 28%
  - Wealthy/corp.: 62%
  - Both/neither: 2%

- Middle class, or the wealthy and corporations?
  - Middle class: 29%
  - Wealthy/corp.: 63%
  - Both/neither: 2%

- Low-income families and the poor, or the wealthy and corporations?
  - Low-income/the poor: 15%
  - Wealthy/corp.: 68%
  - Both/neither: 6%
Debates On Poverty, Government Assistance
Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read both statements, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

The government should ensure that all families have access to basic living standards like health care, nutrition, and housing if their wages are too low or they can't make ends meet.

Welfare programs trap people in poverty by leaving them dependent on the government and penalizing work.
Even if I may not need them now, I'm glad our society provides government services to ensure basic living standards for when times get tough.

I don't envision ever being in a position where I would need or want to use the health care, nutrition, housing, or income support offered by the government.
While there are certainly some cases of fraud and abuse, in general, government assistance programs work as intended and do help people genuinely in need.

There is widespread abuse and fraud of welfare programs by poor people and those looking to avoid work.
When politicians talk about streamlining programs like nutrition assistance and affordable housing, they are really just talking about cutting basic living standards that help people struggling to make ends meet. These efforts really just shift costs to the states and force them to either raise taxes or start reducing food assistance, health care, and housing for their most vulnerable residents.

We need to break down the federal bureaucracy of 92 separate anti-poverty programs and instead give states one sum of money, with the flexibility to work with private non-profit groups and individual caseworkers assigned to each recipient to develop custom plans, with accountability, for each person to lift themselves out of poverty permanently.
Trump Budget Proposals
Would you support or oppose an economic plan to increase spending on our military and homeland security and to cut taxes across the board, including income taxes on individuals and corporate taxes?

Support for Trump Budget Outline Below 60 Percent at Outset

Figure 19

Total African American/Black Hispanic White non-college White college

Strongly support Total support Strongly oppose Total oppose

Total 59 38 42 69 55
African American/Black 46 27 37 43 37
Hispanic 59 46 26 27 42
White non-college 69 23 16 28 28
White college 55 37 13 42 28

Strongly support
Total support
Strongly oppose
Total oppose
Majority of Those In Support Abandon Proposal After Tradeoffs

[THOSE WHO SUPPORT PLAN] And would you support this plan to increase spending on our military and homeland security and to cut taxes across the board, if it would also…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Strongly oppose</th>
<th>Total oppose</th>
<th>Strongly support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cut funding for Medicaid, which provides health coverage mainly for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income families</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut Social Security disability programs, which help people with disabilities replace lost wages when they fall on hard times</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give the vast majority of tax cuts in the plan to the wealthy and corporations, not the middle class</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut funding for Meals on Wheels and other programs that serve older Americans on fixed incomes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut funding for the Head Start early childhood education program</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut unemployment insurance, which helps people make ends meet when they are looking for work and have lost a job through no fault of their own</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut nutrition assistance, which helps families who can't make ends meet put food on the table</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you might know, President Trump recently proposed a budget plan for next year that increases spending on defense and a border wall by $54 billion and pays for these increases with significant cuts to other areas including scientific and health research, environmental protection, public broadcasting, and the State Department.

Based on what President Trump has outlined so far, would you say that you support or oppose his overall plan for the federal budget?

As you might know, President Trump recently proposed a budget plan for next year that increases spending on defense and a border wall by $54 billion and pays for these increases with significant cuts to health care, affordable housing, home heating assistance, nutrition assistance for children, and job training.

Based on what President Trump has outlined so far, would you say that you support or oppose his overall plan for the federal budget?
Now let me read you a few more statements about the budget proposed by President Trump / Republicans in Congress. For each statement, please tell me whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, a little convincing, or not at all convincing reason to OPPOSE the proposed budget.

**Reason to Oppose**

**(OPPOSE AND PROPOSE)** Instead of cutting people’s access to basic living standards like Trump’s / the Republican plan does, we should enact stronger policies to create jobs, raise wages, invest in education, and give people a chance at a better future. Rather than taking away opportunities, we need strong new investments in our families, our workers, and our infrastructure.

**(TRUMP PROMISE)** President Trump promised in his campaign that he would protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and not put working people in harm’s way. Yet Trump’s / the Republican budget plan threatens these very programs and cuts basic living standards for these people, while doing nothing to help with jobs or wages. President Trump should honor his pledge and reject a plan that punishes working families.

**(VALUES)** We have a moral obligation to assist the most vulnerable in our society, but Trump’s / congressional Republicans’ plan does the exact opposite. It cuts vital programs like disability assistance, mental health services, job training, and even Meals on Wheels for seniors to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations.

**(WORK REASSURANCE)** The costs of education, housing, health care, and food are just too high for many people, even those who are working. Nearly eighty percent of adults on Medicaid live in a household where at least one adult is employed, and most are employed full time. Trump’s / the Republican plan punishes working families while doing nothing to lower costs or help people find higher paying jobs.

**(TRADITIONAL PROGRESSIVE MESSAGE)** The social safety net lifts millions out of poverty every year, and the best way to protect the most vulnerable in our country is by increasing government assistance, not slashing it. Low-income tax credits, food stamps, unemployment insurance and other antipoverty programs dramatically reduce poverty and help protect the most vulnerable.
Cutting off people's basic living standards by taking away their health care, affordable housing, and disability support only makes it harder for them get back on their feet. Rather than punishing people who are already facing economic hardship, Congress should instead focus on policies that help create jobs and boost wages.

Requiring people who receive government assistance to find work is critical to promote self-sufficiency, prevent abuse and dependency, and ensure that benefits are going to those truly in need. Work requirements protect taxpayers and help lift up individuals trapped in a cycle of poverty.
Now, I'm going to read you some other policy solutions that have been proposed to address the challenges facing people who can't make ends meet and now turn to government assistance programs. For each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose that particular policy solution.

### Top Tier

1. **For workers who lose their jobs to foreign competition, automation, or relocation, provide a salary and tuition to receive hands-on training in new skills and technology needed to fill available jobs in their communities.**
   - Strongly support: 50
   - Total support: 87

2. **If individuals receiving government assistance to make ends meet can't find work, the government should hire them directly to work providing community service or rebuilding our roads, bridges, and schools.**
   - Strongly support: 50
   - Total support: 82

3. **Enact basic family-friendly policies including paid family and medical leave and paid sick days.**
   - Strongly support: 51
   - Total support: 80

4. **Ensure that all young people aged twenty-five or under are placed in a job, an apprenticeship, or enrolled in continuing education toward a specific vocation within four months of registering for unemployment or leaving the education system.**
   - Strongly support: 43
   - Total support: 76

5. **Help first-time homebuyers by offering low-interest rate mortgages and direct funds to help them make a down payment on a home.**
   - Strongly support: 45
   - Total support: 75
Increase the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour and make sure it rises with inflation.

Strongly support: 40
Total support: 58

Expand rental assistance for all low-income families spending more than half of their income on rent each month.

Strongly support: 33
Total support: 65

Increase the federal minimum wage to $12 dollars an hour and make sure it rises with inflation.

Strongly support: 39
Total support: 71

Strengthen overtime protections so workers either receive extra pay when they work more than forty hours a week or can spend more time with their families, and so companies can’t cut jobs and spread the work over those who remain.

Strongly support: 37
Total support: 73

Invest in American entrepreneurs by providing interest-free loans to start their own businesses in distressed and high-unemployment regions of the country.
Democratic Policy Proposals Popular Across Party Lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Proposal</th>
<th>Democrat Strongly Support</th>
<th>Democrat Total Support</th>
<th>Independent Strongly Support</th>
<th>Independent Total Support</th>
<th>Republican Strongly Support</th>
<th>Republican Total Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide salary &amp; tuition to workers who lose jobs to foreign competition/automation/relocation</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid family/medical leave &amp; sick days</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase minimum wage to $12</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government hire those who can't find work directly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid family/medical leave &amp; sick days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure people under 25 are placed in job/apprenticeship/vocational ed</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Takeaways and Message Guidance

• Voters don’t expect Trump, GOP to march in lockstep. Budget is a key opportunity to show whose side Trump is really on.

• Avoid pity/charity. Proposed cuts to health care, housing, education, and nutrition are proposals that will affect “you and your family” and “threaten your family’s economic security.”

• Safety net is an unfamiliar term for many voters. Use basic living standards, or the basics—these terms resonate.

• Avoid jargon, acronyms, program names (with exceptions). Use kitchen-table terms: programs that enable families to keep a roof over their heads…
Key Takeaways and Message Guidance

• Name villains and highlight tradeoffs: *slashing affordable housing to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations.*

• Disability is an especially powerful lens, spurring outrage even among Trump voters.

• Resistance alone is not enough. Progressives gain more when they **oppose and propose** by putting big ideas on jobs, wages, and economic security on the table as alternatives to Trump budget proposals. *This approach even beats GOP work requirements message.*
• What is Hands Off?
  – A national campaign dedicated to preventing cuts to affordable housing, Medicaid, disability benefits, nutrition assistance and other basic living standards in the upcoming budget fight
  – Launches next week around Trump budget release (expected 5/23)
  – Core goals:
    • Put a face on GOP proposed cuts
    • Show members of Congress that these cuts have political consequences
Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change
National Council on La Raza
National Women’s Law Center
The Arc of the United States
NETWORK
Stand Up America
Coalition on Human Needs
SEIU
AFSCME
Social Security Works
Indivisible
OFA
• How can I get involved?
  – Use the #HandsOff hashtag when discussing cuts in the Trump/Congressional budgets
  – Encourage your followers to share their stories using the #HandsOff Hashtag
  – Direct followers to HandsOff.org to share their story starting next week
I’m telling Trump and Congress: #HandsOff cuts to Meals on Wheels to pay for tax cuts for millionaires.
Questions?

Rebecca Vallas
Managing Director, Poverty to Prosperity Program
Center for American Progress
rvallas@americanprogress.org

Jeremy Slevin
Associate Director of Advocacy
jslevin@americanprogress.org
Getting the Message Right: How to Stop Trump's Proposed Cuts to Affordable Housing

Tiffany Manuel, PhD
Vice President for Knowledge, Impact and Strategy
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.
Email: TManuel@EnterpriseCommunity.org
Reframing the Public Conversation:
Affordable Housing, Opportunity and Community Development

“You Don’t Have to Live Here”
Why Housing Messages Are Backfiring and 10 Things We Can Do About It

Tiffany Manuel, PhD
Chief Strategy Officer
Kathleen Kelly Janus, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

October 2016

www.EnterpriseCommunity.org
Housing Message Backfires

The Mobility, Personal Responsibility and Self-Makingness Backfire
Buy the house you can afford or move. Stop making poor decisions and asking me to pay for them.

The NIMBY and Natural Segregation Backfire
Who wants to live next to poor people? I worked to get out of that ghetto.

The Separate Fates and Zero-Sum Thinking Backfire
This issue has nothing to do with me. It's not my responsibility to solve other people's problems.

The Thin Understanding of Cause and Effect Backfire
What has changed? Why is this happening to so many people these days?

The Crisis and Fatalism Backfire
So, you're saying we have to address poverty and change the housing market? Good luck! How can we ever hope to change issues this big?

The Facts Don't Fit the Frame Backfire
Most people I know are doing pretty OK. These data don't sound right to me.
10 Specific Redirections You Can Implement Today

1. Start with Why
2. Explain How Systems Shape Outcomes
3. Tell the Story of US
4. Powerfully Connect Housing to Community Issues
5. Connect Cause & Effects of Housing Insecurity
6. Where You Live Affects You
7. Future Orientation
8. Focus on Solutions/What Works
9. Avoid the term “Housing”
10. Widen Range of Visible Stakeholders
Making the Case:
Frequency of Key Narrative Elements in Media and Housing Industry Materials

More than 11 million renter households are severely housing cost-burdened—paying 50% or more of their incomes for housing.

**Redirection:**
You know, our paychecks are not getting bigger but the rents are...pushing many of our neighbors out of our community. Many of the neighbors who are leaving have been long-time residents of this community – who have watched their children grow up here, gone to church here, played with their children in our parks – and now, after making those contributions – they are being edged out. We can do better!

**Why It Works:**
- Redirects attention away from a problem of individual agency and defines the problem as structural; causal explanation
America has an affordable housing crisis. You might not know it from our national dialogue. We don’t like to talk about poverty, and homelessness and lack of opportunity.

Redirection:
In Denver, we are a “can-do” city! We are building a new reality for our people, a new future for our children, a new model of healthy communities and providing great places to live – no matter how much money you have in your wallet! That starts with providing quality homes for people who need it.

Why It Works:
- Value message – American pragmatism; increases agency; future orientation; optimistic; universal benefits
Greg and Latisha met a little over 4 years ago and fell in love. They have lived together and supported each other ever since. Greg and Latisha are homeless on the streets of Detroit.

Redirection:
The prosperity of our region depends deeply on the smart investments we make to ensure that the people who work here, have a place to call home here. Every dollar we spend to help a homeless person find a home, returns back to us 100 times over in costs savings. And best of all, these homes actually create jobs for everybody! (+ stories of community)

Why It Works:
- Story of Us
- Moves away from charity as the value and as the motivation for action
- Takes advantage of the connection between housing and jobs
Making the Case: Starts with a Compelling Value Proposition

Start with the Value Proposition

Provide a thoughtful explanation - systems & people

Value: We all have a stake in solving this problem

Explanation: Why is this problem happening? We are all responsible for how it unfolds and gets resolved

Solutions & Results These are proven programs that deliver benefits consistently and we know we’re making progress

Broad Impacts: Use social math to dimension the problem, position policy/investment alternatives & highlight the costs of inaction
“You Don’t Have to Live Here”
Why Housing Messages Are Backfiring and 10 Things We Can Do About It

Tiffany Manuel, PhD
DrTiffanyManuel
www.EnterpriseCommunity.org
Research-Backed Strategies in Practice: Tips for Budget Advocacy

Amy Clark
Senior Director of Marketing and Communications
National Housing Conference

@amysee
www.nhc.org
ABOUT NHC

The National Housing Conference educates decision makers and the public about housing policies and practices to move housing forward together.

NHC convenes and collaborates with our diverse membership and the broader housing and community development sectors to advance our policy, research and communications initiatives to effect positive change at the federal, state and local levels.
Frames

noun

the lenses through which people view and receive information.
Frame with housing values

- Opportunity
- Independence
- Home
- Security
- Choice
- Stability
- Dignity
- Reward for work
- Fairness
- Safety
Discussing the role of government

- Mission and purpose
- Systems and structures
- Citizen-manager thinking
Tell landscape stories

- **Stories about individuals** cause your audience to focus on the person, not the problem: *What should she have done differently to prevent this problem?*
- **Landscape stories** show systems and structures to create a fuller picture of the problem— and solutions.
- Looking at the landscape helps you **discover new voices** that can deliver your message.

www.nhc.org
Evidence (and caveats)

- Few of us think in numbers, so to be understood evidence needs to be made visual, simplified or compared to real-life objects or experiences.

- Being wrong feels bad... so we interpret new facts so that they support what we already believe.

- Beware moving goalposts: How much evidence is enough?
Anatomy of a message

- Problem statement: 5%
- Values: 15%
- Solutions: 80%

www.nhc.org
Putting it all together: Housing intersections

• Understand what your MoC cares about
• Locate the connection between housing and the priority issues
• Create a message
Go further

• Framing and Messaging Toolkit: www.nhc.org/framing-messaging-toolkit

• Solutions for Housing Communications plenary recordings: www.nhc.org/communications-2017