



CLIMATE

solutions

for a stronger

AMERICA

A guide for engaging and winning on climate
change & clean energy



Americans have suffered through much extreme weather this year, from frighteningly early and massive wildfires in New Mexico and Colorado, to rain-starved drought conditions in over half of our nation's counties. Climate change is no longer a thing of the future; it is here now. Citizens are experiencing it in their daily lives,ⁱ and they are also paying for it with taxpayer dollars for firefighters, crop insurance, and natural disaster aid. They know their children and grandchildren face a very uncertain climatic future.

Opinion research shows clearly that the reality of climate disruption is shifting the political landscape. Americans *overwhelmingly* want action to address the threat of climate change, and they strongly support clean energy. In a May, 2012 poll of over 1200 likely voters, a hypothetical "all of the above" candidate supporting more drilling for oil and gas, tapping into our nation's 400 year supply of coal and investing in clean energy technologies was pitted against a candidate in favor of rapidly developing clean energy like wind, solar and geothermal and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. The clean energy candidate received more support, including from Independent voters. A majority supported the clean energy candidate and disagreed that given the tough economy, we can't afford the high cost of transitioning to clean energy. Solid majorities also disagreed with the statement that there is "nothing we can do about climate change." Leaders who effectively communicate a vision for a smooth transition from fossil fuels to clean energy now have a potent strategy for a stronger America, as well as for political success.

While many have approached climate change cautiously, Americans have grown impatient with the lack of action and the excessive influence of fossil fuel interests. They respond positively to honest, confident problem-solvers who will lead our communities, nation and world to a stronger and safer future. This guide is for those leaders.

Betsy Taylor, President
Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions, LLC
August, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Voters are seeing the effects of climate disruption in their daily lives, are concerned about the impacts, and are hungry for leadership and solutions. A large body of recent research shows a solid majority of voters respond favorably to confident, pro-clean energy, climate leadership messages grounded in three core American values:

RESPONSIBILITY.

*Message theme: **Stepping up to the climate challenge is the right and responsible thing to do.** Message elements include:* (1) We can't ignore the increasingly severe weather. Extreme weather is dangerous and not normal. (2) We owe it to our kids and grandkids to protect them and that means addressing climate change before it becomes irreversible. Running away from tough problems only makes them worse. (3) We need to implement common-sense strategies to reduce risk.

PATRIOTIC PRIDE.

*Message theme: **America can rise to the challenge and succeed.** Message elements include:* (1) No one should doubt America's ingenuity and resolve. Those who say nothing can be done about climate change forget who we are and what we can do. We don't run away from a challenge. (2) We already have the energy technologies to run our economy cleanly and affordably. American businesses and scientists have developed amazing renewable energy technologies, including solar mirrors that magnify the power of the sun, efficient wind turbines and jet fuel from algae. (3) America can build a healthier, more secure future by leading the world in clean energy solutions. Developing clean energy creates jobs, strengthens local economies, and helps us gain control of our energy future.

ACCOUNTABILITY.

*Message theme: **We can't allow the billionaire Koch Brothers and Big Oil to continue to rig the system and block clean energy solutions.** Message elements include:* (1) Dirty fossil fuel companies are holding back progress. (2) They have rigged our political system, paying off politicians to keep a stranglehold on Washington. (3) They pay for deceptive campaigns to spread doubts about climate science and the role of fossil fuels in causing climate change.

The three themes function together as a narrative: Stepping up to the climate challenge is the right and responsible thing to do. America can rise to the challenge and succeed. We can't allow Big Oil to continue to rig the system in Washington and block clean energy solutions. This narrative triangle stands alone as a strong message strategy, and can be used to outmaneuver opposition message attacks. It also positions climate and clean energy leaders to gain the upper hand on jobs and the economy, while driving the conversation back to this powerful message triangle. (See: "Taking the high ground on jobs and the economy" below.)



INTRODUCTION:

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP

Is there a winning political narrative for tackling our climate problem? After a period of flux in American opinions, there is now a clear answer emerging from multiple lines of research: *Confident leadership on clean energy and climate is a winner.*

Three out of four Americans now acknowledge climate disruption is real, and more than two out of three believe we should be doing something about it.

Oil industry propaganda and misinformation is being pushed back by the force of the wildfires, floods, droughts and **violent weather that people see with their own eyes.**

Voters are hungry for forward-thinking solutions and can-do leadership. Yet few leaders are talking about the issue. There's a huge political opportunity here.

Voters are strongly supportive of clean energy, and extremely distrustful of oil and coal companies who distort science and oppose responsible policy.

Concern about the issue is high among registered voters. A majority of Democrats and Independents say that the presidential candidates' views on global warming will be an important factor in determining their vote. Although the economy remains voters' highest concern, **solid majorities agree that global warming should be a priority for the President and Congress, and that the U.S. should undertake medium- to large-scale efforts to reduce it.**

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
<i>A candidate's view on global warming will (be one of several important issues or the single most important issue) that influences my vote for President this year</i>	63%	58%	43%
<i>Global warming should be a (medium, high or very high) priority for the President and Congress</i>	84%	68%	52%
<i>The U.S. should make a (medium- or large-scale) effort to reduce global warming</i>	82%	68%	44%

Source: C. Roser-Renouf, A. Leiserowitz & E. Maibach (2012) The Political Benefits to Candidates of Taking a Pro-Climate Stand in 2012. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

WHY USE THE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NARRATIVE?

Voters want honest, tough-minded leaders. They will support problem-solving leaders rather than those who only speak with campaign platitudes. A pro-climate action position wins votes among Democrats and Independents, and has little negative impact on Republican voters. Independents look more like Democrats than Republicans on the issue: they lean toward “climate action” and support policies to reduce America’s dependence on fossil fuels and promote renewable energy.

The clean energy narrative also fits with a larger narrative about our economy and future: *Fat cats have too much influence in Washington. We’ve seen the devastation that comes when big banks aren’t regulated – they almost crashed our economy. Every day we read about another case of financial corruption, from rigging interest rates on our mortgage payments to Wall St traders stacking the deck against average Americans. And now, Big Oil, the billionaire Koch Brothers and oil-related SuperPacs are actively working to block clean energy by spreading lies and buying off politicians in Washington. They don’t want clean energy to hurt their oil profits.*

The stakes could not be higher. History will judge us on what we do on this issue, and voters respond well to the truth about tough challenges when it’s told with courage, determination, and optimism.

HOW DOES THE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NARRATIVE WORK? HOW CAN I USE IT?

This is a playbook for clean energy and climate heroes—for candidates, private sector innovators, and civic leaders who want to lead our nation from dependence on fossil fuels to a safe, job-creating clean energy future. Based on empirical testing, we have developed a compelling narrative, sharp responses to likely attacks from opponents, and rhetorical tools to stay rooted in values, frames, and stories of real people and communities rather than just in policy proposals and data. This framework is designed to be applied across a range of communication venues: sound bites for the media, major public speeches, debates, and op-eds. It equips users to win on climate and clean energy by taking the offensive and speaking to core values – confidently and consistently championing Americans’ ability to step up to problems, drive solutions, and build a better future. Trainings and professional coaching on critical elements of this guide are available upon request.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH & GUIDE

Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions, LLC, (BSS) a consulting firm concentrating on climate solutions and sustainable development, commissioned a national survey of likely voters to determine how leaders can engage and win on climate and energy in key races around the country. Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., a leading national public opinion and research company, conducted a telephone survey of 1,204 likely 2012 voters (margin of error of 2.8 -5.7, by question.)

The poll found three key themes, outlined below, that establish a solid foundation for candidates and other leaders to successfully talk about climate and clean energy solutions. This guide also draws on several additional surveys on climate and clean energy conducted over the past year. Numerous communications and campaign experts were consulted during the development of the final guide. The project was led by Betsy Taylor, principal consultant and President of BSS and was supported by several individual donors. The guide and complementary training materials were developed by BSS in cooperation with Project New America, OnSight Public Affairs, and KNP Communications.

KEY FINDINGS AND MESSAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

A national survey of over 1,200 likely 2012 voters conducted in May 2012 yielded three key findings and corresponding message recommendations. These have also been validated against an extensive body of communication research. Each element evokes a core *value* that is vital to swing or independent voters: responsibility, patriotic pride, and accountability.

KEY FINDING 1:

Extreme Weather

Voters have taken note of the nation's unusual and severe weather—the tornadoes, heat waves, wildfires, and drought. The public clearly gets that *something* is going on with the climate because they see it in their own lives and on the news. Some are still uncertain about the causes of climate disruption, but **three out of four now recognize it is real.**

Underlying Value:

Responsibility

Message:

We can't ignore the increasingly severe weather: it's already causing billions in damage and looks like it's only getting worse. We owe it to our kids to protect them and their futures, and that means addressing climate change before it becomes irreversible. Running away from tough problems only makes them worse. That's not how America works. We need to implement common sense strategies now. We know what's right, we know how to implement clean energy solutions, and we know that reducing fossil fuel dependence will make America stronger. It's time to step up and get it done.

Talk about current and recent weather. Spend less time talking about what may happen in the future and more on severe weather and impacts happening now. Use local examples, but also refer to the wildfires, drought, and major storms that have been in the national news.

Introduce "climate disruption." Begin to use "climate disruption" instead of climate change when speaking about extreme weather and local impacts. "Disruption" makes it slightly harder for people to dismiss unusual events as being caused by natural weather cycles.

Focus on destructive weather, not just heat. Destructive, costly, and unpredictable weather events are more unsettling to voters than just record high temperatures. Voters do connect higher temperatures to destructive wildfires and drought.

Talk about kids and grandkids. In America, we put families first and that means making sure we leave a healthy, secure world for our kids and grandkids.

In early August, the nation's top climate scientist at NASA reported that things are going to get worse and that climate change must be addressed now if we want to make sure our kids have a safe future.ⁱⁱ

Message Pivot: Use the message triangle to link to messages grounded in the other two core messages of *patriotic pride (#2)* and *accountability (#3)*. “We have a responsibility to act, and American ingenuity can drive the solutions. It’s time to break the stranglehold that Big Oil and Coal has on Washington – a stranglehold that is preventing us from taking action on climate change.

KEY SUPPORTING FACTS: Extreme Weather/ Responsibility

When describing severe weather, these are powerful specifics to cite:

- **Over 1300 counties have been declared national disaster areas** due to drought, losing billions of dollars in agricultural production, exports, jobs, and income.
- Carbon dioxide levels have risen **more in the last 50 years than in the previous 2000 years.**ⁱⁱⁱ
- There are **more intense hurricanes and tornadoes, and more droughts and wildfires**, and their severity is getting worse.
- So far, 2012 is the hottest year on record in the United States and daily temperature records have been broken all across the country. Many parts of our country had very little winter. We are having the worst drought in fifty years. The national weather service reports that the cost of weather-related disasters has increased dramatically in the past few years.^{iv}
- The insurance industry is getting hit hard. Every year their losses are increasing as they are forced to cover damages from extreme storms, fires, droughts and floods that they say are connected to climate change.^v Our homeowner’s policies will be going up.^{vi} We need to prepare and take action to make our communities and nation safe again.
- The nation’s top climate scientist says things are going to get worse and that climate change must be addressed now if we want to make sure our kids have a safe future.^{vii}

KEY FINDINGS AND MESSAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDING 2:

American Ingenuity and Solutions

Voters are hungry for optimistic solutions and confident leadership regarding climate change and clean energy. Voters believe in the potential of clean energy and in our nation's ability to overcome challenges: **Two-thirds disagreed** that "given the tough economy, we can't afford the high cost of transitioning to clean energy" and that "there is nothing we can do about climate change."

Underlying Value:

Patriotic Pride

Message:

No one should doubt America's ingenuity and resolve. Those who say nothing can be done about climate change forget who we are and what we can do. We already have the energy technologies to run our economy cleanly and affordably. American businesses and scientists have developed amazing renewable energy technologies, including solar mirrors that magnify the power of the sun, efficient wind turbines and jet fuel from algae. America can build a healthier, more secure future by leading the world in clean energy solutions. Developing clean energy creates jobs, strengthens local economies, and helps us gain control of our energy future.

Voters are seeking confident leaders who are willing to take on the complex problems of our times. Without strong leadership, climate change can be intimidating. Remind voters about practical, available clean energy technologies and solutions available today instead of focusing primarily on solutions projected for the future.

To counter messages that portray clean energy as unrealistic, **take the patriotic high ground. Make the case that the United States has already developed the technologies and has the solutions** we need to make the transition to renewable energy.^{viii} Give simple and visual examples of solutions. Here's one: many technologies have been developed to take advantage of geothermal energy—the heat from the earth. Instead of drilling for more fossil fuels, we can drill down to the steam and hot water in the Earth and use that heat for our homes and office buildings.^{ix}

Talk about clean energy solutions as a source of job creation, a strategy for America to take control of our energy and economic future, and a way to avoid carbon pollution. Use local examples of solar, wind, environmental buildings, or carbon-reducing transit systems that have generated jobs in your community or state. Renewable technologies are positive, clean, and forward-looking -- suggesting a better tomorrow. Naysayers are selling America short and underestimating our capabilities.

Message Pivot:

Use the message triangle to link to the other core two messages grounded in responsibility (#1) and accountability (#3): Americans don't run away from big challenges. We turn them into big opportunities. We have a responsibility to our kids. But Big Oil and the Koch Brothers are standing in the way: corrupting our political process and blocking American clean energy innovation. It's time to take our future back, and clean energy's a great way to do it.

KEY SUPPORTING FACTS:

America has the solutions

- American businesses and innovators have developed renewable energy technologies, including huge solar mirrors, new efficient wind turbines, and jet fuel made from rapidly growing algae.
- Small businesses are sprouting up in cities across the country with a focus on gathering food and lawn waste, keeping it out of landfills, and using it to help rural farmers and urban gardeners with compost. When we do this, we **save money** by **reducing waste**. We **create new businesses and jobs**. And we **reduce methane** – one of the worst forms of global warming pollution.^x
- Independent academic studies show that a sustained investment of public and private dollars in clean energy would generate 1.7 million new jobs in industries like construction for making homes and office buildings more efficient with new windows, lighting and cooling systems – and in manufacturing of solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicles.^{xi}
- Investing in efforts to reduce carbon and other power plant pollution as required by the Environmental Protection Agency's clean air rules will create an estimated 1.46 million new jobs in the next few years.^{xii}
- From 2008 to 2009, the most recent year for which we have the statistics, clean energy jobs in California outpaced jobs in the rest of the state economy at a pace of three to one.^{xiii}
- From landing on the moon, to creating the Internet, to decoding human DNA, American know-how has created opportunity and progress for our nation and world.
- Clean, renewable energy is a bright spot in the U.S. economy. This industry is a success story that has resulted in job creation, scientific innovation, cleaner air, and a stronger manufacturing sector. When we invest in clean energy, we invest in a safer future, and we keep our money and jobs in our communities rather than padding the pockets of Big Oil.
- Whenever possible, use clean energy stories and solutions from your own community and state to support your clean energy narrative. Stories and examples of success are available from numerous sources including the Rocky Mountain Institute, the American Wind Energy Association, www.dailyclimate.org, National Renewable Energy Laboratories, Climate Solutions, Green for All, Climate Progress, and your local universities and clean energy organizations and businesses.

KEY FINDINGS AND MESSAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDING 3:

Big Oil and Coal are Blocking Clean Energy

Voters recognize that big fossil fuel companies have an unfair amount of influence over energy policy decisions in Washington. **They see Big Oil as a greedy corporate actor** that coordinates with SuperPacs, the billionaire Koch Brothers, and corrupt politicians to manipulate our government, pad their profits, and suppress clean energy innovation. Voters understand, correctly, that the undue influence of fossil fuel interests is an obstacle to progress. This finding allows us to construct a powerful narrative that puts climate and clean energy champions on the offensive (with messages 1 and 2), and associates opponents with fossil fuel interests that voters deeply distrust. **Nearly six out of ten voters are troubled a lot or a fair amount by “oil companies pouring tens of millions of dollars into so-called super-PACS advertising campaigns in order to influence key elections.”**

Underlying Value:

Accountability

Message:

It's time to break the stranglehold that the oil and coal companies have on Washington. They are rigging the system to pad their profits, block clean energy innovation, and prevent responsible action to protect our kids from climate disruption. They pay for deceptive campaigns to spread doubts about climate science and the role of fossil fuels in causing climate change.

Call for political leaders to hold oil and coal companies accountable and fight back against corporations that are “rigging the system” against clean energy and “not playing by the rules.” Remind the public that, “What’s best for the oil companies is not what’s best for the American economy and the American people. And especially not what’s best for our children’s future.”

Challenge the credibility of opposition claims by letting voters know that the fossil fuel companies are conducting a deceptive media campaign to spread doubt – distorting science, manipulating our political system, and blocking America’s progress toward a reducing dependence on oil and coal. ***It's the same strategy the tobacco companies used to hide the deadly impacts of smoking, and some of the same people are behind it.***

If it's felt like we haven't made fast enough progress in this country in tackling climate change because there's been a lot of uncertainty in the science -- Guess what? There's been a coordinated, well-funded effort by the petroleum industry to MAKE the American public feel confused and to delay progress in this critical area. I'm reading from a memo from the American Petroleum Institute, stating "Victory will be achieved . . ." (See below for details.)

Message Pivot:

Use the message triangle to link to messages grounded in the other two core messages of responsibility (#1) and patriotic pride (#2). Oil and coal companies can never convince us that fossil fuel dependence is a good thing. So they deny climate science and undermine clean energy. The truth is that clean energy is abundant and affordable and essential to a healthy future.. No one should doubt America's ingenuity and ability to meet this challenge. Those who say that nothing can be done about climate change forget what America is capable of. We can't ignore the growing reality of severe weather – and we owe it to our kids to protect them, and that means addressing climate change before it becomes irreversible.

KEY SUPPORTING FACTS:

■ **Oil company Super-PACs** are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to influence elections and lobby Congress.^{xiv} They are attacking clean energy and **rigging the system** to protect their profits.

■ **Exxon has paid 40 organizations to create doubt in your minds about the settled science of climate change, using some of the same PR people the tobacco companies used.** They are trying to manipulate the media to convince you that fossil fuels don't hurt our environment. They are lying.^{xv}

■ A memo from the American Petroleum Institute revealing their deceptive strategy says "Victory will be achieved when average citizens 'understand' uncertainties in climate science." But the National Academy of Sciences calls the science behind climate disruption "settled fact."

Use this API memo as a prop.

Hold it up and read from it: – an example of American Petroleum Institute and fossil fuel efforts to spread lies, and block progress toward the clean energy future our children need.^{xvi}

TAKING THE HIGH GROUND ON JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

Fossil fuel interests are painting climate and clean energy solutions as anti-jobs. But our research shows that voters are more inclined to *align* clean energy with economic priorities, rather than pit them against each other. Leaders who confidently articulate that alignment are on solid political ground.

This strategy focuses on winning the jobs and economy high ground *within* the core message triangle, rather than making it a separate message. Confident leadership on jobs and the economy can be part of each message element, and can be used to drive the conversation back to the “home turf” of the message triangle, as follows:

#1 - Responsibility – *Stepping up to the climate challenge is the right and responsible thing to do.*

Economy and jobs: An economic strategy that promotes fossil fuel dependence and mortgages our kids’ future is no strategy at all – it’s just stealing from the next generation. We need jobs, not bubbles and pyramid schemes. We have the responsibility, *and the ability*, to build our economy on a solid foundation. We owe our kids an economic strategy that works for them and for us, and that requires a responsible climate and energy strategy.

#2 - Patriotic pride – *America can rise to the challenge. Don’t underestimate what we can do.*

Economy and jobs: The American economy is powered by leadership, innovation, and developing practical, cutting-edge solutions. There’s no economic future in digging and burning more fossil fuels. The nations and businesses that lead the clean energy race will be the winners; those who allow fossil fuel interests to dominate their energy policy will be stuck at the back of the pack with dirty, outdated energy systems. It’s time for America to choose the winning path and lead the way.

#3 - Accountability -- *We can’t allow Big Oil to rig the system and block American solutions.*

Economy and jobs: Oil and coal are not cheap. We pay at the pump. We pay with tax subsidies. And as climate disruption gets worse, our tax dollars pay for natural disaster aid, crop insurance and firefighting planes. When you really stop and think about it, we are being asked to pay an unthinkable price: to forfeit a healthy future for our kids. Clean energy technologies create far more jobs than coal and oil, but fossil fuel companies have got us over a barrel. We’ll keep paying at the gas pump and subsidizing Big Oil with our hard-earned tax dollars until we break Exxon’s stranglehold on Washington. With a level playing field and fair policy, American clean energy can compete. Without those policies, America will fall further behind, as our global competitors win the race to a secure clean energy future. It’s time to take our political system and our energy future back from Big Oil.

ANTICIPATING AND RESPONDING TO ATTACKS

These responses can blunt attacks while pushing opponents back to the “home turf” of the message triangle.

Attack: *Clean energy costs too much.*

What costs too much is what we're doing now. 1300 counties have been declared disaster areas due to drought, losing **billions of dollars** in crops, exports, and income. This year's wildfires have cost us billions more in firefighting and emergency aid. Clean energy is practical, affordable, and inexhaustible – it's the fastest growing energy sector around the world. America has the **know-how** to power our economy with clean energy – IF we break Big Oil's grip on Washington.

Attack: *We still don't have proof that this is caused by humans.*

We're all entitled to our own opinions, but we're not entitled to our own facts. 9 out of the 10 hottest years on record have been in the last decade. Destructive weather is getting more common – just like the scientists warned it would if we did not reduce our carbon emissions. These are facts, not political positions. The longer we delay solutions, the more expensive they get. Denial is not a responsible strategy. It's time for solutions.

Attack: *Clean energy sounds good, but it's unrealistic.*

What's unrealistic is expecting our weather to go back to normal if we just ignore it, or relying on fossil fuel industries to do what's best for Americans. Clean energy technology is proven and economical. Other countries are gaining a competitive edge, using our technology, while oil company lobbyists tell us it's “unrealistic.” Building a healthy, secure future for our kids isn't “unrealistic.” It's our job.

Attack: *Oil creates jobs here and it's cheap. Why are you so opposed?*

Oil dependence is an economic dead end. It's too costly, too dangerous, and it lets oil companies and the Koch Brothers control, and seriously harm, our future. We can create far more jobs and tackle climate change with clean energy. We **already have the know-how**; we just have to break Big Oil's stranglehold on Washington so we can move forward with solutions.

Attack: *You think higher gas prices are good.*

The only way to beat high gas prices is to reduce oil dependence. But you (opponent) want to increase our dependence. Let's get real. We're seeing how big banks rig interest rates. How Enron rigged electricity rates. And how oil companies rigged gas prices. We can't have affordable energy and transportation choices until we break the stranglehold that the big oil companies have on Washington. All clean energy companies need is a **level playing field** to compete with Big Oil so America can innovate, move forward, and develop clean energy solutions. But you support policies that stack the deck against home grown clean energy.

Attack: *Solyndra is what happens when politicians give out tax money to cronies.*

Let's get the facts straight: The loan program that funded Solyndra was set up by the Bush Administration, and it has a 95% success rate. But Solyndra went bankrupt, because it was beaten out by competitors in **China and Germany, where they are out-investing us in clean energy.** If we give up every time there's a failure, our competitors will leave us in the dust. We have to push forward with confidence.

Attack: *The Keystone XL Pipeline would create good American jobs and lower gas prices.*

Keystone is a big oil company boondoggle. It would take Canadian oil and sell it overseas: Oil companies would get the profit, foreign countries would get the oil, and we'd get a few hundred jobs patching pipeline leaks and trying to keep the oil out of our groundwater. And tar sands are a very dirty energy source. Our kids deserve better.

Attack: *Solar panels and windmills cannot provide enough energy for the US.*

There's no shortage of sun or wind or American ingenuity. There's a shortage of political courage to stand up to the bullying of the oil companies. Many of our competitors like China and Germany are racing ahead into leadership positions while oil companies try to intimidate America into thinking we can't compete. Will we step up to the plate, or let Big Oil hold us back with obsolete technology and backward policy?

SAMPLE OP-ED OR SPEECH

Climate Solutions for a Stronger America

For as long as I can remember, America's leaders have warned against the dangers of fossil fuel dependence. Every President in my lifetime has sounded the alarm, and each one has pledged to tackle the problem. Yet we are now more dependent than ever on fossil fuels that drain our economy, threaten our health, and destabilize the climate.

Our moment of reckoning is now. Extreme weather is taking a deadly toll across America. Floods, fires, and droughts are forcing people from their homes. Over 1300 counties were declared disaster areas in July due to drought – the largest “natural” disaster in U.S. history, and a direct hit to global food supplies.

Destructive, extreme weather like this is not normal. It is caused by climate disruption. And climate disruption is caused by carbon pollution from fossil fuels. These facts are troubling, but they are facts. To say that no single weather event can be attributed to climate disruption is like saying that no single case of lung cancer can be attributed to a particular cigarette. Smoking causes cancer. Fossil fuels cause climate disruption, which causes more extreme weather. We know these things. It's our responsibility to act.

Politicians who deny or duck this reality are perpetrating a dangerous deception on the American people. Spreading doubt and confusion may be good for Exxon and the billionaire Koch Brothers, but it's bad for America. Denial is not a good enough strategy for our kids' future. It's no strategy at all – it's just politics, and it's just dead wrong.

Running away from big challenges is not the American way. Time and time again, American ingenuity and hard work have led the world in tackling our biggest problems, and developing our best

solutions. The energy and climate challenge should be no different. Practical, economical, clean energy technologies are available now. Energy efficiency opportunities are abundant and cost-effective now.

[Describe a local example of how clean energy is working. Clean energy innovators, projects and companies are everywhere. Some of the best examples are prominent local businesses who have reduced their costs and improved their competitiveness by making their operations and facilities more energy-efficient.]

American scientists and innovators developed the most successful clean energy technologies, but America lags behind in implementing them. Our economic competitors are pulling ahead in the race to a clean energy future, *using American technology*.

Why are we falling behind? Well, there's no shortage of sun or wind or ingenuity in America, that's for sure. There's no lack of hard-working people. But we do have one big obstacle to overcome, a roadblock in our journey to break free of fossil fuel dependence: Big Oil.

Oil companies and other fossil fuel interests are rigging the political system with lobbyists, campaign ads, and barrels of money for the politicians who protect their profits. They are polluting our democracy even more aggressively than they pollute our air and water. They are holding us back in order to pad their profits and keep their grip on political power. They are willing to risk everything – including a safe future for our children and grandchildren – to guarantee that no energy source can compete fairly with dirty fossil fuels.

America has a job to do, and we can't let Big Oil stop us. We have to step up to the climate challenge. We have to take control of our future. We have to get to work building a stronger economy today and a healthier, clean energy future for our kids

And *we know exactly what to do* – we can build a clean energy economy based on efficient use of domestic, renewable energy sources. There is no *technology barrier*. There is no *economic* reason to delay; every dollar we spend on clean energy now is a dollar we take back from fossil fuel companies and invest in our communities. Smart, practical, clean energy solutions create more and better economic opportunities when we need them most..

The only real obstacle is political. It's a leadership problem. And it is time – right now, in this election – to step up to that challenge. Big Oil has plenty of campaign money – *our money: the money we put in the gas pump and the subsidies they get from the politicians they buy*. But we've got something more powerful – the unbounded energy and determination of the American people. History will remember us for how well and boldly we use that energy now to take back our democracy, our energy policy, and our future from the fossil fuel interests.

WORDS TO USE WHEN COMMUNICATING SUCCESSFULLY ON CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Here are some strong words and phrases that can reinforce the 3 core messages outlined above and put opponents on the defensive.

Responsibility

- Americans don't run away from problems. We tackle them. We deliver solutions.
- In America we put families first, and that means protecting our kids and grandkids from climate disruption.
- Denial is not a strategy.
- Increasingly Extreme/ Violent/ Severe/ Dangerous/ Destructive Weather
- Floods, droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, "derechos," tornadoes
- Just turn on the TV/ Watch the news/ Look Around/ Go Outside
- Billions of dollars in damage
- Drought turned 1300 US counties into official disaster areas – the largest natural disaster in U.S. history
- Climate disruption
- 2012 on track as the Hottest Year in Recorded History
- 9 of the 10 Hottest Years on record occurred since 2000.
- The extreme weather is not normal / unnatural
- Confront risk. Face facts. Stand up for solutions.
- Protect our kids and grandchildren
- Building a healthy future for our kids isn't a pipedream. It's our job.
- I'm a straight shooter. I believe in facts – I don't try to distort them.
- Common-sense strategies/ approaches

Patriotic pride

- We already have the technology [site a story or example immediately, like: wind and solar are the fastest growing energy technologies worldwide; clean energy creates more jobs and local economic activity for each unit of energy delivered]
- Anyone who doubts that we can take this on doesn't know what America is capable of. American Ingenuity, What America is capable of, American know-how
- Landing on the Moon, Internet, decoding the human genome, LOCAL EXAMPLES
- Americans pioneered clean energy technologies, but Big Oil is blocking them.
- Other countries are gaining competitive advantage using technology made in America.
- Lead the world
- Create new jobs, new industries
- Level playing field
- Our military is moving quickly to renewable energy sources because they know that our reliance on oil makes us vulnerable.
- Practical, cost-effective clean energy technologies: Solar mirrors, advanced wind turbines, algae-based biofuels to run jet engines
- Americans step up to a challenge and deliver solutions.
- Practical, local clean energy solutions keep more money and jobs in our communities.
- Take our energy dollars back and invest in our communities, invest in American solutions.

Accountability

- What's best for the oil companies is not what's best for the American people.
- Making record profits.
- They get us at the pump and they get us again in Washington (subsidies).
- What other business gets to dump their pollution in our air and water for free?
- Stranglehold on Washington / our energy policy/ our political system.
- Rigging the system
- Clean energy needs a level playing field
- The same people who told you cigarettes don't cause cancer are telling you that climate change is not a problem. Who are you going to believe?
- Holding us hostage; Holding back American innovation
- If we want true freedom, we need to become free from the nightmare of climate change and from the stranglehold that Big Oil has on our federal government.
- We can take control of our energy future, if we take our government back from the fossil fuel lobbyists.
- Oil company Super-PACs - Paying off politicians,
- Massive disinformation campaign on climate Exxon paid 10s of millions to 40 different organizations who deny climate reality PR people to cast doubt on science
- Just like tobacco companies told us cigarettes are safe.
- Many of the very same people who misrepresented the science on tobacco are doing the same thing on climate disruption.

SAMPLE STORIES TO INCORPORATE IN SPEECHES AND DEBATES

Use those that apply to your situation and reflect your state's actual experiences with climate disruption. There is no need to do anything but speak the truth. The key is using stories of real people and places instead of primarily using data to communicate the truth.

- Mention local weather events that have damaged property, crops, and lives. Personalize with the story of a local farmer, family or small business owner who lost out due to extreme weather caused by climate change.
- Mention local farmers who have been farming the same land for generations and whom you can quote directly in talking about how the weather has changed for the worse in recent years. Use their names, their stories, their realities.
- People who live on the coast of our state are seeing their beaches erode and taxpayer dollars being used over and over to rebuild the coast line. Just last week, I visited Joe Doe. He told me...
- Insurance companies down in the capitol are visiting me. They say that rates are going to go up – for businesses and homeowners. They can't handle the record number of tornadoes, the wildfires, floods and droughts. They want action on climate change.
- I talked to Mayor x of city A. He says they're now taking steps to prepare for climate disruption because they have no choice, but he wants Washington to help out by stopping carbon pollution before it's too late.
- Let's talk about the tobacco industry. John Boehner once served as one of their chief lobbyists. Now he is Speaker of the House and he is doing the same kind of work for Big Oil, only this time he is supposed to be an elected official working for the people – not for special interests. This is the problem with our democracy today. Special interests are buying up politicians.
- Earlier this month I met with business leaders from the solar industry down in town A. What they're telling me is that fossil fuel interests are stacking the deck against small and medium sized clean energy companies. How in God's name can we subsidize the most profitable industry on the planet – Big Oil – and not provide investment in wind, solar or geothermal power? The only reason we keep subsidizing oil, coal and gas is because their lobbyists spend hundreds of millions of dollars trying to influence elected officials.
- We hear a lot about an "all of the above" energy policy. What does that really mean? Basically that policy means drill baby drill which we're all discovering really means burn baby burn. That is what Big Oil is saying to American families. We heard it from the CEO of Exxon earlier this year. In a meeting with shareholders, the CEO of Exxon said we'd just have to adapt to climate change. Really? Are we supposed to get used to this heat? Are we supposed to live with these wildfires? Does Big Oil expect us to adapt to these droughts and high food and gas prices while they drill until every barrel of oil and every ton of coal comes out of the ground? My opponent believes in a policy of Burn Baby Burn. I believe in American ingenuity and our ability to face facts instead of denying them. We have energy technologies today – just look at company B over in town C. They've created x jobs while reducing carbon pollution. That, my friends, is the American way.

JUST THE BASICS

Communicating a Winning Narrative on Climate & Clean Energy

This simple message triangle provides flexibility and message discipline: the elements and values remain the same even while their order and the facts cited are varied.



These three primary messages combine to help you tell a story.

The Quest: Americans are ready to step up to the challenge of climate change and to the promise of a clean energy future. We can create whole new industries, new jobs, and create practical, cost-effective energy solutions. By acting together, we can make sure our children inherit a better world.

The Threat: All across America, families and businesses are suffering from extreme weather. Climate change is real and it is here now. The threat to our families and communities is growing more frightening with every wildfire, every extreme storm, and with the rising costs of climate disruption. It doesn't have to be this way.

The Villains: Big Oil, the Billionaire Koch Brothers, and fossil fuel Super-PACs are rigging the system and blocking clean energy solutions. They are trying to buy the election and keep fossil fuel interests in control.

The Heroes: Many of you and your neighbors are standing up for clean energy. You're trying to do your part. Our civic and business leaders are taking action too. Local schools are installing solar power and creating school gardens; several churches and synagogues are making their buildings more energy efficient; and forward thinking local companies are installing wind and other homegrown clean energy. And all of us are fighting back against the billionaire Koch Brothers who have a stranglehold on our political system and energy future. These climate heroes and many others get up every day and work hard, play fair and invest in America's future. There are heroes across our country, solving the climate problem and generating clean energy jobs.^{xvii}

END NOTES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals contributed to the development of this guide. The views and analysis reflected in this guide do not necessarily reflect the views of the individuals noted here, but all contributed valuable support, research, analysis or commentary. Special thanks to Jessica Bailey, Peter Bahouth, Jabe Blumenthal, Susie Buell, KC Golden, Adelaide Gomer, Neva Goodwin, Eileen & Paul Growald, Paul Harstad, Bonnie Frye Hemphill, Bracken Hendricks, Barbarina Heyerdahl, Daniel Hildreth, Marion Hunt, Sarah Jaynes, Daniel Kammen, Matt Kohut, Hunter Lovins, Josephine Merck, Colin Lingle, Edward Maibach, Andrew Maxfield, Dennis May, Mike Melanson, George Merritt, Joanna Messing, Matto Mildenberger, Belinda Munoz, Jeff Nesbitt, John Neffinger, Sandy Newman, Kelly Nordini, Michael Northrop, Lauren Nutter, Robert Perkowitz, Cara Pike, Holly Savage, Joseph Taylor, Kathy Washienko, and David Winkler.

Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions, LLC was the lead project manager, in close partnership with Harstad Strategic Research, Project New America, KNP Communications, and Onsight Public Affairs.

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Printed sustainably by Ecoprint, using a carbon neutral process.



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