

**HOW TO
TALK ABOUT
IMMIGRANTS
IN AMERICA**

 **NEW MESSAGING**
IMMIGRATION

Winning messages

Engage our Base of Support,
Persuade Americans in the Middle,
& Provoke the Opposition
to reveal their true colors.

This new immigration messaging was developed with the input of over 100+ advocates from over 50+ allied Labor, Progressive, and Immigration organizations. We then refined the best messages through 6 focus groups of voters in 3 cities and then dial-tested these with a national representative sample of 1145 voters (MoE +/- 2.9%). These are the words that work for us to talk about immigrants in America. Use the words that work in order to win the immigration debate.

**Thank you for using
the words that win.**

Define America*

“America is a nation of values, founded on an idea - that all men and women are created equal. **We hold these truths to be self-evident that all people have rights, no matter what they look like or where they came from.** So how we treat new immigrants reflects our commitment to the values that define us as Americans. We believe that families should stick together, that we should look out for each other, and that hard work should be rewarded. **You see, it's not about what you look like or where you were born that makes you American - it's how you live your life and what you do that defines you here in this country.** That's why all Americans who love this country very much deserve a common sense immigration process, one that includes a roadmap for people who aspire to be citizens.”

* Best top-testing message overall.

Dignity of Work*

“Out of many cultures, our country’s strength is grounded in our ability to work together as fellow Americans. From those who cook the food that we eat to those who create innovative businesses, new immigrants realize the value of working hard and doing your part in exchange for the blessings of liberty. **As Americans, we all do our part to contribute, and we’re all the better for having hardworking new immigrants as contributing members of our communities** by being customers in our stores, paying payroll taxes, and giving to local churches and charities. All Americans living here come from diverse backgrounds and many different places; we are united by a deep respect for those who work hard for a living and a shared commitment to the country we all call home. **America works best when we all do our part and work together as one nation, indivisible and strong.”**

* 2nd Best top-testing message.

People Move*

“The same is true today as it has been throughout history: **people move to make life better for themselves and their families. It’s hard to move - to pack up everything and go to a new place takes courage** - but you do it in order to put food on the table, to provide for your family, or send your kids to a decent school. **Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country.** People move in order to improve life, and we believe that moving to make a better life for your family is one of the best things and one of the hardest things a person can do. **One of the values we hold dear to our hearts is a deeply rooted belief in the freedom to be who you want to be, say what you want to say, and go where you want to go.** America is supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave - that’s a good thing so let’s keep it that way.”

* Best response to ‘rule of law’ arguments.

Roadmap to Citizenship*

“America deserves a common sense immigration process, one that includes a roadmap for New Americans who aspire to be citizens. Everyone agrees that the current patchwork of policies and programs is mismanaged and broken, and it breaks up families. For those currently striving for citizenship, the current maze of regulations provides no light at the end of the tunnel, because there’s often no line to get into for becoming a fully participating American. For aspiring citizens, the essential rights of citizenship should be attainable by taking a test of our history and government, paying an appropriate fee, and pledging allegiance to our country. **People move their families here to the land of freedom and opportunity, in order to provide a better life for their children and contribute to our culture in this country.** In order to do our part to welcome newcomers, we need to create a common sense immigration process that recognizes the hardships and contributions of people moving here, keeps families together here in this country, and **creates a roadmap to citizenship for New Americans who aspire to be citizens.”**

* Best message for the policy debate.

Re-Branding Immigrants

DO SAY: Aspiring Citizens, New Americans, New American Immigrants

Aspiring Citizens ranks #1 among base (38%) and persuadable (38%) voters. As a contrast, the previously suggested language ‘undocumented worker’ only gets minor support from base (12%) and persuadable (16%) voters. New Americans ranks a close 2nd with base (36%) and persuadable (27%) voters. Using these new ‘brands’ for immigrants will establish a sense of shared values and shared identity with Americans.

DON'T SAY: Illegal Aliens, Illegal Immigrants, Undocumented Workers

The only reason to put the words ‘*illegal*’ & ‘*alien*’ next to each other is to criminalize and dehumanize a person as the basis of an anti-immigrant argument. ‘*Illegal*’ is an ethnic slur that will soon sound like ‘*colored*’ or ‘*wop*’ (which stands for “without official papers”). This language is designed to win the argument for our opposition. One person said in a post-survey interview, “Illegal is bad. Legal is good.” As right-wing wordsmith Frank Luntz says, “The labels used to describe [immigrants] determines the attitudes people have toward them.” You will lose the argument using their terms.

Change the Frame

DO SAY: Freedom to Move, Land of Freedom & Opportunity, People Move

With near unanimity, when asked to explain “who are immigrants”, our allies respond “people who move.” Moving is a shared experience for most Americans (70% of voters surveyed moved from the county they were born in), and most of us can relate to the hardships associated with moving. Connect this to the freedom to move, which is our unassailable moral high-ground. ‘Freedom’ was the #1 word association with ‘America’ in our focus groups, freedom is a dominant American value, and our laws must abide by our values (we change those that don’t).

DON’T SAY: Rule of Law, Broke the Law, Secure our Borders

Moving to the USA is not a criminal act, and focusing on the ‘rule of law’ in this debate leads many to neglect our values as Americans. Debates often devolve to the point where someone will say, “but they broke the law” and then the argument is over. As one brave DREAM Activist said, “This is a losing narrative. Accept criminality in the narrative, and the immigration reform ‘solution’ will treat immigrants like criminals. It’s that simple.”

Always Remember:
*The Base is the Best Messenger of
the Message.*

In advertising, “**brand advocates**” are loyal customers that spread the word to their friends and family about a product, and substantial advertising dollars are spent on cultivating and equipping these advocates. Politically, our “brand advocates” are our base of supporters, who will spread our message if they like what they hear. Messages are like a baton that must be passed through millions of people in order to gain political traction. If we say something that is opposed to their values, they will not spread our message. If your message does not spread, your words do not work. Winning is persuading uncommitted people to accept the assumptions held by our committed base of support, and that begins with training our base camp with words that work, that they will spread, and that are persuasive. The language presented above is new immigration messaging that *engages the base, persuades the middle, & provokes the opposition.*

Thank you for using words that win.

IMMIGRATION **NEW MESSAGING**

A COLLABORATION OF:



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