

An America that Works for All of Us

A Progressive Economic Narrative

Economic Narrative Working Group

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These slides present five key elements that together comprise a progressive economic narrative. They provide good language for making our basic case in speeches, written materials and interview settings. Specific language applying these principles to specific topics will be forthcoming following feedback on these general principles.

Slide 3 -- Main Pillars: sketches the key pieces of the narrative in five parts (or pillars).

Slide 4 – Summary Slide: Describes the basic concept to be conveyed with each of the five pillars of the narrative.

Detailed Slides:

Slide 5 – The Economic Problem

Slide 6 – What a Successful Economy Looks Like

Slide 7 – The Role of Our Government

Slide 8 – The Political Problem

Slide 9 – The Call to Action

An America that Works for All of Us: Main Pillars of the Story

1. Today working and middle class families are getting crushed while the wealthiest and most powerful interests are taking more and more.
2. The American middle class is the engine of our economy, a great source of strength to our nation. We all do better when we all do better.
3. A strong middle class doesn't happen by accident – we create it with the decisions we make together, guided by our shared values.
4. To build a strong middle class, we need our elected representatives to work for all Americans, not just the richest and most powerful.
5. We are fighting together to take back our country and rebuild the American Dream: good jobs, strong communities, high-quality education, the opportunity for all of us to realize our full potential, with liberty and justice for all.

An America that Works for All of Us: Key Concepts

1. Connect with our Economic Problem – Working and middle class families are struggling, while the richest get richer at the expense of the rest of us.

- American families are working harder and getting paid less, falling behind our parents' generation. Gone are the days when we all believed we had an opportunity to get ahead.
- Big corporations shipped jobs overseas and Wall Street speculators took more and more of America's wealth, getting rich quickly at the expense of American workers, and families.
- Too many Americans can't find good jobs and too many jobs don't pay enough to support a family.
- Big business bend the rules so small businesses can't compete.

2. What a Successful Economy Looks Like – Our middle class is the engine of the economy.

- The true measure of our economic success is the well-being of our families and the productivity of our nation, not the stock market and corporate profits.
- We all do better when we all do better. America is only as strong as its middle class.
- Our economic success is driven by innovating and investing in the future so that every American has a good job, can educate their kids, support their families and retire with security.

3. The Role of Our Government in the Economy – The middle class does not prosper by accident.

- We build a large and prosperous middle class through the decisions we make together; investing in our people, expanding opportunity and security, paving the way for business to innovate, and to do business in ways that create prosperity and economic security for Americans.
- When our country invests in each of us, we are more likely to succeed. And when we do succeed, we repay the people and communities who invested in us.
- Good government decisions and policies pave the way for families and businesses to succeed, and bad policies have made it harder.
- Markets in which the rules are rigged means suppressed wages, dangerous products, a fouled environment and bailouts for big corporations. We must establish rules of the road so that markets generate shared prosperity.

4. Our Political Problem – Our political system has been captured by the rich and powerful and corrupted by big money politics.

- The issue is not the size of our government, it's who the government works for – big corporations and the richest few or all of us?
- Today, CEO campaign contributors and Wall Street speculators legally bribe our elected leaders to rewrite the rules just for them and to look the other way when they break the law.
- Our democracy will only work again when we all have an equal voice in how our economy works. We have to take our democracy back to ensure that our economy works for all of us, not just the richest few.

5. The Call to Action -- We are fighting together for the American Dream.

- It's up to us to fight together for the American Dream: opportunity for good jobs, strong communities, shared prosperity.
- We are going to hold our elected representatives responsible for protecting and expanding the middle class, with a new Contract for the American Dream.
- Americans have done this before. This is who we are. This is what America is all about.

**1. Today, working and middle class families are getting crushed
while the richest are getting richer.**
(Connect with our Economic Problem)

- Faced with globalization, big corporations – boosted by trade deals and tax giveaways – abandoned Americans, shipping our jobs overseas and shuttering 42,000 American factories. Instead of making the investments needed to keep us competitive –in education, infrastructure, and innovation -- big business and Wall Street speculators – backed by the government they bought – went for the quick profit, at the expense of the rest of us and of America’s competitiveness with other countries. The rich got a lot richer – and the country weaker – by slamming the door on the middle-class and working families.

- Conservative economics – which call for leaving business alone and giving ever - bigger tax-breaks to the rich –wrecked our economy and crushed the middle-class. Big corporations shipped our jobs overseas instead of investing in America. Wall Street speculators got rich off the bubbles they blew and the rest of get poorer when the bubbles burst. And the only trickle-down was to corporate jets and luxury beach homes.

-Working and middle class families haven’t had a raise in a generation, but costs for the necessities in life – health care, education, housing, child care – keep going up and up.

-Over the last 30 years, elites have shifted our economic rules to favor the wealthiest over the rest of us; corporate executives over workers and unions; Wall Street over manufacturing; big business over small business, and the rich over the middle class.

- Big Oil, Wall Street speculators and CEO campaign contributors keep taking more, often directly at the expense of American workers, families and small businesses,

- Politicians handed millionaires and billionaires trillions in tax cuts that didn’t create any jobs, and are now asking our children and parents to sacrifice education and retirement for the deficit they created.

-For the first time, the majority of Americans fear their children won’t be better off than them.

-Too many Americans can’t find a job, and too many jobs pay wages that don’t support a family.

-Big business keeps breaking labor laws and busting unions, driving down wages and benefits for all working families.

Tested Talking Points:

-The people who wrecked our economy should be paying for it, not profiting from it.

-We stand with working families and the small businesses that create two-thirds of American jobs. They stand with the Wall St. speculators and CEOs who cut our wages, crashed our economy and shipped our jobs overseas.

- Most of us don't expect to be rich or famous, but we do expect to earn a decent living and good American benefits for a hard day’s work.

2. The American middle class is the engine of our economy.

We all do better when we all do better.

(What a Successful Economy Looks Like)

- Our economic success is driven by innovating and investing in the future so that every American has a good job, can educate their kids, support their families and retire with security.
- Our economy is sputtering today because middle class buying power is stalling, even as corporate profits soar.
- We believe that the success of the economy is measured by a strong, working middle class, which is open to all Americans. They believe that only the stock market and corporate profits matter.
- Trickle-down tax cuts for the rich haven't created jobs. Workers who can support their families and invest in their futures create the demand for products and services, which in turn creates jobs.
- We must replace the failed conservative ideas with a sound progressive economics that invest in our future so that even in a globalized world, all Americans can earn a fair share of the value we create.
- Every American should be able to work their way into the middle class.
- It's time for our leaders to commit to policies that protect and expand the middle class.
- America flourishes when Wall Street serves the real economy and real people – not the other way around.
- We need to provide better opportunities for the small businesses that create jobs in our communities and whose taxes pay for services in our communities.
- To drive our economy forward we need strong schools and world-class higher education that our families can afford.

Tested Talking Points:

- Americans should be working their way into the middle class, not falling out of it.
- It's time we started expanding opportunity and stopped shrinking the middle class.
- Our economy doesn't work if Americans aren't working.
- It's time America worked again for people who work for a living.

**3. A strong middle class does not happen by accident,
it's created by decisions we make together.**
(The Role of Our Government in the Economy)

-Back when our government promoted a strong and growing middle class, we provided families the building blocks of opportunity and security – good schools, affordable college, a minimum wage, the right to organize, unemployment insurance, Medicare and Social Security.

-We used to have an economic bargain between government, businesses and labor that shared our increasing prosperity, gave people a voice, and aimed for all Americans to do better. Big corporations broke that agreement, grabbing a bigger share of our wealth, cutting wages and benefits, shipping our jobs overseas - and crushing the middle class.

-Our leaders have an obligation to help grow the middle class. They are breaking that obligation by holding on to the failed policies that have shrunk the middle class.

We can invest in the future and build a large and prosperous middle class by the decisions we make together;

- Decisions to invest in our people, expand opportunity and provide security - a world-leading education, quality affordable health care, protections at work, retirement security.
- Decisions that will pave the way for businesses to innovate and meet the future: green jobs; fuel efficient cars and high speed rail; fixing our crumbling; bridges, roads, water and sewer lines; a modern, energy-saving electric grid; high-speed internet in every home and business.
- Writing rules that boost businesses that do the right thing: create good jobs here in America; make safe products; safeguard our food, water and air; save energy and make and install green sources of energy.

- We need to pave the way for entrepreneurs to innovate and small businesses to start, expand and hire workers.

-We only have a middle class when we write rules that reward hard work and we invest in our people and our future.

-The rules we make should reward business innovation, not Wall Street speculation.

-When our country invests in each of us, we are more likely to succeed. And when we do succeed, we should repay the people and communities who invested in us.

Tested Talking Points:

-Our economy isn't something that happens to us. It's something we make, together.

-The great American middle class didn't just happen. It was built, brick by brick.

-It was built by soldiers returning from war and a government that took seriously our obligation to them, by giving them a shot at a college education. It was built by businesses that hired American workers and valued a well-educated American work force. And it was built by labor—by the hard work of our parents and grandparents and the strength in numbers that came from unions that represented them.

4. To build a strong middle class, we need our elected representatives to work for all of us, not just the rich and powerful.

(Our Political Problem)

- Today, the rich and powerful legally bribe politicians to rig the rules in their favor- crashing our economy, crushing the middle class and wrecking our democracy.
- We're not broke, we've been robbed... By the Wall Street speculators who wrecked our economy and got bailed out. By the corporate lobbyists who bought our democracy out from under us. By the super-rich who paid politicians to cut their tax rates in half while their incomes went up 500%.
- Too many politicians have put the interests of a narrow elite – Wall Street speculators, bankers, multinational companies – ahead of the rest of us.
- Our democracy only works when all of us have an equal voice in making the rules we all live by. That's why we need to tear down barriers to voting and limit lobbying and big money campaign contributions.
- We must fix our democracy so that it is driven by ordinary Americans, not just the wealthy and powerful.

Tested Talking Points:

- We won't have a government that works for all of us until we take elections away from the rich and powerful and put our democracy back in the hands of ordinary Americans.
- Our government should ensure opportunity for every American family, not just those with the most money.
- When corporate lobbyists have the ear of our leaders, the voices of ordinary Americans aren't going to get heard.
- When our elected officials are voting on a bill, they should consult their conscience and their constituents, not their campaign contributors.
- It's time we returned to a government by and for the people, not bought and paid for by CEO campaign contributors.
- It's no wonder Washington is broken: it is full of corporate lobbyists who are trying to break it.
- Freedom isn't the right to buy your own member of Congress.

**5. We are fighting for our country and for the American Dream
– for good jobs, strong communities, liberty and justice for all.**
(The Call to Action)

When times are this tough, working families and the middle class need to work together to build a better life and make our country and our economy work for all of us.

It won't be easy, but it's up to us - everyday, ordinary Americans to hold our elected representatives responsible for protecting and expanding the middle class. We need to insist on a new Contract for the American Dream.

We owe it to our children to be sure that the American Dream is within their reach too.

We are fighting together to take back our country and rebuild the American Dream –good jobs, strong communities, high-quality education, the opportunity for all of us to realize our full potential – with liberty and justice for all.

Throughout the nation, from small towns to big cities, from town halls to state capitals to Congress, people are standing up to take back our nation from those who put profit before our country and greed before our families.

There are more of us (ordinary Americans) than there are of them (CEOs and the richest few); we can get America back on track if we use our strength in numbers.

- Our movement will accomplish, (for example):

If we stand together, we can put elections back in the hands of ordinary Americans,

We will make the people who got rich wrecking our economy pay to repair it and be sure that they are never put at the wheel again.

It's up to working families like us to demand an end to NAFTA-style trade deals and instead start making things in America again.

- We will end the tax breaks for millionaires and companies that ship jobs overseas, and instead invest in businesses that will create good jobs at home, strong schools and college opportunity for our children and shore up Medicare for our parents and for future generations.

Our movement believes:

-Just as we are responsible for ourselves, we share the fundamental belief that I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper.

-Americans have done this before. This is who we are. This is what America is all about.

-We believe America rises or falls together – one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

-When you stood in school and took the pledge of allegiance, was it a pledge for liberty and justice for the few, for the wealthy and powerful? Or was it a pledge for liberty and justice for all? That's the pledge I remember taking, liberty and justice in an America that works for all.