

Community Values Communication Toolkit

Section E: Tools and Exercises for Applying Community Values

In This Section:

Model Press Release

Calendar of Community Values News Hooks

Exercise 1: Applying Community Values to Candidate Questions

Exercise 2: Going on the Offensive

Exercise 3: Local Media Exercise

Exercise 4: Injecting Community Values into Local Campaigns

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Model Press Release

Press releases are more than an opportunity to publicize an event or report. They are also messaging vehicles. While the main text of the release should be primarily informative – who, what, when, where, and why – you have a lot of room in the quotes you provide for elevating Community Values.



Heartland Presidential Forum Challenges Candidates: *How can we embrace community values?*

For Immediate Release: [date]

Contact: [contact name, phone numbers]

DES MOINES – Ten presidential candidates will gather at Hy Vee Hall on Saturday, December 1 to answer Iowans’ questions about community issues ranging from health care and education to social justice and factory farming. Organizers, who expect an audience of over 5,000, say the theme of the debate, “Community Values,” is meant to focus candidates’ attention on the idea that the common good is too often overlooked in favor of individual interests.

“These core issues are important to Iowans,” said [speaker]. “And it’s important that we focus on solving the challenges they present through the lens of community. When we think of how we’re stronger together, how we solve our problems more effectively when we’re all involved in the process, we all come out ahead.”

[Event details]

“Community values are such an obvious fit for Iowans,” said [speaker]. “We look out for each other here, and we resist the politics of isolation that tell us that we have to solve societal problems on our own. Whether it’s health care or the environment, we’re going to do this together, with a positive role for government, and leave no one behind.”

[Continued details]

“We became involved in this event because of its focus on community,” said [speaker]. “There’s a lot of lip service to valuing community, but we wanted to force candidates to explain what that really means to each of them on a policy level. We need more policies of connection that recognize how we’re all in this together, and draw on our collective strength. So we’re actively rejecting the “go it alone” approach to policy.”

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Calendar of Community Values News Hooks

Use this 2008 calendar as a planning tool. It can help you identify opportunities to get out your message about community values. Connecting your press release or op-ed to a holiday or notable/historic date in a unique way can help it get better coverage.

| JANUARY | |
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| 1: | Last day of Kwanza 1863: Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation 1892: Ellis Island opens as a gateway for immigrants 1994: The North American Free Trade Agreement comes into effect |
| 2: | 1945: Executive Order 9066 is rescinded, ending Japanese internment |
| 3: | Iowa Caucuses |
| 8: | New Hampshire Primaries |
| 10: | 1946: United Nations General Assembly convenes for first time |
| 15: | Michigan Primaries |
| 19: | Nevada Caucuses, South Carolina Primary (R) |
| 21: | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (date varies) 1974: Lau v. Nichols decided by the Supreme Court, expanding the rights of limited English proficient students |
| 22: | 1973: Roe v. Wade decided by the Supreme Court, legalizing abortion |
| 25: | Hawaii Caucus (R) 1890: United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) is founded |
| 29: | Florida Primaries, South Carolina Primary (D) |
| FEBRUARY <i>Black History Month</i> | |
| 1: | Maine Caucus (R) |
| 5: | Alabama Primaries, Alaska Caucuses, Arizona Primaries, Arkansas Primaries, California Primaries, Colorado Caucuses, Connecticut Primaries, Delaware Primaries, Georgia Primaries, Idaho Caucus (D), Illinois Primaries, Kansas Caucus (D), Minnesota Caucuses, Missouri Primaries, Montana Caucus (R), New Jersey Primaries, New Mexico Primary (D), New York Primaries, North Dakota Caucuses, Oklahoma Primaries, Tennessee Primaries, Utah Primaries 1993: Family and Medical Leave Act enacted |
| 7: | Lunar New Year (date varies) |
| 9: | Kansas Caucus (R), Louisiana Primaries, Nebraska Caucus (D), Washington Caucuses |
| 10: | Maine Caucus (D) |
| 12: | District of Columbia Primaries, Maryland Primaries, Virginia Primaries 1909: The NAACP is founded |
| 18: | President's Day |
| 19: | Hawaii Caucus (D), Wisconsin Primaries 1942: Executive Order 9066 is signed into law, resulting in the forced internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans |
| 21: | 1965: Malcolm X is assassinated |
| 25: | 1870: Hiram Rhodes Revels becomes the first African American sworn in as a U.S. Senator |
| MARCH <i>Women's History Month</i> | |
| 4: | Massachusetts Primaries, Ohio Primaries, Rhode Island Primaries, Texas Primaries, Vermont Primaries 1913: U.S. Department of Labor is created |
| 5: | 1914: The Ford Motor Company doubles the daily wage |
| 6: | 1857: Dred Scott Case decided by the Supreme Court, ruling that people of African descent could not be U.S. citizens, whether they were slaves or free |

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| 8: | Wyoming Caucus (D) International Women's Day |
| 11: | Mississippi Primaries |
| 20: | 2003: U.S. invasion of Iraq begins |
| 21: | 1965: Selma to Montgomery march begins |
| 22: | 1974: U.S. Congress passes the Equal Rights Amendment, which would amend the constitution to guarantee equal rights regardless of gender, but state legislatures failed to ratify the ERA 1988: Congress overrides President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act |
| 25: | 1911: The Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire kills 146 workers, mostly young immigrant women; the outrage over unsafe working conditions helps to solidify support for unions |
| 30: | 1870: 15 th Amendment is adopted, guaranteeing voting rights regardless of race |
| 31: | 1927: Birthday of Cesar Chavez |
| APRIL | |
| 8: | 1935: Works Progress Administration established by Congress, providing jobs and income to millions during the Great Depression |
| 11: | 1968: Fair Housing Act enacted, prohibiting discrimination in housing |
| 15: | Tax Day |
| 22: | Pennsylvania Primaries Earth Day |
| 29: | 1854: first African American college chartered (now called Lincoln University) |
| MAY <i>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</i> | |
| 1: | International Workers' Day, commemorating the Haymarket Rebellion of 1866 |
| 5: | Cinco de Mayo, commemorating initial victory of Mexico over France in 1862 |
| 11: | Mother's Day |
| 13: | Nebraska Primary (R), West Virginia Primary (D) |
| 17: | 1954: Brown V. Board of Education decided by the Supreme Court, paving the way for integration of schools |
| 20: | Kentucky Primaries, Oregon Primaries 1996: Romer v. Evans decided by the Supreme Court, ruling against an amendment to the Colorado Constitution that allowed discrimination against gays and lesbians |
| 26: | Memorial day |
| 27: | Idaho Primaries |
| JUNE <i>Gay Pride Month</i> | |
| 2: | 1924: Indian Citizenship Act signed into law, guaranteeing full citizenship rights to Native Americans |
| 3: | Montana Primary (D), New Mexico Primary (R), South Dakota Primaries |
| 13: | 1967: Thurgood Marshall becomes the first African American appointed to the Supreme Court |
| 14: | Flag Day, commemorating adoption of the U.S. Flag in 1777 |
| 15: | Father's Day |
| 19: | Juneteenth Day, commemorating the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865, roughly two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation |
| 22: | 1944: GI Bill of Rights is enacted, providing veterans of World War II with greater opportunities, especially to go to college |
| 23: | 1972: Title XI is enacted, prohibiting gender discrimination in schools |
| 25: | 1938: Fair Labor Standards Act is enacted, establishing a minimum wage, guaranteeing time-and-a-half for overtime, and prohibiting child labor |
| 27: | 1905: Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is founded in Chicago, with the motto "an injury to one is an injury to all" |
| 28: | 1969: Stonewall Rebellion helps to spark the gay rights movement |

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| JULY | |
| 2: | 1964: Civil Rights Act signed into law, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin |
| 4: | Independence Day, commemorating the Declaration of Independence in 1776 |
| 5: | 1935: National Labor Relations Act enacted, protecting the rights of workers to organize |
| 9: | 1868: 14 th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, establishing the citizenship of former slaves and all people born in the U.S. |
| 19: | 1848: First women's rights convention in U.S. held in Seneca Falls, NY |
| 26: | 1990: The Americans with Disabilities Act is enacted, prohibiting discrimination based on disability |
| AUGUST | |
| 6: | 1965: Voting Rights Act signed into law, to eliminate actions that limited voting rights (like literacy tests) and guaranteed new voter protections (like multilingual ballots) |
| 14: | 1935: Social Security Act enacted, providing social insurance for elderly and disabled |
| 18: | 1920: 19 th Amendment is ratified, giving women the right to vote |
| 25: | Democratic National Convention begins in Denver, CO |
| 28: | 1963: Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers "I have a dream" speech |
| SEPTEMBER <i>Hispanic Heritage Month runs Sept. 15 – Oct. 15</i> | |
| 1: | Labor Day Republican National Convention begins in St. Paul, MN |
| 11: | 2001: Terrorist attacks made on the World Trade Center and Pentagon |
| 21: | International Day of Peace |
| 25: | 1981: Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court |
| 30: | 1962: The National Farm Workers Association is founded (the union is later renamed the United Farm Workers) |
| OCTOBER | |
| 2: | International Day of Non-Violence, commemorating the birth of Mahatma Ghandi |
| 11: | National Coming Out Day, commemorating 2 nd March on Washington for LGBT Rights |
| 13: | Columbus Day, also celebrated as Indigenous Peoples' Day, International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous People, and Dia de la Raza |
| 16: | World Food Day, to raise awareness of issues of poverty and hunger |
| NOVEMBER <i>American Indian Heritage Month</i> | |
| 4: | Election Day |
| 11: | Veterans Day |
| 27: | Thanksgiving Day |
| DECEMBER | |
| 1: | World AIDS Day |
| 10: | Human Rights Day, commemorating the adoption of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) |
| 15: | 1791: Bill of Rights (first ten amendments to the constitution) are ratified |
| 18: | 1865: 13 th Amendment is ratified, abolishing slavery in the U.S. |

Exercise 1: Applying Community Values to Candidate Questions

Asking questions of candidates, either directly, or via the media (“what I’d really like to know from the candidates is this:”), is a great messaging opportunity. It’s helpful to remember the Values, Problem, Solution, Action model for this as each component is important to include.

Use the VPSA model to craft three more Community Values candidate questions, using the issues you work on or care most about.

How to Apply VPSA to Candidate Questions:

- “I believe” or “Americans believe” in VALUE, and how it applies to the issue I’m going to address.
- But: PROBLEM, include relevant statistics or background information here.
- Describe your SOLUTION, or the vision you think the solution should reach.
- Ask what ACTION the candidates will take to make sure the SOLUTION happens?

General Example:

“In America, we believe that we’re all in it together; that we share responsibility for each other. But lately, we’ve seen a real drift toward the idea that we’re all on our own, responsible only for ourselves. It’s time to reject these politics of isolation and change our policies so that they reflect our best values: community values. What would you do to promote Community Values in your administration’s policies?”

Issue-Specific Example(s):

“As a person of faith, I believe that we’re all connected and share a sense of responsibility for each other. But we’re not fulfilling that responsibility today, with [47 million people uninsured and left to fend for themselves AND/OR 7 million working people living in poverty AND/OR immigrants being demonized and exploited]. A caring and responsible community would [provide health insurance for everyone AND/OR pay all workers a living wage AND/OR welcome and respect newcomers and their valuable contributions]. What would you do to return our country to the values of community and the policies of connection?”

Exercise 2: Going On the Offensive

In weaving Community Values into all of our communications, we also need to work on attacking messages that are opposed to Community Values when we see them.

When going on the offensive, it's important to remember:

- We need to counter the idea of extreme individualism rather than attack the person stating it.

“That’s just another example of the ‘go it alone’ mentality. We all know we’re stronger together.”

- Most audiences value both personal responsibility and community– trigger shared responsibility first.
- Use a positive vision to counter opponents’ negativity.

Below are some examples of messages reflecting extreme individualism in politics today. In small groups, craft an overall approach for attacking the individualistic rhetoric and develop some community values messages.

Message 1

“The health of our nation can be improved by extending health insurance to all Americans, not through a government program or new taxes, but through market reforms.

*It’s a conservative idea, **insisting that individuals have responsibility for their own health care**. I think it appeals to people on both sides of the aisle: insurance for everyone without a tax increase.”*

Message 2

*“I believe that the only way to make a major improvement in our educational system is through privatization to the point at which a substantial fraction of all educational services are **rendered to individuals by private enterprises** ... Nothing else will provide the public schools with the **competition** that will force them to improve in order to hold their **clientele** ...”*

Message 3

*“We showed the world that power and wealth are the product of freedom and not the other way around. The freedom to pursue **your aspirations**, to seize **your opportunities**, to rise as far as **your own industry and imagination will take you**, to make a better life for your children than you inherited, and to build together a civilization for the ages, in which all people share in the promise and responsibilities of liberty.”*

Message 4

*“People are fed up with illegal immigration, and they’re demanding we do something about it. It’s the overcrowded houses, the job market with the **day laborers bringing down the wages**, the health system with hundreds of millions being spent in Virginia hospitals on illegal aliens, and all those **ESL classes taking away resources from other kids**.*

Exercise 3: Local Media Exercise

Clip 8 – 10 articles from local newspapers that talk about a crisis facing your community.

Be sure to track these articles over a period of weeks and include different media sources and perspectives. Once you've assembled the articles have your leadership review them.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the frame expressed through these articles? What are the central messages?
- How do they either support or oppose Community Values?
- Who do local media look to for comments on these articles?
- How does the frame shape the response of everyday people, both those affected by the crisis as well as those looking in from the outside?

Exercise 4: Injecting Community Values into Campaigns

Use some of the language from the basket of phrases and general talking points to re-think a local campaign. Brainstorm about how changing your message creates new media opportunities or the potential to attract new allies.

Consider the following questions:

- How can we see our local campaign through the lens of Community Values?
- Do our current messages reflect values that undercut what we really want for our community?
- How can our local campaign respond to negative, go-it-alone rhetoric from the other side?
- What are the current dominant frames?
- Do we think the local media will accept our frame for our campaign or will they resist it?
- How and where can we build on Community Values frames and where can we make a point of attacking individualistic ones?