



On Reproductive Health and a Broader Agenda

## An Overview

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- Our Goals:**
- ◆ Develop a new, expanded **values-based** frame to broaden support for reproductive and other health issues that *does not compromise abortion rights*.
  - ◆ Build on voter support for policy change on a **broader agenda** that includes birth control, emergency contraception, comprehensive sex education, the HPV vaccine, end-of-life decisions and stem cell research.

## 1. Research

**Probing voter opinions with research partners Harris Interactive, Sheehan and Associates, and V.J. Breglio Consulting by ...**

- Interviewing 150+ leaders, including pollsters, women’s rights and reproductive health (RH) advocates, communications experts, policymakers, authors, academics and others on their views of the RH movement, opinions of the pro-choice frame and identification of common goals.
- Commissioning a case study on the successful reframing of “the war on poverty” – an equally challenging issue – to “an economy that works for all.”
- Conducting preliminary focus groups with voters to determine how to start a new conversation on a broader agenda.
- Facilitating electronic bulletin boards of on-line discussions over five days to identify the values voters connect with reproductive health and other issues being overshadowed by the abortion debate followed by eight dial groups with more than 200 voters to pinpoint the best/least effective messages.
- Fielding validation poll of 1,000 voters to analyze supporting and opposing messages.
- Developing a cluster analysis to identify target audiences; and commissioning regular omnibus polling to track key research findings over time.

## 2. Values-based Messaging

**Frames that work...**

The research indicates that the most effective frame with voters is Important Life Decisions and the most effective core message is:

**Important Life Decisions can only be made responsibly if people have access to information, options and services.**

- Using the word “decisions” highlights the more serious, deliberative nature of making a choice.
- Choices and options are necessary for people to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

Messages centered on four key values are integral to supporting the core message:

1. **Personal responsibility/responsible government:** People need information and options so they can have the opportunity to make responsible life decisions. But we also need responsible government to provide safe, affordable and readily available options.
2. **Protection, planning and prevention:** Are important for improving lives and to prevent serious problems in the future. People should have the ability to plan when they want to start a family, decide when they are ready to become a parent, and make important end-of-life decisions.
3. **Respect:** We need to respect people’s ability to make their own life decisions and not impose our values and views upon others. We should each appreciate and respect our individual opinions. Sometimes, we must just agree to disagree.
4. **Individual decision making:** Individuals should be able to have the freedom and opportunity to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

### 3. Analysis

#### **What it means...**

##### **It matters where you start the conversation**

Our findings suggest starting with the broader agenda, not with individual issues. Starting the conversation on abortion usually means the discussion doesn't move forward to a broader set of issues.

##### **A new frame leads to a new discussion**

A strong majority of voters (81%) want a discussion on a broader agenda that is more relevant to their everyday lives. Our research shows the concept **Important Life Decisions** encompasses RH and other issues and is an effective way to start a conversation with voters on a broader range of issues.

##### **The more you relate to individual experiences, the more powerful and relevant the message**

A large majority (81%) believe that regarding important life decisions on reproductive and other health issues, individuals, not politicians or the government, should decide which option is best. However, voters do see a role for government in providing safe, affordable and readily available options.

##### **Define personal responsibility and acknowledge it's a two-way street**

Voters value personal responsibility, but realize that people need options, knowledge and choices so that they can be personally responsible, especially when making important life decisions. An overwhelming majority of voters (93%) ranked personal responsibility as the best descriptor of a broader RH agenda.

##### **Women's equality is a powerful argument for access to family planning**

Both men and women (78%) believe that for women to achieve equality, they must have access to family planning services, including birth control.

##### **Birth control and comprehensive sex education have overwhelming support**

Ninety-one percent believe couples should be able to have access to birth control options; 86% support comprehensive sex education when the role of both schools and parents is acknowledged.

In addition to talking about **Important Life Decisions**, the research supports these message tips:

<b>Try Saying...</b>	<b>Rather Than</b>
Choices (which implies a larger frame)	Choice
Protection, Planning and Prevention	Prevention (by itself)
Unintended or Unwanted Pregnancy	Unplanned Pregnancy
Preventing Unintended or Unwanted Pregnancies	Preventing Abortions
Personal Responsibility and Responsible Government	Personal Responsibility (by itself)
Birth Control Options, including Emergency Birth Control	Emergency Contraception (by itself)

To read the full message memo, please visit: <http://www.importantlifedecisions.org/Decisions/messagememo.pdf>.

### 4. Action and Advocacy

#### **The way forward...**

1. **Outreach to Policymakers:** Broaden dissemination of findings to key policymakers, including Congress, key state champions, political consultants and pollsters, state and federal legislative leaders, and communications staff for influential opinion leaders.
2. **Birth Control Watch:** A Web-based action component designed to focus media attention on elected officials whose real and generally hidden agenda is opposition to birth control, emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education.
3. **Communications Strategies:** Work with spokespeople and advocates on a range of reproductive health and life issues embraced by our frame to share strategies, plot media outreach, evaluate progress and plan next steps through 2008.
4. **dPoll Database:** A new computer software product that allows us to house, maintain and fully analyze polling data sets from many sources over time and from various perspectives to benefit and strengthen the RH community.

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