

Revenue

Polling and Messaging

Our Challenge

Fundamental Disconnect with Voters

- Two months ago, only 14% of voters said they had a "great deal" of awareness about the state budget situation...
- ... but today, after 8 weeks of regular headlines about likely impacts on schools and human services, that number has soared to...

15%

Our Challenge

- Only half of voters are even vaguely aware of the state budget problem
- Only one-third of voters believe the state budget is in crisis
- The reason for the crisis?
 - #1 Answer (40%): "State leaders are wasteful"
 - #2 Answer (30%): "National economy"
 - #3 Answer (15%): "Corporations and wealthy not paying their fair share"

Our Challenge

- The solution for balancing the state budget?

Most voters say:

- The state already has enough money and can avoid cuts by reducing waste
- They favor cutting services (52%) over raising taxes (40%)

Our Challenge

To summarize:

- Voters are disturbingly unaware of the state's budget crisis
- If told there is a crisis, their first instinct is to blame the legislature for wasteful spending
- They're not in favor of simply raising taxes to fill the budget gap

The Good News

- Voters are deeply concerned about **preserving and creating jobs, protecting the vulnerable** (including students/schools), and making sure that **corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share**
- Polling shows that there is a path through this crisis – if we engage voters where they are and move them toward a balanced solution.

Talk about human needs, not "budget deficits"

The Good News

- Polling shows that when we raise awareness human needs, many voters are inclined to change their minds
 - For example, when told that "cutting services" means cuts to schools, healthcare and public safety, **61% favor preventing cuts** over preventing tax increases (36%)

Talk about impacts on students, families, learning, etc., not "budget shortfalls"

Messaging Triangle

- Balanced Approach
 - *Cuts where possible, revenue increases where necessary*
- Protecting the Vulnerable
 - *Protect seniors, children / students, the unemployed, low-income families; preserve and create jobs*
- Shared Responsibility
 - *Corporations and the wealthy should pay their fair share; don't increase the burden on the middle class*

Messages That Work

"Like the rest of the county, Oregon is hurting. And, like you, schools and state government are tightening their belts. Here in our school district we are..."

(describe local impacts to students, families, jobs, etc.)

Messages That Work

"We can't balance the budget on the backs of working and middle-class families, or students and teachers. It is unfair and irresponsible to further punish the people who have been hit hardest by the economic crisis – seniors, children, the unemployed, low-income families – by cutting the services they depend on. Here in our school district we are doing everything possible to protect students and classrooms, but..."

(describe local impacts on learning, students, families, etc.)

Messages That Work

"Cuts to education, healthcare and public safety only cost us more in the long term. This is a short-term crisis – we need to avoid cuts to vital services that hurt the long-term futures of our students, and the long-term health of our families and communities."

"Our school district is one of the largest employers in our community, and there is a real snowball effect when we are forced to lay off employees. A 2002 ECONorthwest study shows that for every \$1 million cut from schools, 27 school employees lose their jobs – and their lost wages cause 10 other people in the community to lose their jobs..."

Messages That Work

- "This is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis that requires bold steps from state leaders to create jobs and preserve education, healthcare and human services."
- "We need a balanced solution that protects the vulnerable and doesn't shift the burden to the middle class."
- "Oregon can no longer afford for two-third of corporations doing business here to pay the \$10 minimum income tax. Profitable corporations and the wealthy need to carry their share of the burden through these tough times."

Messages That Work

To review:

- Talk about “human” need, not “budget” need
- Talk about “fairness” – *protecting the vulnerable, without balancing the budget on the backs of the middle class*
- Talk about “balanced solution” – *cuts where possible, preservation of critical services, and revenue increases so that corporations and the wealthy (the “who” is important) pay their fair share*
