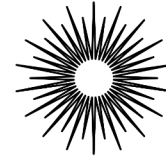




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Navigating Anti-Trans Attacks During the Next Few Weeks

October 2024

Transgender Freedom Alliance Action

- Effective approaches to avoid falling into opponent traps during election season.
- Research-based messaging for:
 - Electoral campaigns
 - Independent expenditures
 - Candidates and elected officials
 - Other communicators
- Focused on “do no harm” in the short-term—not long-term persuasion (which doesn’t happen in a matter of days or weeks)
- Intended for use with conflicted/ moveable/swing audiences

The Team

Project leads

- Adrienne Kimmell (independent)
- John Neffinger (coordinated)

Community Advisory Council

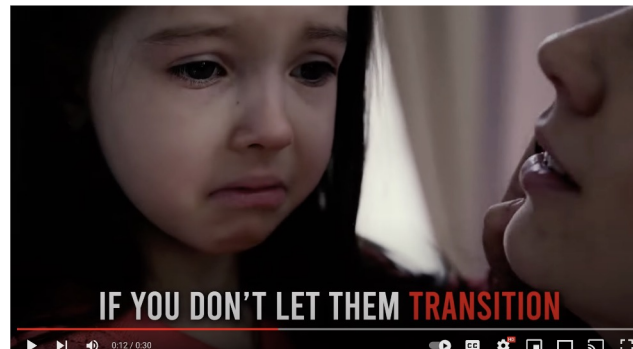
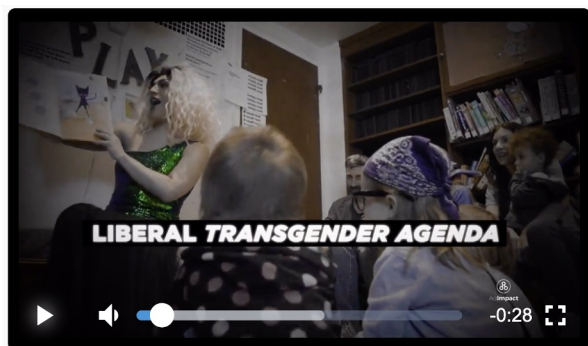
- Partners from the transgender community at the national and state level

Research Advisory Council

- Partners at opinion research firms

Understanding the “Why” Behind These Attacks

Stoking Fear



Anti-trans and right-wing groups are using fear of the world changing, plus appeals to nostalgia and protecting kids (and protecting girls, in particular) to stoke anxieties around chaos and fear.

These attacks are also being used to change the subject away from right-wing vulnerabilities and toward fear-based attacks where they can activate strong, negative emotions and othering.

Rampant disinformation and misinformation

The Debate Over Transgender Care and Detransitioning

Readers discuss a column by Pamela Paul about children with gender dysphoria who regret their transitions.

The New York Times

TikTok brainwashed me into being transgender — now I'm detransitioning

By Asia Grace

Published July 7, 2023 | Updated July 8, 2023, 9:02 a.m. ET

NEW YORK POST

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson talks bathrooms, suggests transgender people should go 'outside'

WUNC 91.5
NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC RADIO

Nassau County bans transgender athletes from competing at public facilities

BY REBECCA GREENBERG | NEW YORK CITY
PUBLISHED 10:40 PM ET FEB. 22, 2024

SPECTRUM NY
NEWS 1

Intel agency DEI training features the 'gender unicorn' and 'transgender terminology'



Opponents' Tactics

1. **Use anti-trans attacks (particularly focused on trans youth) to activate fear and alarm in voters during the final weeks before Nov. 5 for political purposes.**
2. **Leverage those attacks in an effort to paint inclusive candidates as extreme.**
3. **Try to bait LGBTQ/allied advocates into engaging with the attacks, which opponents can exploit to increase visibility of the attack and further stoke conflict via the media.**



Our Approach:
Ground. Pivot. Don't Take the Bait.

Navigating These Dangerous Attacks

We want to do what we can to make sure these attacks don't have their intended effect.

It's important to remember that effective persuasion on these issues requires audience engagement and layered conversations. It's simply not possible to do this at scale in the days or weeks before Nov. 5; there's just too much noise and information competing for people's attention.

But while persuasion in such a noisy environment is hard, our opponents know that fearmongering is easy. That's why they're launching these attacks now. *The timing is not a coincidence.*

Our issue-specific messaging for navigating these dangerous attacks uses three common approaches:

1. **Ground** the conversation in shared values or, if needed, in naming the motive behind the attack.
2. **Pivot** the conversation to issues that are highest priority to voters. In this election, that involves things like the economy and lowering costs, education, and affordable healthcare.
3. **Don't take the bait.** Our opponents *want* us to engage with them on these attacks—because if we take the bait, we'll amplify and raise the visibility of their attacks. That's why our approaches are rooted in an understanding of what opponents are trying to do—and the importance of not playing into their hands.

Evidence-Backed Messaging

Research Partners



Blue Rose Research



WORTHY
STRATEGY
GROUP



Methodology

- Randomized controlled trials
- Metaphor Elicitation
- Online focus groups
 - White non-college women
 - Black men
 - White college men
 - Conducted on May 14th and 15th, 2024
 - Persuadable voters in battleground states
- Remesh (qualitative research with larger sample size)
 - Conducted on May 16th, 2024
 - Persuadable voters in battleground states
- Nationwide survey
 - Black and Latino/a oversamples

Overall Framing Recommendations

Our Priorities

1. Our main priority is to not help opponent attacks gain traction in media. **During the next few weeks, this might mean leaving responses to campaigns and/or committees, rather than responding to attacks/stories/news we might instinctively react to at any other time.**
2. If a response is needed, consider reaching out to us to discuss further. We may be able to help work thru response scenarios.
3. Before engaging on the specifics of an attack, try to respond using **only the Overall Framing on slide 15**. This is a different way of messaging for many of us. It's more like rapid/crisis response, not our movement's usual educational messaging.
4. If you must provide an issue-specific response, consult slides 18-23 for guidance.

Overall Framing

- These attacks are designed to tear us apart. Everyone is tired of the petty destructive politics. Let's turn the page and chart a new way forward.
- More than ever, Americans are working hard to make ends meet. We need leaders who focus on the needs of the American people, not politicians stirring up divisions for their own political gain.
- So while certain politicians are trying to create a big panic around transgender kids, our leaders should be focused on raising incomes and lowering everyday costs so working families have the tools and opportunities needed to build a good life.

Guidance

1. When possible, **DO** use the first message and let that be the end of the discussion (though in some cases, we know more may be needed).
2. If more is needed, **DO** refocus the conversation on the economic priorities that are most important to voters in this moment: lowering costs, raising incomes, affordable healthcare, and more.
3. **DO** consider naming what opponents are doing here: **trying to create a big panic and stirring up divisions for political gain.**
4. **DON'T** engage in anything that could register as name-calling. It escalates conflict and may be interpreted by voters as being directed at them.
5. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples. Return to these points whenever possible. If you do need to speak to specifics, see slides 18-23.

Example: VP Harris Response

You've probably seen all of these negative ads against me, well here's the deal:

They are designed to tear us apart.

But here's the truth. My life's work has been fighting on behalf of others. It's why I became a prosecutor, district attorney, and attorney general. I took on drug cartels and human traffickers to protect our communities.

Look: Everyone is tired of the petty destructive politics. Let's turn the page and chart a new way forward.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zC8MvqfY-Nk>

Issue-Specific Recommendations

TALKING POINTS

Healthcare

- Healthcare decisions for a young person who is transgender should be made by **parents and doctors, who know the situation best – not politicians.**
- *If pressed:* Banning doctors from providing healthcare to transgender young people would have serious unintended consequences. Politicians are getting in the way of doctors who have years of training and experience and are trying to practice according to professional standards of care and know what is best for their patients. This is their area of expertise, not politicians’.
- *If pressed on regret:* The decision to seek transgender-related medical care is not something that anyone – whether young OR an adult – is able to rush into. The **expert medical standards require extensive screening**, doctor’s visits and counseling. It would be impossible for a person to decide they want to transition one day and make an irreversible decision the next.

Guidance

1. When possible, **DO** keep any response focused on the **first message**. If you need to go beyond that first message, discuss bans as **bans on healthcare** (see #2 below).
2. **DON’T** use terms (e.g., “gender-affirming care”) that are unfamiliar to voters or imply that this care is different from other medical care. Instead, use everyday, relatable language like **healthcare** or **medical care**—for example, **essential health care, medically necessary care**.
3. **DO** focus on the roles of **parents and doctors**, and how politicians shouldn’t be banning parents from getting their child the care they need.
4. **DON’T** get baited into engaging on specific examples. Return to the point that parents—**not politicians**—should be the decision-makers on these issues.

TALKING POINTS

Youth Sports Participation

- Local schools and sports associations should be handling this issue, not politicians.
- We need elected officials focused on the needs of the American people, like **lowering everyday costs for working families**.
- These **attacks are designed to tear us apart**. Everyone is tired of the petty destructive politics. Let's turn the page and chart a new way forward.

Guidance

1. **DO** emphasize that local schools and athletic leagues should make these decisions, not politicians.
2. **DON'T** engage in a prolonged back-and-forth. These messages are short for a reason. After you make the core points clearly, pivot to an emphasis on concerns and priorities held by most voters—e.g., lowering costs for working families.
3. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples. The point is that politicians are not the qualified decision-makers on these issues.
4. **DON'T** argue in this setting that sports should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Sports often have “blanket” rules and they are not applied case-by-case, making that argument ineffective.

TALKING POINTS

Incarceration & Healthcare

- These attacks are designed to tear us apart.
- I'm focused on our work fighting on behalf of others.
- Everyone is tired of these petty destructive politics. Let's turn the page and chart a new way forward.

Guidance

1. **DON'T** repeat the attack. There are no issue-specific counter-messages here that don't take us down rabbit holes.
2. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples.
3. **DO** speak to the division that opponents are seeking to stoke—and in terms that make it clear that opponents are on the wrong side of voters' priorities.
4. **DO** be forward-looking—both in terms of your own work (e.g., “our work fighting on behalf of others”) and in terms of moving past opponents' tactics (“turn the page, chart a new path forward”)

TALKING POINTS

Forced Outing

- Most **parents** know their kids would come to them if they needed help.
- And **we all want kids to be safe**. Unfortunately though, **not all kids** live in homes where healthy communication happens, and some transgender teens are afraid of getting kicked out of their homes, beaten, or worse.
- We should not **force teachers to put those kids in danger** and violate that trust they build with their students.
- My focus is **making sure our schools are funded**, and **every child has access to high quality education and the mental health resources they need** – not passing more laws about transgender kids.

Guidance

1. **DO** invoke the shared value of keeping kids safe and show empathy for the emotional burden this places on teachers.
2. **DO** pivot to broader educational issues.
3. **DON'T** use *freedom* framing in this context. An emphasis on *keeping kids safe* is better-aligned with shared values and effective persuasion on this topic.
4. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples.

TALKING POINTS

Restrooms

- Politicians are trying to make an issue out of transgender people using a bathroom to **score political points and scare people**.
- While they're focused on who is using what bathroom, we **should be focused on the needs of the American people: lowering costs, raising incomes, and getting our economy back on track**.
- These **attacks are designed to tear us apart**. Everyone is **tired of the petty destructive politics**. Let's **turn the page and chart a new way forward**.
- *If pressed*: These bans will just **create more confusion and are impossible to enforce**. They would force transgender people who have already transitioned, and look like the gender they transitioned to, to use the restroom of their birth gender. This will just cause more confusion and discomfort for everyone.

Guidance

1. **DO** name the motivation of opponents, and then **pivot quickly**.
2. If pushed, **DO** highlight the confusing and difficult nature of enforcing these bans and question enforcement realities.
3. **DON'T** engage in a prolonged back-and-forth.
4. **THINK CAREFULLY** before talking about the fact that existing laws make harassment illegal. This may evoke complex reactions that can be difficult to navigate in this particular setting.
5. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples.

TALKING POINTS

Number of Genders

- **As we all know**, the vast majority of people identify as either male or female.
- For a few people, their situation is more complicated. **I'm not a scientist**, but I do know that for that small number of people, their experience of gender is different.
- The important thing is that **every American, no matter their gender, is respected and protected** the same as every other American.

Guidance

1. **DON'T** get into the weeds when talking about gender and gender identity.
2. **DO** pivot to the shared value of making sure every American, no matter their gender, is respected and protected from discrimination.
3. **DON'T** get baited into engaging on specific examples.

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