

# **Loyal to Big Oil Messaging Dos and Don'ts**

**It's fun to be a Loyal.** In fact, sometimes it's so much fun that we get carried away camping it up as an obnoxious rich person and lose track of the message we're trying to get out. From years of experience, we've learned that effective actions require tight message discipline. Please review these talking points and encourage everyone who is Loyal to use them.

- I. Loyal to Big Oil is a 501c3 campaign
- II. Guiding Principles
- III. Do's
- IV. Don't's
- V. Talking Points

## **I. Loyal to Big Oil is a 501c3 Campaign**

This campaign is being run through Oil Change International's Separate Oil and State campaign. This means we must follow the legal guidelines for a non-profit 501c3. We CAN inform people about the campaign contributions representatives receive and their legislative voting records. We CAN NOT participate in electioneering or tell people who they should or should not vote for.

Examples of how to present information:

In character: "...this is not a Democratic issue, this is not a Republican issue, this is not a liberal issue, this is not a conservative issue, this is about us at Big Oil getting a fair shake from our elected representatives..."

Out of character: "...both parties are in the grip of the oil and gas lobby, it's just so happens, that Republicans get 85% of the \$, and Democrats get 15%..."

At an action or interview this could also look like, "Both parties are in the grip of the oil lobby, and this particular candidate took X amount. The result of this lobby is X."

Big Oil simply wants what is best for them in the government, and that is representatives who will take our contributions and serve the oil lobby.

## **II. Guiding Principles**

**\$ Allow people to laugh with you (perhaps despite themselves)** as you poke your finger in the eye of the Loyal representatives by playing their biggest fan.

**\$ Focus on economic issues and corporate takeover of democracy** – Corporations are hated more than rich people, CEOs more than corporations. Corporate takeover arguments resonate across the political spectrum, and constitute our strongest message.

**\$ Use irony as Trojan Horse, then step out of character** – Use humor to get yourself in the door and then break character to explain our message in plain terms. Speaking from the heart is often the best way to reach people. One good way to do this is to say "Speaking as [your real name]..." while literally removing your top hat or tiara **\*\*Note: in less-than-friendly settings, it's often best to remain in character\*\***.

## **III. DO:**

**\$ Be witty** – wit energizes activists, engages people, and attracts media.

**\$ Memorize and repeat 3-5 facts** – Repetition and simplicity are essential ingredients to effective messaging. Even if you feel you've already done that schtick 100 times, remember that it's new to your audience, and a concise sound bite is harder for someone to distort.

**\$ Leave social and cultural issues behind-** Corporate cronyism is a threat to our democracy that everyone can identify with (or against).

**\$ Be seen and heard clearly**– Be mindful of your visual message, esp. in front of cameras. Everyone should be in Billionaire attire, or dressed as one of our staff. Do not mix with non-billionaires. Stick together and keep the banner visible at all times - do not stand in front of it. Project your voice, speak a little more slowly than normal and don't talk over your fellow Billionaires. Otherwise, no one will understand what you're saying and reporters won't be able to use your footage.

**\$ Praise all representatives that are Loyal to Big Oil**

#### IV. DON'T:

**\$ DON'T break the law by telling people who to vote for or by supporting any political party or candidate** – As a 501c3 campaign, we can educate the public about their representatives' campaign contributions and voting records, but cannot get involved in electioneering.

**\$ DON'T fall into the trap of simply playing an obnoxious rich person** – Our aim is to highlight how the current system takes very good care of corporate interests at the expense of ordinary Americans. It's easy to just riff on the wealthy. Prepare yourself to talk about why, as someone who is Loyal to Big Oil, you support representatives who show favoritism toward Big Oil.

**\$ DON'T be condescending.** Our intent is to generate anger toward an accepted system that gives government subsidies (“handouts”) to Big Oil – not generate anger at us. Avoid language like ‘suckers’ and ‘little people’. We lose our audience if we put ordinary Americans on the defensive.

**\$ DON'T get trapped into talking about cultural issues** – These issues don't affect our bank accounts. Stick to economic issues where we're strongest.

**\$ DON'T describe our opponents as liberals** – It's middle class interests we're fighting, not any political ideology. At a counterdemonstration, for example, we're there to hold forth against “the great unwashed middle class masses.”

**\$ DON'T make fun of the flag**

**\$ DON'T be a mock racist** – To handle race in a humorous way requires a high level of artistry. Don't risk it.

**\$ DON'T put down other activists** – When speaking out of character about how Loyal to Big Oil uses a unique approach to protest, it's important to acknowledge that we are different, but not better. In fact, we often depend on the presence of more traditional activists to serve as our ‘foils’.

**\$ DON'T make Big Oil seem all-powerful** – We don't want to exacerbate apathy and resignation. We empower our allies by expressing frustration at ‘setbacks’ like environmental restrictions, strong clean election laws, or other citizens' initiatives.

**\$ DON'T continually name any candidate up for election-** this will be construed as electioneering. Make the point that many representatives are Loyal to Big Oil- be more general.

#### *A Note on Language*

We can deliver our message even more powerfully if we choose our words carefully. Below we have flagged a few ways that your choice of words can make a difference in how your message is received by your audience.

\$ Talk about how current legislation favors the super rich, or the really really really rich, not just the rich. Americans like to think that they, too, will one day be rich. Being super rich seems alien and unattainable. Also put a focus on corporations and CEOs.

\$ Don't talk about capitalism; it makes you sound like a socialist. Instead of capitalism, use corporate cronyism, and especially Big Oil. People do have disdain for closed insider networks and corruption among CEOs.

#### V. Talking Points

##### *Some Good One Liners*

\$ To those who say Big Oil should be kept out of politics, I say show me where in the Constitution it calls for a separation of oil and state!

\$ Representatives who are Loyal to Big Oil don't pander to the special interests of ordinary Americans.

\$ There's no better business than politics. And because of Loyal representatives, the business of politics has been pretty damn good – for us!

\$ We can't wait for the election to be over so we can raise gas prices again!

\$ Loyal representatives have liberated our oil reserves, which were somehow trapped under other peoples' countries.

\$ Halliburton's earnings quadrupled under the current Congress with the help of several no-bid reconstruction contracts in Iraq.

\$ Big Oil has spent over \$35 million buying representatives since 2000, and they voted to give Big Oil \$6 billion in government handouts

\$ It's only a matter of time and money until Loyal representatives allow us to drill in ANWR!

\$ This Loyal congress has helped undo decades of terrible, anti-oil environmental policies and fought hard for our rights to make billions wrecking the natural world.

\$ The Clear Skies initiative was a stroke of genius – everyone is happy, people who don't breathe, and those of us whose companies benefit from the relaxed environmental regulations it brings.

\$ Legislated energy plans have a clear preference for corporate interests over the environment – it even recommends drilling for oil in the Arctic refuge—I mean, what have those caribou done for you lately?

\$ Non-Loyal representatives want to spend more money on health and education, and cut back on corporate subsidies. What good does that do us?

\$ Non-Loyal representatives talk too much about so-called “corporate fraud” and the problems of workers who lost their life savings because their pension was invested in the wrong company. Wrong company?? There's no such thing as a wrong company. It's not our fault those workers didn't get better investment advice.

\$ If those caribou-loving environmentalists at the League of Conservation Voters like a representative, it's a sure sign they'll play favorites with the environment over our fat bottom line.

\$ Representatives who aren't Loyal want to limit emissions and develop clean energy sources- we say Global Warming equals better tans!

#### *Answers to Questions – In Character*

Q. Who are you guys?

We are Loyal to Big Oil, a wholly owned subsidiary of Billionaires for Bush, a consortium of oil barons, energy-company CEOs, and giddy traders on the energy futures market. Oh, and of course the faithful representatives in Congress who deliver the subsidies and tax breaks we love at the expense of taxpayers who can't afford lobbyists of their own.

We are...

\$ the Big Oil CEOs who average \$32.7 million a year, almost 3 times the average CEO pay in the U.S. The same CEOs who have gotten a 50% raise since 2004!

\$ the oil companies who rake in \$115 million daily in net profit

\$ the oil and gas lobby that has spent over \$33.5 million buying our nation's Representatives and Senators since 2000

\$ the oil companies that received \$6 billion in subsidies from the 2005 Energy Bill

\$ the oil barons responsible for the highest gas prices in 25 years, and the highest profits in U.S. history

Q. Isn't it unusual for Billionaires to participate in street protests?

For too long we have ruled the country from behind closed limo doors.

#### *Answers to Questions – Out of Character*

Speaking from the heart can be a better way to reach your audience. Use these talking points to convey that message.

Q. But you guys aren't really Loyal Billionaires. What's going on here?

OK, speaking as [your name], rather than [your billionaire name], let me explain. We've decided to "become" Billionaires who are Loyal to Big Oil because it's a great way to show how many representatives in Congress are way too cozy with Big Oil, to the detriment of most Americans. The humor and creativity of this approach gets people's attention because it's the joke that tells the truth: how the Big Oil lobby pays representatives to get no-bid contracts and relaxed pollution rules, while the rest of us have to pay the highest gas prices in 25 years, experience the erratic changes brought by global warming and suffer the effects of a war waged for oil.

Q. What is Loyal to Big Oil?

It is a do-it-yourself campaign that uses street theater, media and a good dose of humor to flush out the truth about how current legislation is great for Big Oil but has been a disaster for most Americans. It is an initiative of the Separate Oil and State campaign. (plug [www.priceofoil.org](http://www.priceofoil.org) if possible)

Q. How did Billionaires for Bush/Loyal to Big Oil get started?

Billionaires for Bush was started by a group of artists and social activists in New York City and Los Angeles. Loyal to Big Oil is an initiative that uses the same style of activism for the Separate Oil and State campaign.

Q. What kind of organization are you?

Loyal to Big Oil is a campaign from Oil Change International- a non-profit 501c3. Which means we're not affiliated with either party or involved in electioneering and we can't tell you who to vote for, but we can sure as hell lay out the facts about, say, how members of Congress have accepted over 35 million dollars from Big Oil and pushed through legislation that gives those companies 6 billion dollars in government subsidies.

Q. How do you get funding for the work you do?

We get our funding through foundations and donations from individuals. (if anyone wants further information they can contact Oil Change International at 202.518.9029 or [www.priceofoil.org](http://www.priceofoil.org))

Q. Why are you involved in this group? (examples)

I am active in this group because I am deeply concerned that...

- We have been paying the highest gas prices of the last 25 years just so that oil companies can rake in the largest profits in American history
- Legislation offers oil companies tax breaks and subsidies for oil exploration instead of putting money towards developing alternative energy sources
- Global Warming can no longer be denied- but we are not using alternative energy resources or cutting back on fuel emissions because Congress is serving Big Oil and increasing their profit margins, not legislating for our interests
- Loyal representatives support war for oil instead of really protecting our national security or using resources to better America