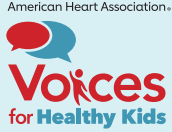




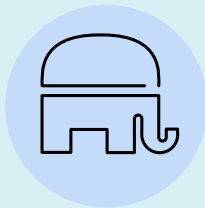
American  
Heart  
Association.



American Heart Association.

## MESSAGING:





# The Benefits of Local Decision-Making (without Preemption)







**This message platform includes four main message points to build a case for local decision-making.** It also uses non-polarizing communication techniques that foster understanding and pave the way to further dialogue and collaboration. Depending on the archetype that best describes the decision-maker you are meeting with, consider the related pivots, along with your own research and instincts, to shape your approach.

We tested initial messages with decision-makers, then adapted them based on what we learned. These messages have not been re-tested, so we are eager to hear from advocates how they work in real time.





## ENTRY POINT MESSAGE (DEPOLARIZING THE MEETING)

MESSAGES	WHY IT WORKS	 <b>CHURCH &amp; COUNTRY PIVOT</b>	 <b>ECONOMIC INFLUENCED</b>	 <b>LEGACY REPUBLICAN</b>	 <b>POPULIST-ALIGNED</b>
<p><b>“I’m guessing that you, like me, got into this work because you care deeply (about xxx, specific to the issue or archetype).”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Listen for priorities that you have in common.</li> <li>▶ Briefly share what got you into the work, focusing on needs and values you have in common.</li> </ul>	<p>Decision-makers described feeling judged in meetings with advocates. They may not know issues in as much detail and/or may sense that the advocate assumes they are actively working against health, families and communities. Acknowledging their values and conviction can help soften this edge. Keep in mind that helping everyone in their district is a common desire, as is keeping people self-sufficient and in the workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Helping families and serving constituents is a powerful motivator.</li> <li>▶ Lean into values related to faith, caring and service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Helping people be self-sufficient is a motivator.</li> <li>▶ Lean into values related to government efficiency and success for communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Building relationships and having conversations about problems is important.</li> <li>▶ Lean into values related to service, balance and contribution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Freedom and autonomy for people to create the communities they want are strong motivators.</li> <li>▶ Lean into individualism and choice values.</li> </ul>





## PREEMPTION MESSAGES

MESSAGES	WHY IT WORKS	 <b>CHURCH &amp; COUNTRY PIVOT</b>	 <b>ECONOMIC INFLUENCED</b>	 <b>LEGACY REPUBLICAN</b>	 <b>POPULIST-ALIGNED</b>
<p><b>LEVEL SETTING MESSAGE</b></p> <p><b>When people make decisions about their health—or the health of their children—their options depend on what’s available in their community. Those options are shaped by local policies.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pause to ask what comes to mind for them and to hear their take on health-related policies.</li> <li>▶ If possible, mention one or two policies or conditions you know they support, and the benefits that result, e.g., meeting the needs of babies and children, keeping the workforce healthy and on the job, attracting business to the area.</li> <li>▶ Know that the most common concern you may hear is that local laws during COVID-19 created many challenges. When this comes up, you might say: “Local areas tried many things during COVID-19. There were no perfect solutions, and we all learned a lot. By continuing to innovate together we can rebuild trust and collaboration. Can we find the places where local decision-making can further both of our goals?”</li> </ul>	<p>In interviews, decision-makers had limited knowledge about what is working to support babies, children and healthy families—both statewide and in local communities. They mostly named programs and access to healthcare—not policies. Offering a clear definition of the importance of policy can help you start from a place of shared understanding.</p>	<p>Take care not to imply that the decision-maker doesn’t know this. You might start this with “As you know,” or “I suspect we may both be in this work because we see how ...”</p>	<p>Be straightforward, clear and succinct. Progressive terms can be viewed as “virtue signaling”</p>	<p>Slow down and take some time to establish a relationship.</p>	<p>Be humble, friendly and avoid lecturing.</p>
<p><b>VALUES MESSAGE</b></p> <p><b>We all live in unique communities. One size typically doesn’t fit all when it comes to policies that help families be healthy, safe and secure.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What are the top concerns you are hearing about in your community? (Ask this first, listen and consider their perspective and expertise on their community.)</li> </ul>	<p>Even for people skeptical of local decision-making, the idea that every community is unique resonates strongly. Keep in mind that many state decision-makers also see themselves as local leaders who know their local communities.</p>				





## PREEMPTION MESSAGES

MESSAGES	WHY IT WORKS	 <b>CHURCH &amp; COUNTRY PIVOT</b>	 <b>ECONOMIC INFLUENCED</b>	 <b>LEGACY REPUBLICAN</b>	 <b>POPULIST-ALIGNED</b>
<p><b>CORE MESSAGE</b></p> <p><b>Policymaking at the local level allows innovation and creative problem solving that builds on local strengths and addresses local needs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local leaders know what people in their communities need, and where there are strengths to build on.</li> <li>▶ Local elected officials and health departments are strong allies when they have the needed expertise and resources, with state level support where needed.</li> <li>▶ Sometimes this looks like pilot testing, trying new ideas before expanding across the state.</li> <li>▶ For example: (Share examples of what local areas are doing or want to try. Make them relevant to the area, representing urban and rural contexts; show how health, jobs and other outcomes improved. Know that there is some concern about policies from liberal cities influencing action in more rural and/or conservative communities.)</li> <li>▶ Conversation starter, when you have time: Local elected officials have different ideas of what is most needed. (Offer examples of different local solutions to shared problems.) What do you think—should they be able to give it a try? What’s the worst outcome? The best?</li> </ul>	<p>This was the most influential message in testing: decisions should be made as close to the people as possible, in most cases.</p> <p>The idea of innovation—including pilot projects— appealed as a way to try out solutions.</p> <p>The second sub-point nods to the concern that many local elected officials are citizen lawmakers and people in part-time positions who may lack education, resources or expertise on issues. Demonstrate how and why local communities are equipped to make the decision in question, or what state support would be most useful while maintaining local decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ As long as they see local leaders as good people—and policies are perceived as moral and in line with family values— decision-makers in this archetype agree that local decision-making helps local leaders be accountable.</li> <li>▶ Helping families is a top priority, so you might say, “... local strengths and needs for families and all residents.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This group strongly opposes legislation and policies that increase the size of government, make people dependent on the government, or infringe on personal freedoms. Emphasize efficiency and ways the policy builds self-sufficiency and increases choice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Innovation has strong appeal, as long as there are facts that support the need and document the impact.</li> <li>▶ This group was especially concerned that local leaders may lack needed expertise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Innovation can be good, but some are skeptical of giving local politicians a blank check; show that there are checks and cross checks.</li> <li>▶ You might add: “Local decision-making gives people the freedom to create what they need to be—healthy, safe and secure,” a message that tested well with this group.</li> </ul>

# PREEMPTION MESSAGES

MESSAGES	WHY IT WORKS	 <b>CHURCH &amp; COUNTRY PIVOT</b>	 <b>ECONOMIC INFLUENCED</b>	 <b>LEGACY REPUBLICAN</b>	 <b>POPULIST-ALIGNED</b>
<p><b>CAUTION MESSAGE</b></p> <p><b>All leaders are accountable to their constituents. But sometimes the state restricts the freedom of local leaders to leverage local strengths and address specific needs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local business leaders, elected leaders and voters can work together to solve local problems. (When possible, having a business leader accompany you and speak about the benefits to business is most persuasive.)</li> <li>▶ I know you are accountable to all your constituents. Within local areas in your jurisdiction, local elected officials are also accountable to families and businesses.</li> <li>▶ For example: (Share examples of local areas that want to innovate but can't. Show how loss of local decision-making reduced health outcomes, weakened the workforce, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Freedom and individual responsibility are strong core values. This message links local decision-making to those values.</p> <p>Take care here not to imply that state legislators are intentionally interfering in or harming local communities. Stay focused on the positive actions that can happen when local decision-makers have the freedom to serve constituents' unique local needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ "I know you keep the best interests of all your residents in mind. Can we agree, however, that that can be harder to do at a broad level, and sometimes ..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This group prioritizes business success and believes that business—not government—knows best what is needed. They also believe in the free market and think that regulations make it difficult for businesses to prosper and thrive.</li> <li>▶ This archetype is also the most concerned about patchwork policies. Instead, position these as pilot programs and stress that the state can save money and time by testing new ideas before trying a full rollout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This group sees themselves as local leaders. Acknowledge their shared perspective and accountability with local leaders.</li> <li>▶ There is a belief that businesses know what they need; government best supports them by ensuring strong schools, safety and healthcare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ For many in this group, workforce issues are a hot topic and there was an immediate positive reaction to attracting a strong workforce.</li> </ul>

## CLOSING MESSAGE (WITH CONNECTION AND OPEN DOOR)

MESSAGES	WHY IT WORKS	 <b>CHURCH &amp; COUNTRY PIVOT</b>	 <b>ECONOMIC INFLUENCED</b>	 <b>LEGACY REPUBLICAN</b>	 <b>POPULIST-ALIGNED</b>
<p><b>“I know you are an independent thinker, you deal with many different issues, and you have to balance your desire to support local decision-making with state and federal policy. I imagine you’re caught in a real push-pull sometimes. I’m here to talk with you because I trust that together we can find a way to give local leaders the freedom to best serve your shared constituents.”</b></p>	<p>In interviews, state electeds shared that they sometimes want to support more local decision-making, but also want to align with party priorities, including the desire to limit laws and policies. Additionally, constituents often call them to express disagreement with local policies, so they may feel wary, especially about any policies they perceive to restrict individual freedom. (This is also a good reminder to encourage people who agree with local policies to voice that to their leaders.)</p>	<p>▶ This group is loyal to chosen leaders, but also deeply accountable to the people.</p>	<p>▶ This group prioritizes limited government.</p>	<p>▶ This group identifies as pragmatic and open to talking about and considering different solutions.</p>	<p>▶ This group is most likely to see themselves as independent thinkers who are different from other conservatives.</p>