



To: Interested parties  
 Fr: SEIU Colorado and Our Story – The Hub for American Narratives  
 Re: Colorado poll with key insights into economic messages that work across constituencies  
 Dt: 10.9.18

Overview: In June, SEIU Colorado commissioned Strategies 360 to do a poll of Colorado voters<sup>1</sup> that we believe has some important findings for messages and narratives that work with the general public and have particular appeal to three key constituencies: core Democratic voters; drop-off Democratic voters; economically distressed voters who include equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats and are among Whites, predominantly non-college. The messages identified, several of which were tested against powerful conservative messages, incorporate key ideas about the economy and the role of government, how to address dog-whistle racism and attitudes toward labor unions.

Context and Constituencies: Earlier this year, SEIU Colorado and a coalition of labor, policy and community groups in Colorado worked with Our Story – The Hub for American Narratives to develop a Colorado Economic Story, a short narrative that tells a progressive story about the economy and the role of government and refutes the well-known conservative story about free-markets, limited government and taxes. The poll aimed at testing key elements of the Colorado Economic Story as well as messages aimed at addressing dog-whistle racism and attitudes towards unions.

The poll tested how well messages worked among three constituencies that are frequently looked at: all likely voters, highly reliable Democratic voters and Democratic drop-off voters (more likely to be young and of color). We also wanted to look at voters who are economically distressed. To do this we asked those polled to pick from 3 choices regarding their personal situation: 1) live comfortably and can save for the future; 2) get by each month but struggle to save or meet unexpected expenses; or 3) have difficulty making ends meet.

	<u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Democratic primary</u>	<u>Democratic drop-off</u>
Live comfortably	49%	53%	37%
Get by but struggle	40%	35%	48%
Difficult to make ends meet	9%	9%	10%
<b>Total "economically distressed"</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>58%</b>

---

<sup>1</sup> Strategies 360 conducted a live telephone survey of 500 general election voters (GEVs), 387 Democratic primary voters (DPVs), and 200 drop off voters in Colorado. Interviews were conducted May 29-June 6, 2018. A combination of landline and mobile phones were called to ensure greater coverage of the population sampled. The margin of error for the GEV sample is ±4.4% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for the DPV sample is ±4.9% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for the drop off voters is ±6.9% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error is higher for subsamples.

The people who were more likely to say they are economically distressed than those who say they are financially secure are: just as likely to be Democrats as Republicans; much more likely to be women (56%) than men (41%); slightly more likely to be of color (53%) than White (48%). *White non-college voters are much more likely to White non-college (61%) than college educated Whites (35%)*. By focusing on economically distressed voters, we are clearly talking to the half of Coloradans who do not feel the state’s economic boom in their personal lives. This is an important constituency not just in Colorado, but across the nation.

**The key finding from a communications point of view is that messages that work well with both drop-off and economically distressed voters will appeal to: younger voters; voters of color; and non-college White voters.**

Progressive narrative messages on economy and government beat conservative messages among all four constituencies: We tested three core progressive messages, ones that underpin the [Progressive Economic Narrative](#) and [Colorado Economic Story](#). We asked people to choose between the progressive message and a powerful conservative message, drawn from messages used by Republicans in Colorado. The table below shows that the progressive messages rated much higher by all four audiences:

<u>Progressive message</u>	<u>Conservative message</u>	<b>Difference between progressive and Conservative Messages</b>			
		<u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Econ distressed</u>	<u>Dem drop off</u>	<u>Dem primary</u>
A Colorado where our economy and democracy work for all of us, not just the wealthy few. (Split sampled).	A Colorado with limited and accountable government, low taxes, and a prosperous and growing economy.	+27	+32	+53	+48
Working families and the middle class are the engines of the economy. When we have good jobs so we can care for and support our families, educate our children, afford our health care, shop in our neighborhoods, and retire in security, we drive the economy forward and build thriving communities.	Businesses and entrepreneurs are the engines of the economy. When we reduce barriers to starting a business or make it easier for them to invest and hire, it helps workers and communities thrive.	+13	+17	+28	+52
The question is not whether government is big or small, it’s who government serves. In Colorado, we want a government that works for working families and the middle class, not just the very wealthy and big corporations.	Prosperity and opportunity come from the ingenuity and hard work of individuals and entrepreneurs, not from government. In Colorado, we must ensure government does not expand its reach into functions more appropriately left to the private sector.	+11	+14	+36	+53

In Colorado, a state with a strong tradition of Western individualism, the progressive messages win by double-digits with all voters and with the economically distressed voters, who among Whites are largely

non-college. And these messages are home runs among both Democratic base and drop-off voters. Note that among all White non-college voters the progressive messages prevailed by 14 to 18 points.

Testing the “race-class” narrative in Colorado: We also wanted to test the message recommendations on how to address the use of race to divide working people from recent [research](#) sponsored by Demos. We asked people a Colorado version of the key message recommendation from that research: “Please tell me if you would be more or less likely to support a candidate for governor who made this statement:

No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us in Colorado work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and corporate lobbyists hurt everyone by holding down wages and benefits, handing huge tax breaks to the very wealthy and big corporations, and cutting the funds needed for our public schools. Then they turn around and point the finger for our hard times at poor families, Black people and new immigrants. We need to elect new leaders who will put the interests of working people first, whether white, Black, and brown.

Colorado voters are clearly receptive to this message:

	<u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Econ distressed</u>	<u>Dem drop off</u>	<u>Dem primary</u>
More likely	61%	65%	81%	85%
<b><i>Much more likely</i></b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>66%</b>
Less likely	18%	16%	6%	4%
No impact	16%	12%	9%	8%

The findings above help reinforce the Demos sponsored research that you can talk about race in the context of the powerful dividing people to enrich themselves and it will appeal to a wide cross-section of voters.

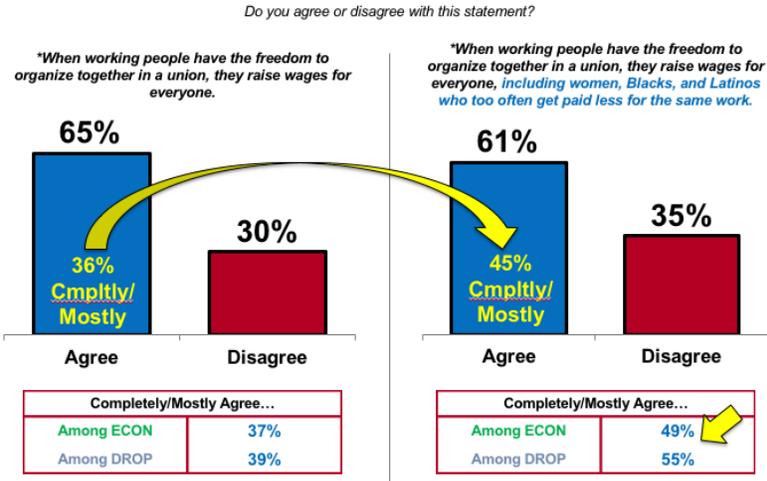
Attitudes toward labor unions including a message that boosts support and impact of race: Our research found that while most Colorado voters have neutral or positive feelings about labor unions, it is easy to make a case that unions help build thriving communities by enabling working people to negotiate for better wages. In addition, both economically struggling and drop-off voters are more positive on unions than the general electorate. A pro-union message that is race specific increases intensity of support among voters, while losing only a little overall support among likely voters.

Coloradans have neutral or favorable views of unions, dwarfing those with negative opinions:

<b>Attitudes towards labor unions</b>	<u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Econ distressed</u>	<u>Dem drop off</u>	<u>Dem primary</u>
Favorable	29%	33%	35%	59%
Neutral	38%	40%	41%	30%
Unfavorable	27%	21%	15%	6%

In addition, big majorities of all constituencies would be more likely to support a candidate for governor who says: “We need to hold corporations accountable when they try to deny employees a voice on the job by interfering with employees’ freedom to join a union.”

We found that adding a race lens to the well tested “freedom to organize a union” message boosts intensity of support among likely voters and among economically distressed and drop-off voters, as summarized in this slide from Strategies 360:



We also tested the impact of using a message frame included in the Colorado Economic Story to the freedom to organize a union message. That frame is “Our success depends on the success of those around us.” Adding this, and concluding with a reminder about the impact of raising wages on families increased support for unions among the key constituencies we seek to reach, as seen in the following:

<u>Progressive message</u>	<b>Difference between agree and disagree</b>			
	<u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Econ distressed</u>	<u>Dem drop off</u>	<u>Dem primary</u>
Our success depends on the success of those around us. Our communities thrive when all working people have the freedom to organize together in a union and negotiate fair wages, so they can care for and support their families.	+32	+46	+70	+78
When working people have the freedom to organize a union, they raise wages for everyone.	+35	+41	+62	+70

**Conclusion:** The polling in Colorado reinforced the power of core progressive messages about the economy and role of government, which we would encourage progressives to use as foundational messages in their communications. In looking at economically distressed voters as well as drop-off voters, we identified messages that move both key constituencies and are a way to reach non-college White voters and voters of color. We also found that we can effectively include a race lens in our messages and tell a clear story about how race and the economic well-being of working people are tied together.