

**EXPOSED by CMD:****2016 TRANSCRIPT OF THE LUNTZ WEBINAR  
DOCUMENTING BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR  
INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE AND OTHER POLICIES**

[Verbal tics such as “ummm” and “uhhh” have been removed.]

**DAVID MERRITT** (Managing Director at Frank Luntz’ polling firm, Luntz Global Partners, which was hired by the Council of State Chambers):

...Behind these questions and behind these responses later in the presentation.

Typically, I’d rather have some discussion along the way, but given that this a webinar I understand that we can’t do that. But please do have questions. There is a ton of data here. And we go into all kinds of issues that you guys are facing across the country, so happy to delve into any of these specific areas.

There’s also some data that we just probably don’t have time to show, so I’m happy to really cover anything you might want to ask about.

I also head up our political work, I’ve been doing a lot of work on the presidential race, if you have any questions on that too, we can really take it in any direction you’d like.

So let me give you a quick breakdown on what we actually did here, what you’re actually going to see.

We polled a thousand registered voters, and these are basically the opinion elite, these are your members, and prospects that you’re trying to target every day in your individual states. So they are were all C-Level executives.

They were all decision makers on whether they join a chamber or not. As you see the breakdown between the size of the companies, we talked about doing it a little bit less than twenty-five but we figured this was a good spot between 50 and up, and as you can see by the breakdown on revenue, these are mostly mid-sized companies.

And from what the council said, the most likely prospects and members that you guys see everyday. So these really are representative of your members.

And you’ll see we have data broken down by geographic region. We couldn’t do individual states because it just wouldn’t be valid data, but when we grouped



them by region, you can see some differences between those in the South and those out West, and the Midwest and those in the East.

So I'll leave it here so you guys can get an idea of where you guys are in your individual states, and we did 250 responses per region, every state was represented, and weighted within the regions, so one state wasn't dominating the region. You know a Florida, or a Texas, or a California, we tried to weigh it appropriately so no state was more represented than another.

So I'll go through the top takeaways first.

And as I said we'll go into the details and I'll show you why these top takeaways are so important.

And this actually confirms from what I've gathered a lot of research that you guys have on an individual level is that you have a very good reputation. State chambers are seen as problem solvers and that you really are valued by your members. So congratulations on building such a good reputation in your individual states.

The key word that I want you to focus on, and you'll see this later in the presentation is opportunity.

I know a lot of folks and a lot of chambers talk about benefits, and talk about intelligence, or insight, when you look at what they actually want the most out of your chamber is an opportunity. And that's a word you should really focus on because it can be applied to so many different things. It can be applied to networking, partnerships, growth, advocacy, whatever kind of benefit you're going to be offering if you describe it as an opportunity that really works because it resonates.

Number three, what are their priorities, well not surprisingly the economy and anything related to the economy is their number one priority. When we're talking about business owners and decision makers that's not a surprise.

What was a surprise is security. That actually tracks with that we've seen in voter responses, particularly over the last couple of months with Paris and San Bernadino, but it was a bit surprising to see how high of a priority it was for business leaders as well.

I know on the state level you guys face these social issues, particularly in capitols as legislative sessions have gotten underway, but those issues, when you ask directly of your members and prospects what do they care about, what keeps



them up at night, social issues is not a very high priority when it's compared to other issues like the economy, like health care and some others.

Number four, if we had to boil down what you should really say your mission is, and this is a quote that you should really try and use, is this, my state chamber our state chamber creates economic opportunity and good-paying jobs for everyone. That's really the nutshell quote that describes what you [inaudible], and it really does resonate and it makes an impactful response for your audience. So we'll come back to that as well.

Another one, when it comes to taxes obviously businesses are always concerned with taxes. Tax incentives and a simple tax code really do mean a friendly business climate.

That is almost the deciding factor when it comes to what it makes for a friendly business climate or hostile business climate, and I don't think I have this one in here but three quarters of your members and those that we polled said that they thought their state was a friendly business climate, so overwhelmingly a positive outlook on where things stand.

Education. You absolutely have the credibility to lead on education. And obviously it's a big priority for you, as far as getting an educated workforce.

One thing that you should look to though is there's a big emphasis on trade schools, on trade and vocational educational.

In past research we've actually looked at this topic for a governor in particular who's made this a very big priority in his state, and the phrase that we actually came up for him was not vocational schools or trade schools, or technical schools, the phrase that you should look at in this particular area is career-oriented job training.

People want careers.

You know jobs are like nine to five, you punch in, you punch out, you go home, you don't worry about it until the next day, a career is something that people value, and it's much more long term, it's much more of a part of them. So if you look at career oriented job training, it really does capture everything positive about vocational schools, technical schools, trade schools.

Number seven. Your respondents, our respondents overwhelmingly oppose government mandates.



And whenever you see anything in quotations marks that's been tested in the actual survey.

But they don't like mandates that are controlling, they don't like government mandates and government control.

But if you ask them individually whether they support or oppose individual mandates, individual requirements, like minimum wage, like predictive scheduling, they overwhelmingly support those.

It's a contradiction that you may see in your own individual states, it was one that jumped out at us the moment we got this data back. So very interesting and we'll go through those specifics as well.

A lot of you guys have minimum wage battles at the state level.

If you are fighting those fights, the best way to fight it is to not talk about the minimum wage.

If you can, turn it into a federal issue, and talk about expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit. Or as we have actually done a lot of research, renaming it would actually be better, if it were called a Working Family Credit.

And we'll get into this later as well, when you have a minimum wage fight, you have to come back with some kind of positive solution. You simply can't say we're opposed to the minimum wage, you actually have to have an alternative to make a credible argument, and this is the best one that we found.

On policy arguments, they will fail if you're arguing on policy, if you're arguing about even the impact on businesses is a bit too policy-oriented.

What you want to talk about is how your arguments can improve people, improve your employees, improve and help small businesses.

You have to personalize these policy arguments, because if you get stuck in the weeds of talking about this policy versus that policy, you're bound to lose.

You've seen folks on the other side who are talking about minimum wage increases, who are talking about mandates for leave and maternity benefits and everything else, the way that they win those battles typically is to personalize the consequences of not having them.



So you need to actually fight on the same ground for having a chance, if you are going to fight these, and use personal language and personal arguments. That's what will prevail.

What will not prevail, and what will lose every single time is if you go in with overheated partisan rhetoric. It turns off a lot of people, it certainly turns off any kind of swing voter, moderate public officials. We've seen it lose time and time again.

It's great in a primary, and we see it on the Republican side right now, we see Senator Clinton and Senator Sanders, who can out progressive each other right now, that kind of stuff is great in that environment, but when you're talking about individual arguments with a lawmaker on Capitol Hill, in your states, or giving a speech, or giving an interview, if you really overdo the rhetoric you're just digging yourself a big, big hole. So I'll show you a little bit of that too.

Alright, so let's just dive into some of these, if you want to do a screenshot that's fine,

Bill if you wanted to share this presentation that's certainly up to you, but these are a few words that we've found to be the most effective, way to communicate a positive pro-business language lexicon.

So things like a healthy economy. I'll just pick on a couple of these.

A healthy economy. We hear people talk about a strong economy, a booming economy, that's what Governor Rauner ran on last year in Illinois.

Other talking about strong economic growth, we've tested all of those, and the best, most impactful way to communicate your positive message of building a stronger economy is to actually say we want a healthy economy.

And the word healthy can be used for virtually anything. Whether it's healthy schools, healthy communities, healthy environment, the word healthy is actually very, very positive. So that's one that I definitely recommend you use.

Also looking at common sense.

This is something that people find to be lacking in virtually every state capitol across the country and certainly here in Washington. If you talk about common sense solutions, you automatically--and let me actually back up.

These kinds of phrases here, these kinds of word choices, these are not silver bullets, what we try and do is take each of these and look at them as like a brick



in a wall, that not one of them by themselves is actually going to win you any arguments, but if you piece these together, you build a credible argument, and you build your credibility brick by brick, or phrase by phrase.

So something like common sense, you say look we need common sense solutions in Sacramento. It not only actually has a nice rhythm to it, it's what voters actually want.

And if you're talking about bringing common sense solutions, they're much more likely to actually listen to what that solution is.

That's the opposite of a very partisan attack, you know we conservative solutions, or we need progressive solutions, that politicizes things. Every voter whether on the left, right or middle wants something that's common sense, so I definitely recommend that one to you as well.

And then at the very bottom, we put together of them.

**Opportunity and then all Americans everywhere.** You can use your own state as well. All Georgians everywhere, all New Yorkans everywhere, but if you actually use that phrase together where you're talking about everyone, or all people, or all employees.

Too many people try and segment into groups, where they talk about the poor, or they talk middle class, or they talk about seniors, you know whatever it might be, that hyphenated kind of language actually turns voters or turns audiences off, because of they're not in that group, they don't think you're talking to them. So if you talk about everyone, everywhere, you're being very inclusive. And again, it's building your credibility little by little.

So just a couple slides on how overwhelming that support is and that favorability is for you, 82 to 4.

I mean we see this kind of measurement on like Pope Francis, or Mother Theresa, so you guys have really done a great job in building your credibility across the country.

What are they looking for?

They're looking for networking, they're looking for business development tips and strategies, a bit lower is advocacy and anything kind of related to legislation, but their most valuable benefit that they get through you guys is actually what can help the bottom line, what can help build their business.



That where the word opportunity I think comes into play in so many ways, is because you can see how across it is a winner, both from the West Coast to the East Coast, you provide leadership and opportunities, and the opportunities again, that kind of language, that kind of word can be applied to pretty much anything you're offering.

Another way to look at it we tested this word out opportunity, and we put it up against free economy, economic freedom, free enterprise, an opportunity economy, and you're welcome to steal this, the House GOP actually picked this up last year, but it's that kind of thing people are really looking for. They're looking for opportunity.

Here's a word comparison that we did.

And this was not from your survey, and you'll see me pulling in some other survey research and I'll try and note what is yours and what is not.

This is for a different survey that we did, but we tried to take something like Hillary Clinton where she--and this is a very powerful statement. No one who works an honest job in America should have to live in poverty. People who grow our food especially should not need to be on food stamps just to feed their families.

If you put that towards something positive, where you talk about Americans are really struggling, you acknowledge that struggle, but then you focus on common sense solutions that create real jobs and opportunities for all Americans everywhere, this even wins among Democrats, when you go head to head with Hillary Clinton's best language.

So just to give you a flavor of how this type of language can be pieced together.

So overall very positive economic outlook, I don't know if I see quite this happy but very positive, certainly compared to where the economy has been, overwhelmingly positive that it has improved over the past four years, 80 to 8 is overwhelming.

A healthier economy, this is where that phrase--and I have a couple of these where I can show you how these can phrase can again not be a silver bullet, but if you talk about building a better business climate in your state--this is from a different survey -- when we compared those two together, overwhelmingly the response for healthier economy just a much more positive, much more impactful way to describe what your ultimate goal is as a state chamber.

So what do these folks really focus on.



Well when we gave them five issues, and five big buckets, economic issues, national security, personal issues, government issues and social issues, you can see how they break down from one geographic location to the next, they're fairly consistent.

The only outlier really would be social issues out west which actually isn't a surprise when you think about things like assisted suicide, which has been on the west coast for a long, long time, many more environmental and ballot initiatives in California, the West seems to have a long history of being forerunners for the rests of the states dealing with these issues, so not a huge surprise to see that be so important in the West.

But very consistent across the top issue being economic issues.

When you ask about economic issues in particular, we drilled down to each of those buckets, and again there's that word economic opportunity and good-paying jobs for everyone.

Again, a clear winner, this one was no contest here. A clear winner across the board, and that's where that phrase can actually come in handy as your foundational mission, as a state chamber you want to create economic opportunity and good-paying jobs for everyone. That really does encompass what you do. You can pivot from that to really anything, whether it is taxes, whether it is mandates, whether it is benefits, that's a great foundation to work from.

Some of the other things that you look at, minimum wage - and I'll show you why minimum wage is so interesting, because when you ask about it in isolation, it's an overwhelming winner.

Most people want to increase the minimum wage. However when you actually put it in comparison to other priorities it loses a ton of its impact. And we've seen this in many other studies, especially in the federal level. But it does lose a lot of its intensity when there are other priorities that you put up against it.

So reducing the deficit and the national debt certainly doesn't happen at the state level, but you can see where everything else breaks down, taxes are obviously a top tier issue as well.

The other bucket that we asked about, or one of the other ones, was personal issues.



So we tried to create these buckets so they included similar type of priorities. Here was education, healthcare, welfare, we put roads and highways and transportation, affordable college, universal childcare, paid maternity and parental leave — another thing that is very significant, overwhelmingly supported by itself, but if you put it competition with other priorities, it really does fall to the bottom.

Healthcare will be an issue, obviously for business owners and anyone running a business because it is such an anchor on your bottom line, so not a surprise to see that be a top tier issue.

Government issues. So those are issues of corruption and accountability, waste, bureaucracy, that sort of thing, making government more efficient and effective, I've streamlined this a little bit from what you saw Bill in Marco Island, but one of the most efficient or effective phrases not to use the same words but **we have found that what works over and over again no matter what the context is that if you're on the side of making government more efficient, more effective, more accountable, that's the magic phrase, that's one of those phrases that works on the left, that works on the right, and it works with independents, because everyone wants government to be accountable, everyone wants government to be effective at what it does, and everyone wants it to be efficient.**

So that's the kind of phrase that if you do have those kind of battles in your capitol about good government, that's a phrase that you should put in your hip pocket and use.

Social issues. This was gun violence, the environment, drugs, same-sex marriage, religious freedom, again look at those issues that are towards the bottom, these are ones that you've seen on ballot initiatives, you've seen them in capitols across the country.

These are issues that I know you have to face in your capitols, but if you ask business owners and business executives what keeps them up at night, those aren't the ones that keep them up at night.

So keep our streets safe, gun rights and gun control and gun violence obviously with the news in the last couple of years with all these shootings that does keep folks awake, and those are high priorities, as you can see.

So which of the following do you believe should be your state's highest priority?

And this is when it comes to education, that phrase at the top, prepare every student for college, career and life, that's another one of those phrases that we've tested again and again, we've done a ton of education work, that's one



that if you do have an education battle if you're on the side of reform that prepares every student for college, career and life, that is a phrase that works with parents, it works with teachers, it works with administrators, it works with public officials, you name it. It's a phrase that you should copy down and use in any legislative battle that you have.

I also wanted to point to this is where that career-oriented job training language can come into play, we gave respondents a bunch of different choices, and as you can see, a lot of these sound pretty similar, worker training programs, long term strategy to ensure community college and trade schools, if we had to boil it down, this is where I talked about replacing those three on the right with the one on the left.

We've tested it, we've researched it, we've refined it, and that's the phrase you should really try and replace. It'll take discipline because these other things have been around for so long, they're engrained into our vernacular, but the language on the left is one that we have found that resonates much much better than the ones on the right.

So let's get into some of these mandates. This is where we asked about generally do you think there are too many or too few state government employer mandates related to business. Not surprisingly, there are lots of folks who say, there are just too many mandates. I'd like to meet the seven percent who think there are too few.

But when you ask them specifically what kind of mandates they oppose the most, just to get them with a word or a phrase you can use, government controlling companies' business practices.

That's a word, when you hear the word control, so many people think that they lack control in their lives, or lack control in their business, whether it's the government telling you what to do, whether it's the stock market going up and down and they have no control over that, whether it's healthcare prices and costs going up exponentially year after year, they have a feeling of not being in control. And consumers feel the same thing. Gas prices are whipping from above four dollars and now below two dollars. We just have very little control over a lot of important things in our lives, and business owners and business executives think that as well. You can actually talk about mandates being government control, that kind of word, phrase resonates very powerfully.

But when you get into some of these individual questions, like minimum wage, do you support or oppose an increase to your state's minimum wage, it was very consistent.



These folks are okay with mandates if you're asking about them in isolation. So here's the minimum wage, 80 to 8...

When we looked at what is an alternative, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, that was a clear winner, the others that didn't fair so well as you can see, exemptions to a minimum wage increase for certain industries, workforce programs, but when you put the minimum wage versus the EITC directly, even Democrats, they were the only ones who actually have a favorable view of increasing the minimum wage, the other is about split.

So it's a fair fight. And most folks don't really even know what the EITC is you have to do some education. But if you go with an alternative, you can actually win on that issue.

So here's the question about maternity and paternity leave. 72 to 9 for increasing maternity leave.

Mandating paternity leave was 82 to 7.

Again, overwhelming numbers in all of these mandates in isolation have similar support.

We broke it down by members of state chambers and non-members, and your members actually supported more so than non-members.

We talked a little about this, and that might be because the non-members are more Tea Party, they're more on the right side of the issue, of many issues, that could be the reason why, but your members overwhelmingly support both of those.

When we asked about paid sick time, and then time off for caring for family, again, very consistent, 73 to 16. And 83 to 5, that one might be the biggest spread on the right.

So we asked some language questions, this was the clear winner when we talked about paid leave policy.

This is from the National Partnership for Women and Family, this is a great — I wouldn't have changed anything about this statement: "At some point, nearly everyone will need to take time away from work to deal with a serious personal or family illness, or to care for a new child. Our nation's public policies are failing to meet the needs of workers and their families. Laws providing paid family and medical leave allow workers to meet their health and family needs without jeopardizing their economic security." Perfect, perfect language.



We tested a couple other things, we used some heated language that didn't really work, this is the one that really did.

We also asked about predictive scheduling. Again this one was not quite as well known as raising the minimum wage, we had a little bit of setup. But even when you explain it, 78 to 11, again an overwhelming winner.

We asked about some these, what would concern you the most when it comes to predictive scheduling, not surprisingly, that it takes away the flexibility employers as well as for employees.

But as you can see, some of these other arguments, look at the bottom, "it's an undue intrusion by the government into business autonomy," particularly out west, that argument just doesn't fly, that politicizes things.

But if you're talking about people, employees, much more personal.

So what do these results all have in common, well quite frankly they are all empathetic.

If you ask about them in isolation, of course we want to take care of people who are caring for a loved one, of course we want to give folks more benefits, or more leave, or more income.

So when you ask about them like that and they interpret them like that, they aren't government regulations, they're talking more about personal protections.

And that's why so often businesses actually don't win these arguments. It's because they're fighting against government regulations, they're not fighting for personal protections.

So what we'll try to do is actually give you a few helpful hints on how to actually combat these in your states.

A couple things about healthcare, because this isn't going away as an issue either but costs, costs, costs, that's absolutely the number one concern when it comes to healthcare. That's been very consistent, not only with small business owners and executives, but with voters across the country. You can see, it really is all about cost.

And actually this is from a survey we did last year about the Affordable Care Act, and we asked about state versus federal, and this was across the board, so this



was not just Republicans and maybe independents putting more faith in the state government than they do in the federal government, this is across the board.

So we asked between the state government and federal government who would give you more control over your healthcare, state government overwhelmingly. Every one down the line, very consistent just like with those mandate questions, very consistent in deference to the state, and that's why state solutions in your state capitol can be so effective, certainly compared to Washington. So if you have an opportunity to run against Washington, definitely try and do that.

I'll give you a quick example of that over-heated language, and how a different approach will work much, much better.

This is language that we came up, and we compared it to the actual language of a congressman in opposition to the Affordable Care act, and so what we said here was every American deserves health insurance: affordable, patient-centered insurance. That's not what the Affordable Care Act does, but it is what we're committed to delivering. Efficient, effective and accountable public programs to provide a secure safety net, and a strong, vibrant marketplace to provide the freedom and choice we all deserve.

Almost every one of those phrases has been tested and proven over and over again. And look at what it beat out. Obamacare is a command-and-control regime that reduces families' choices, thwarts innovation and charts a path of European-style debt and rationed access to healthcare. If we cave and set up an exchange, Obamacare is never going away.

Let me go back to the other one.

Look at the GOP number there, 11% GOP. Twelve points ahead is this language here. We had a couple number of options, that's why the numbers don't add up to a hundred, but this was the top vote-getter. This was the bottom one.

And even with Republicans on the right, who are loathe to support Obamacare, language that's much more positive in talking about what you're for will resonate much, much greater when you're about to talk to lawmakers or the public.

So a few things on civil rights issues.

This was another language exercise that we found, this really does capture where business executives and business owners are.

Every person, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation deserves equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. Period. No



exceptions. This was a clear winner and I put this first because it really does summarize everything we asked about some of these race, religion and sexual orientation questions, um, they do support the religious freedom laws.

We've seen this in Indiana, we've seen this in other states, in Arizona, it's come up in North Carolina, so we asked them point blank do you support or oppose types of laws in your state where a business has the option to not serve someone or not work for a customer they choose not to, and yes, they do support it.

We even put it a different variable in there, we asked would you support or oppose that same religious freedom bill if it gave other religions the ability to discriminate against Christians. And it was less support, but still the majority supported it, so there was consistency there.

The bottom line really is that you need to advocate for solutions that create opportunity, that talk about good-paying jobs in fulfilling careers. Don't forget about that word careers, because that's what people really do want. And if you're talking about jobs that's great, but add in careers as well, and you're just going to build more and more credibility.

You have a bunch of policy fights on the horizon I'm sure, many of them are underway now in states that are in session, you need to talk about both the benefits and the consequences, not on policy grounds but on personal grounds.

That doesn't mean that if there are some economic statistics or some stats and facts and figures about your business that can actually make your case, use them, but don't use them exclusively.

Lead with personal, secondary with policy, and you have a good argument.

And then last but not least, I know a lot these battles can get very political, very quickly, but if you're the one throwing bombs, if you're the one out there with really harsh language, you're just digging yourself a hole and making it even harder for you to win.

So use personal language that is positive where you can, acknowledges a problem up front even if you're opposed to what they're trying to do, that's the way you can actually build credibility and gain support for your position.

So with that Bill, why don't I turn it back over to you and hopefully we can review some questions.



**BILL KRAMER:** Thank you, David. So anybody can go ahead and ask a question through the question panel or the chat panel, even if you kind of just want to not that you have a question I'll try to individually unmute you if you want to speak.

One thing that I would like to point out is that this slide presentation and the full survey data will all be made available on the wiki webpage and there will be links to that data in next weeks newsletter, as well as the recording of this webinar will also be made available.

We have one question from **Amy Hilter (sp?)**, she asks, **does quality of life still resonate?**

**DAVID MERRITT:** Quality of life, I think so, particularly when it comes to healthcare that something that we found that definitely resonates. You're not just talking about cost but people are obviously concerned with quality of life. So I'd say in that context that phrase certainly works, I'm not sure if you have another context in mind, I don't know if you can unmute her Bill, but if there is another context in mind I'd probably have to hear it to weigh in on it specifically.

**BILL KRAMER:** One second I'll attempt to. Oh, she doesn't have a mic, so.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Okay.

**BILL KRAMER:** One other question that actually came up earlier when you were discussing the minimum wage issues, **Don Boyd** was wondering, **when you were talking about raising the minimum wage to the surveyors, does that mean that they are worried about raising it, or do they actually want to see it raised?**

**DAVID MERRITT:** **No, they actually support raising it.**

**Let me see if I can go back to that slide. Where is it here? I think it was the first one I had up. No we've seen this in — here it is.**

**Do you support or oppose an increase to your state's minimum wage?**

**So, that's where it's undeniable that they support the increase.**

**When we asked a different way, maybe some interpreted it as, we're worried about it being raised, but my guess is they are actually looking at raising it as a priority than being concerned about it being raised.**

**And again, we've actually looked at this issue a number of different ways. We've done focus groups on it, as part of policy discussions, and this is universal.**



If you're fighting against the minimum wage increase, you're fighting an uphill battle, because most Americans, even most Republicans are okay with raising the minimum wage.

Again, where you might find some comfort if you are opposing it in your state, it's how big of a priority is it against other priorities. Most folks think there are bigger priorities. Creating more jobs, rather than raising the minimum wage is a priority that most everyone agrees with. So when you put it up against other issues, you can find other alternatives, and other things to focus on. But in isolation, and you asked about minimum wage, it's definitely a winner.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's a good question from **Tom Schuman** in Indiana, he asks talk about the word compromise, is it effective to point the unwillingness to compromise is detrimental to the policy process.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Great question, great word to zero in on, because compromise is actually a bad word. It might be great in practice, but the word itself is not one that you need to use.

There are some alternatives that you can use, because most people want their policy makers to compromise, they want them to work together, but if you use the word compromise you're going to raise some concerns, mostly on the right and on the left, at least the far right and the far left, they don't want compromise. Okay, most people on the fringes don't want compromise because they automatically think you're compromising your principles. That's not what elected officials want to be compromising about.

The phrases to actually use are coming together, finding common ground, cooperation, and if you string it all together you can actually say, we need to work together, we need to cooperate on common sense solutions.

Those kind of words get to what actually people want. They want the parties working together to get something done. The word compromise just has a little bit more baggage that we found, and we typically recommend not using it.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's one more from **Blake Wilson** in Mississippi, he asks are there any differences between modern economy companies versus traditional companies.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Great question, we didn't actually break it down that way in this survey, but there absolutely are different priorities for those types of companies, and you can actually look in this survey, you can look for where those companies are typically located.



So there were lots of differences between companies in the Midwest, which are typically your manufacturing companies, or at least they're much more prevalent in the Midwest, versus companies that maybe out in the West, issues like career-oriented job training, issues like taxes, cost of living, those sorts of things were much higher priority than things where traditionally manufacturing states are traditional industry. Issues out west, like we saw with social issues, like we see with the environment, some of the other issues in those buckets, those were much more of a higher priority in the West, and that's where you'll find more technology companies, more innovative companies, at least they'd be more represented there.

So we've seen some of those breakdowns, but we had to look at it geographically rather than industry in this particular survey.

**BILL KRAMER:** Getting a few more in here. **Dave Adkisson** in Kentucky asks, he says that you've mentioned the favorable impression of state chambers, but his sales folks find that sometimes business leaders don't even recognize what a state chamber is, did you run into that during the survey?

**DAVID MERRITT:** No we didn't ask have you ever heard of it, or do you know what they do, we asked if they have a favorable opinion, and we asked what they get out of it.

My guess is if there are folks who don't know what the state chamber is it's probably going to be a smaller company.

We did for companies that were on the smaller side, you know 25 and under, 10 and under, with employees, they were obviously more attuned to their local chambers rather than their state chambers. So guess is that's where the education could be the most effective if you were reaching out to the types of companies, or those size of companies, but that's about as far as we got in the survey, asking that particular question.

**BILL KRAMER:** Yeah, depending, even sometimes business owners get a little confused with the state chamber and the local chamber, and even the U.S. Chamber, a lot of chambers being thrown about. Here's a question, did you notice a difference in the minimum wage support based on company size?

**DAVID MERRITT:** That is a good question and off the top of my head I don't recall, but why I don't I do this Bill, why don't I actually go back into the data and look that up and I can send you an answer.

**BILL KRAMER:** Excellent, and I'll include that in the newsletter next week.



**DAVID MERRIT:** And so that was, minimum wage support, by company size. Okay. Got it.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's a question from **Tom**, he says thoughts on this education phrase, equal opportunity for quality education and success in school for every child is the most important social justice and economic issue of our time. Okay so he's putting one out there, and wondering your thoughts on that.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Okay, yeah, well that's certainly a big one, that puts a lot of priorities into one phrase. I'd probably say a lot of those words work individually, we hear a lot of people talk about quality education, we actually have tested that particular word and no one want quality education, they actually want an effective education.

So when I mentioned before the word effective being used in many different contexts that one where it's used, it's a very powerful way to describe education. Another way is just to say, excellent education. Quality can be good quality or bad quality or average, but if you have something that's a bit more subjective and talks about it in a positive way, either effective or excellent, that's one.

Equality is another word, yes, you can talk about equality, but it's better to not use the word equality, it's better to actually spell it out, because equality has been politicized as a word, social justice has been politicized as a word, if you want to reach the broadest possible audience you don't want to use words that have been politicized, so one way that I would say it, and we've tested this, is to say that every student deserves an effective education no matter what their zip code is, no matter where they live, no matter their household income.

Every single student deserves an effective education. That doesn't get into anything about policy or anything politics or justice, but that doesn't make any exceptions for any student to be left behind.

So there are way that you can say these to get the same end, but to describe them in a way that is a bit more impactful.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's one that I know we didn't ask in a specific survey but you might have run across it in other surveys, **Kate** asks, **is there a difference between using the terms plaintiff attorney versus trial attorney?**

**DAVID MERRITT:** I



Any time you can say trial attorney, any time you can say personal injury trial attorney, actually lawyer is probably best, lawyer is better than attorney. Any time you can say the word trial lawyer, together, is much better than plaintiffs. Plaintiffs is more innocuous, and this goes back certainly for a quite a while, but yeah any way you can shoehorn in trial lawyer you're definitely winning.

**BILL KRAMER:** And here's a follow up to that one. Is there a difference between extreme environmentalists and anti-growth groups?

**DAVID MERRITT:** Anti-what?

**BILL KRAMER:** Growth groups.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Anti-growth groups.

We haven't really gotten into that one, you know generally if you're talking about special interests, and they can be environmental special interests, they can be corporate special interests, we found that that resonates more if you can describe them as special interests, no matter who you're talking about because if you get too specific and talk about them being environmental extremists again that's politicizing, that's using language that is partisan, but if you talk about special interests, no one likes special interests. So even if they're environmental special interests that's going to be better than using the word extreme.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's something to keep in mind for our next survey and it's a good point from **Zack Hutchins**, but he says it would be interesting to see the stats on quote on quote state chamber support in states like his, New York, where his state chamber is actually called Business Council of New York State. And he's not the only one, there's a good amount of what we consider state chambers are called by something different in that state. Sometimes it will be a little confusing what their state chamber is for people living in that state. That's just something to keep in mind when we're talking about state chambers.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Yeah, no that's a good point. I would hope though that in the states that actually use a different name, like the state council or jobs council or business council, that that has more resonance in those particular states. Obviously if it's not used somewhere you don't want to change it, but hopefully it's used with a lot of prevalence it can actually have a bit more impact in those states.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's another comment from Kentucky, they were surprised by the importance of networking, state chambers often leave that to the local



chambers and don't think of networking as a major benefit, so it's a good insight for them.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Yeah there was actually another question. I think just for length in time I didn't include it in this one but networking, it's not just going to events and going to cocktail parties, we kind of got the sense that they look at networking as a way to build their business, so it was networking with potential partners, it was networking with joint ventures, it was networking with customers, it was networking with experts who can help them with problems that they face, so it was much broader than just a meet and greet, we looked at it as, that's a definite strategy and a definite benefit of a way they see the state chambers providing them with a way to impact their business and grow their business.

**BILL KRAMER:** And here's another one from Kentucky, they asked about something that I'm sure has been polled to death, Common Core language, the use of higher standards, better quality education, etc., do you have any insight on that particular policy battle and messaging.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Oh yeah, we've done a ton of work on that particular issues. We've actually done a lot on education. Common Core the name has been so poisoned that if you are anywhere near Common Core, particularly on the right, you're going to lose.

However if you are talking about standards, and even if you talk about national standards, there's overwhelming support for it. So people like the concept, they don't support the implementation, or the name.

So there's definitely a contradiction there, but everyone wants standards, everyone wants local and state standards, no one wants federal standards, but when you do drill down and ask about national standards they actually do think that people in Massachusetts and Mississippi should be learning the same stuff. People from California and Connecticut should be learning the same material. So they want their cake and they want to eat it too. But anything that has to do with Common Core has just been poisoned beyond being salvageable.

**BILL KRAMER:** And I know a lot of these state chambers are quite familiar with that battle. Here's another from **Barry Robinson**, and you touched on this a little with the state versus federal trust polling, but with the unfavorability of Congress, was there any difference in confidence between state government and federal government, and as far as having any affect on the economy.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Not sure about the effect on the economy, but the trust and faith really does resonate on the state level versus the federal level across the board.



And we didn't stack the deck, this wasn't a way where we said you trust state lawmakers versus Washington politicians, I mean that would be a completely skewed question, we said do you trust politicians in your state capitol or in the national capitol.

You know I remember exactly what the phrasing was, but it was apples to apples, and it was very consistent with what you saw in those healthcare options.

Overwhelmingly supportive of their state lawmakers, that's not to say that there aren't the same problems, but they just don't think things are as bad in their state capitol as they do in the national capitol.

I'm sure if you look at Albany, or Sacramento, or Tallahassee, or some of these state capitols, things can be quite as bad, but they balance their budgets, they're much closer to the people, the reputation they have is just far higher than what it is for folks who go to Washington. And that really does cross party lines and whatever issue you're talking about, whether it's healthcare or energy or education.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's one from **Kurt Bauer**, in Wisconsin, he says, **per the special interest comment that was just made, what should we refer to ourselves as?**

**DAVID MERRITT:** **Well, not special interest, obviously.**

If you can talk about representing small business owners, or representing job creators, and use numbers, you know if you have 20,000 members, use that number, say we represent 20,000 job creators in this state...

Someone else is going to describe you in not so flattering terms, but the more that you can talk about how many people you represent and who they are in particular, you know we represent three thousands business, ten thousand businesses, and their twenty-one million employees, if you're in a big state, or their six million employees, breaking out those numbers so you're talking about how wide your membership is.

And if you can, be as specific as you can, this obviously can't go on like a bumper sticker but instead of just saying we represent businesses, talk about what kind of businesses you represent. We represent five thousand businesses, from manufacturing, to technology, to energy, to healthcare. Something like that. The more descriptive you can be, the better you'll actually make your care.



And we've seen in many other surveys where people refer to stakeholders—it's just so generic and so cliché, the better alternative is the talk about and specifically identify who those stakeholders are.

So in healthcare instead of talking about stakeholders of care providers, say doctors, nurses and pharmacies. Instead of saying manufacturing or manufacturers, say we represent those who make plastics, or metals, or be as specific as you can. That will make your argument and your pitch, that much stronger.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's one from **Blake Wilson** in Mississippi, and I'm not sure if you'll have any specific data on this but maybe you'll have some insight, he asked if you've polled anything on the impact of Americans For Prosperity, which is an active group in a lot of these states.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Well I'm not sure polled them, AFP is pretty much big in every state, but we haven't polled anything about them. They're politically active, they can certainly mobilize grassroots, but no, we haven't polled anything about them.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's one last one from **Tom** in Indiana, he's asking for any suggestions that you might have for successfully educating their talented policy staff on his team who are very used to using policy arguments, and in many cases do you have any words that work or any general suggestions for them to go about training messaging.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Well, it's one of the hardest things to actually do effectively, because policy folks deal in policy and therefore their language is going to be in policy. It's like asking an attorney not to talk in legalese. So it just takes a lot of discipline and really having a toolkit that you can pull from.

And that's where some of these words and phrases that I highlighted today can be effective. And I'd actually just put the offer out there for anyone who wants to connect directly, just reach out to Bill and he can do an intro, I'd be happy to talk to anybody about doing one of these calls, not just on this survey but he have so much other data from focus groups, from other surveys, from past work examples where we've actually worked with trade associations and the business roundtable, the U.S. Chamber, individual companies asking about the economy and coming up with language on minimum wage, on mandates, we've done a ton of work and actually have ready language that you can use, so we'd be happy to connect with anyone offline if you'd like to talk about doing a training session of some sort.

**BILL KRAMER:** Yeah certainly reach out to me and I'll introduce you to David and get that connection made. **Don Boyd** has another question, he asks, do you



have recommendations for any other words to use other than reform, whether it's tort reform, or reforming certain laws.

**DAVID MERRITT:** That's a great, great questions because reform is one of those words that it's so empty at this point, it's so hollow, there are sometimes when there isn't anything else to use.

But instead of saying education reform, talk about improving schools. Instead of talking about healthcare reform, talk about improving patient health or improving access, the word improvement is the word or the phrase that we found is most effective to replace reform, because reform can be good or bad, particularly when it came to health reform it could be good or bad. But when you actually say you want to improve something, or strengthen something, or expand something, use an active word that connotes something positive and something better than just change. Because change can either be good or bad. But if you tell someone you're for effective education, they know you're actually focusing on improving education, not simply just reforming it.

So I would say those are a few words that I would recommend and that I would certainly use to great effect in the past.

**BILL KRAMER:** Here's another one on word advice. Are there any words that help against messaging going against TABOR laws?

**DAVID MERRITT:** I don't know what kind of laws those are.

**BILL KRAMER:** Like Taxpayer Bill of Rights, like they have in Colorado.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Oh, got you. Well we haven't done any research on that issue in particular. We've done a lot on taxes in general, and when you talk about the consequences, that's certainly one way to look at it, that if you're fighting a taxpayer bill of rights that would hurt your business, you talk about the word consequences, that's certainly one way I would start, another is to, to talk about, if it's a tax battle, most folks when polled them on taxes, they're less concerned a taxpayer bill of rights and they're more concerned about simplifying the taxes.

And you know we're not talking flat tax or postcard tax returns, but simplifying the task code is a word--actually I'll give you four.

These are four words that we've proven in a bunch of different surveys on taxes. People want a tax code that's fair, consistent, simple and straightforward. So those kind of, and my guess would be that a taxpayer bill of rights might get to be to the fairness aspect, but it probably wouldn't simplify it and it probably



wouldn't make it more straightforward, and it probably wouldn't make it more consistent.

So if you're looking to fight that in your state, fighting with simplification, being straightforward, and being consistent would be where I would come out. But again that's one of those things where we've done a lot of research in the past and we can actually do new research if you have a specific state battle that we could help with.

**BILL KRAMER:** Barry's clarifying his original question about the state versus federal, he says let me ask a little differently, he says many states seem to be doing well, but there is a cloud over D.C. that remains to have an effect on business overall, did you hear anything along those lines?

**DAVID MERRITT:** There's definitely, you definitely put your finger on it that people are much more optimistic about their state and local economies than they are about the national economy. A lot of what we ask is about not just how do you feel about today, but where are things going tomorrow, and there is a split between being optimistic about the future when you ask about the country versus asking about their families, themselves, their business, their career, their kids, if you ask it--the closer you get to people, the more optimistic they are, particularly on the Democratic side, and this is what's so interesting and this gets I think back to national politics.

Republicans think the country is going to hell, and they ascribe all responsibility to Barack Obama.

So when you ask about America, or the United States, or the national government, or the national economy, they immediately define it in a political way. But if you ask them about their state, if you ask about their family, if you ask them about their local economy, that is not clouded by their feelings for the president, and they give you a much more positive outlook.

That's pretty consistent. And I'm sure if you look back at data from 2006, Democrats would be much more pessimistic on the national level with George W. Bush as president then they were looking at their own states and local economies. So that's something that is fairly cyclical, and I think will change if a Republican is president next year you'll probably see that change pretty quickly.

**BILL KRAMER:** Well I think we've exhausted the questions. Wait. One more, a clarification from **Blake**, he says **what is the best language to counter Americans For Prosperity's stance against economic development?** So I guess, more generally, are there any language that would help going against a far right kind of group.



**DAVID MERRITT:** Hard to say. There are so many different battles in so many different states, I know in some states its over energy, and in other states it's over taxes and spending, so I'd say it's hard to pinpoint a particular phrase or strategy.

I think I would actually just say using those language strategies that I talked about, no matter if you're battling someone on the left or the right, if you take the middle ground, and you talk about the impact voters, or employees, or small business, or small business owners, or if you're getting more specific, on nurses, or on teachers or something like that, if you talk about personal consequences, or personal benefits, of a change or of a policy, you're simply going to build more support for your argument rather than trying to take someone's knees out with something that is much more partisan or much more polarizing.

So I know there be a desire to take somebody on the far left or the far right, and get into a brawl, but if when you do that, you become part of the political problem, you become a mudslinger, you want to try as much as possible to stay above the fray, and have your arguments focus on how you can actually help people, or businesses, or families. You're going to find that your arguments resonate much more so if you're arguing from that position rather than try to hit somebody in the mouth with a partisan fight.

Can I also add one last thing, Bill, that doesn't mean that I don't have experience doing that, I worked for Newt Gingrich for a long time, we worked with a lot of political organizations, and there are sometimes when you have to do that, but when you're talking about some of these issues that the business community needs to push back against, it's appropriate for other instances, it usually doesn't work when in you're in that kind of fight in a state capitol, where there's lots of media attention, where you're giving media interviews, you're doing sit-downs, you're talking to the rotary club, that kind of stuff, those aren't where you have those partisan fights. And ad wars and things like that, that's where I'm coming from when it comes to those issues.

**BILL KRAMER:** And one more quick request, could you please flip back to the main two slides, of the overview? And again these slides, as well as the full survey data, and a recording of this webinar will all be made available. I know that people attending will want to flip through these slides in a little more detail and take some notes, as well as anybody that was not able to attend today, will have a chance to listen to it. So I think this has been a fantastic webinar, I think the information you provided David has been excellent both in Marco and here, and I know we're going to be doing some follow up with you this great Q & A that we got going here has helped shape where we want to go with this on the next



installation. So thank you so much David, it's been really helpful for all of us, and we really appreciate you taking the time to go over all this with us.

**DAVID MERRITT:** You bet, it's been great working with you guys. And once again the offer's open to connect offline on anything specific in your state. We do a lot of state-based work. We've been in--I was in Alaska just this past month working on a state issue there, so we do a lot of work that's based strictly on what's needed in your state, we can tailor to that kind of work, so reach out Bill and I'd be happy to chat with you.

**BILL KRAMER:** Yeah and if anyone doesn't have my contact info ... and I'll either introduce you to David, or send you the slides, or whatever you need, so thank you everybody and have a good afternoon and a great weekend.

**DAVID MERRITT:** Thank you.

**BILL KRAMER:** Thank you.

