



REAL CHANGE, NOT POCKET CHANGE

Messaging Guide

Overview and Goals

As costs keep rising and the job market stalls, too many people are left feeling like nothing will change and that politicians in power have failed to deliver on the kitchen table issues that matter most: wages, housing, food, and health care. Any policy progress made under the Biden administration hasn't been felt fast enough by working people who are now watching a Trump administration that promised to bring down inflation instead reward the billionaire class at working people's expense.

That's why we're launching a campaign to build momentum for the economy we deserve, while calling out the people profiting off our pain. This campaign centers the voices and experiences of voters of color and working-class communities who've been hit the hardest and ignored the longest. It's about shifting the conversation from vague promises to real, material, and immediate wins. Anything short of that will lead to further disengagement from voters as we head into an all-consequential 2026 midterm election.

We aim to do this through the **“Real Change, Not Pocket Change”** campaign, a narrative rooted in lived experience and grounded in the reality that working people need real change instead of pennies – and we need it now.

It's direct, bold, and true to what we hear every day in our communities — and turns that frustration into a demand for relief while creating a sharp line between performative politics and real progress.

→ “It's time for our fair share, not shares for billionaires.”

- “I want a full fridge, not billionaire tax breaks.”
- “I want a living wage, not more debt and stress.”
- “It’s time for affordable housing, not investor profits.”

At the heart of this campaign is a simple truth: Most Americans are putting in the work and getting little to nothing in return. It’s time for real change and a quality of life we can afford – not unchecked wealth for billionaires.

We invite partners to adapt and amplify this message across social media, email, organizing events, voter outreach and day-to-day communications, helping people name what’s broken and demand what’s overdue.

Campaign Key Messages

Overview

The following key messages are intended for State Tables and partners to use throughout the campaign to engage communities and push for economic justice. Use these across digital content, in-person conversations, public events, and coalition communications.

Consistency helps us build power, but language can and should be adapted to local context and audience. What’s critical is that when we name what’s wrong, we also name what we’re fighting for and how people can take part.

Vision/Values

Lead with value messages meant to answer the questions: Why are we launching this campaign? What kind of world are we working toward?

- We all deserve to have our basic needs met: fair pay, affordable housing, health care that doesn’t leave us in debt, and a chance to build a future for our families.
- The working people who keep our country running — people with resilience in their DNA, people who kept the language of their grandparents, people who are the firsts in their family, people who love courageously and with pride — deserve real change that can make a material difference in their lives.
- The government and our elected leaders should put our needs first, not the interests of billionaires.
- We know there’s a better way. We’re here to demand an economy that works for us. One built for real change, not pocket change.

Challenges

What's standing in the way and who's responsible?

- Ultra-wealthy corporations and billionaires are raking in record profits while we're left choosing between rent, groceries, seeing a doctor, and keeping the lights on.
 - Whether it's electricity bills, sky-high rent costs, food, school supplies, gas, or car insurance, we just can't keep up with how expensive everything has become.
 - Last election, we were told by the people in charge that tackling inflation would be a top priority. Instead, our government is handing out tax cuts to billionaires by cutting down our healthcare and food stamps.
 - So while the rich get much richer and politicians keep paving the way for it, the working people who keep this country running are left footing the bill.
 - None of this is a coincidence. Billionaires and self-serving politicians know that if our interests take priority, theirs go on the back burner. That's why they're making it even harder for us to fight back.
 - They want us tired, distracted, and divided because they think as long as we're scrambling to keep up with rising costs, we can't focus on who is responsible.
 - They've seen the power we have when we organize for real change. And now we're done settling for less while they keep taking more.
 - [Insert local/state-specific example: a housing fight, health care policy win or cost-of-living stat.]
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Solutions

What can we do and what does progress look like?

- We're demanding real change, not pocket change. It's time for working people to benefit from America's economic growth — the growth that we power, every day.
- We're not waiting around for the next generation to fix this. We're fighting for the change we need right now.
- There are real solutions that will help communities and working people – and we can fight for them, now. This is about:
 - Raising the minimum wage to a living wage for all.
 - Freezing rent and building affordable housing to protect renters from skyrocketing costs.
 - Expanding the child tax credit to ensure that it works for low-income families.
 - Expanding state Medicaid programs to increase access to affordable health care.

- [Insert local/state-specific example of a policy or issue the State Table is focused on]

No more broken promises. We are done with headlines, hashtags or hollow speeches. We want **real change**, not pocket change.

Calls-to-Action

What do we want people to do?

- Support champions for real change on November 4 in Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and New Jersey, and Virginia.
- Tell your state legislator about the kind of change you want when state legislative sessions open early next year.
- Use your voice to advocate for change:
 - “I want real change, not pocket change.”
 - “I want a raise that actually means something.”
 - “I want housing I can afford, not more investor profits.”
 - “I want food on the table, not billionaire tax breaks.”
 - “I want leaders who put people first, not billionaires first.”
- We’re the ones showing up and putting in the work. Now it’s time we decide where the money goes.
- Visit **statevoices.org/real-change** to get tools, get connected and take the next step.
- Get ready to demand *Real Change, Not Pocket Change* in 2026. There are tons of issues relevant to our communities that are soon to be on the ballot. Learn more about how you can get involved via **statevoices.org/real-change**.
- [Insert state-specific action: join a get out the vote campaign, show up at a town hall, whatever moves real change near you.]

References

- Oxfam’s [data](#) on wealth inequality (2025)
- Navigator [polling](#) on Trump + Congress’ budget (2025)
- We Make The Future + ASO Communications’ [guide](#) to messaging our freedoms (2025)

- Data for Progress’ [survey](#) on how the Democratic party should approach the economy (2025)
- Pew Research Center’s [survey](#) on how Americans view the economy (2024)
- Brookings’ [research](#) on economic concerns shaping the youth vote (2024)
- Yale University [research](#) on naming villains (2024)
- Gallup’s “[Mood of the Nation](#)” poll (2023)
- We Make The Future + ASO Communications’ [Race/Class Narrative](#) (2020)