

IV. Spinning the Issues

Billionaire Messaging Dos and Don'ts

It's fun to be a Billionaire. 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. We created this guide to help us all stay more on message. From years of experience, we've learned that an effective political campaign requires tight message discipline. Please review these talking points and encourage all fellow Billionaires to use them. Let's have fun AND be effective messengers.

As the campaign proceeds, the political landscape will evolve and so will our messaging strategy. These talking points will be updated periodically. Some of our messaging will also be adapted to particular states or regions. In fact, several of the one-liners below have come from local chapters. The campaign is a nation-wide collaboration. If you would like to share talking points or one-liners from your chapter, or recommend how to tailor the talking points to your state or region, please write to messaging@billionairesforbush.com.

Guiding Principles

- § **Focus on corporate takeover of the government** – Corporations are hated more than rich people, CEO's more than corporations. Corporate takeover arguments resonate across the political spectrum, and constitute Billionaires' strongest message. Leave social and ideological issues behind. Corruption is a winning issue, corporate cronyism is the best cross-cutting critique of this administration. Hence we don't do much on gay marriage, reproductive rights, the moral issues behind Iraq war etc.
- § **Know our facts** – It's not enough to say corporations have too much influence in government. We need figures, and we need to articulate the difference between Bush and Kerry. We need to choose a few facts and get them out in the echo chamber. Enron's Ken Lay is George Bush's biggest lifetime contributor, and gave him more money than all 16 years of Kerry's special interest money combined. EVERY American should know that. Vague generalities preach to the choir, swing voters are concerned with facts. Money in politics is old hat, we need to have hooks and punches, compelling stats.

Dos

- § **Focus on economic issues and corporate take-over of democracy** – mention Enron, corporate pay offs and lobbyists as much as possible
- § **Memorize and repeat 3-5 facts** – swing voters respond to facts, not slogans. Billionaires should repeatedly deliver the most damaging three facts about Bush.
- § **Repeat the name** – The core slogan of Billionaires is its name, which should seek to 'hardwire' the word 'billionaire' to 'Bush'. It should be put up front and center in all materials and repeated in all communications.
- § **Be witty** – wit energizes activists, engages people, and attracts media.
- § **Attack Kerry, praise Bush** – it is critical to continually emphasize the difference between Kerry and Bush. Call Kerry a traitor to his class and criticize his record of "pandering to the special interests of ordinary Americans."
- § **Use irony as Trojan Horse, then step out of character** – Use irony to get yourself in the door – i.e. to win the attention of the media or a voter – and then break character to explain our message in plain terms. Speaking from the heart is often a better way to reach swing voters, particularly when speaking through the press.
- § **Attend to your "visual message"** – Always be mindful of how you're presenting yourself to the cameras. *Everyone* should be in Billionaire attire, or dressed as one of our staff (butler, chauffeur, secretary, horse trainer, etc.). Do not mix with non-billionaires. Keep the banner visible at all times - do not stand in front of it. Stick together, avoid becoming dispersed.

- § **Keep it simple and stay on message** – Even if you feel you’ve already done that schtick 100 times. Repetition and simplicity are essential ingredients to effective messaging. Beware the overly subtle or sophisticated message. Communicate so that most people understand the satire and the message.

Don'ts

- § **DON'T break the law by telling anyone who to vote for** – Billionaires is a “527 organization” which means it can express political support for Bush but cannot actually tell someone to *vote* one way or another. It’s ridiculous, but it’s the law.
- § **DON'T fall into the trap of simply playing an obnoxious rich person** – the Billionaires have a political agenda which is to highlight how the Bush Presidency takes very good care of CEOs and corporate interests. It’s easy to just riff on the wealthy. Take the time to prepare yourself to talk about why, as a Billionaire, you support President Bush.
- § **DON'T be condescending** towards ordinary Americans. Our intent is to generate anger toward Bush – not us. Avoid language like ‘suckers,’ ‘stupid wage workers’ and ‘little people’. We lose our audience if we put ordinary voters on the defensive. Allow them to laugh with you (perhaps despite themselves) as you poke your finger in the eye of the President by playing his biggest fan.
- § **DON'T get trapped into talking about cultural issues** – We don’t discuss gay marriage, gun control, right-to-choose, and other cultural issues. These matters don’t effect the bank accounts of Billionaires (and may turn-off many swing voters). 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** – This plays into the Republicans’ hands.
- § **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 protestors** – When speaking *out of character* to a reporter about how B4B 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 protestors to serve as our foils.
- § **DON'T make Billionaires seem all powerful** – We don’t want to exacerbate voter apathy and resignation. Instead, we can empower our audience by expressing frustration at “setbacks” like environmental restrictions, strong clean election laws, voter registration drives, or other citizens’ initiatives.

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 Bush 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.
- § Don’t talk about capitalism, it makes you sound like a socialist to ordinary voters. Instead of capitalism, use *corporate cronyism* or *Big Money*, or *Big Oil*. People do have disdain for closed insider networks and corruption among CEOs.
- § Conservatives have succeeded in linking “government spending” with “wasteful” and “inefficient” in the public’s mind. When talking about the negative impact of Bush’s tax cuts, talk about how it will reduce funding for *public initiatives*, rather than how it will result in cuts to government spending.

Talking Points

Some Good One Liners

- \$ George W. Bush doesn't pander to the special interests of ordinary Americans.
- \$ What do you mean, there is no diversity in the White House? – the President and the Vice President represent two *different* oil companies!
- \$ George Bush is the best investment we Billionaires have ever had in Washington.
- \$ We Billionaires continue to be there for him, because, boy, has he been there for us!
- \$ Leave no child behind?? George Bush has left no *billionaire* behind.
- \$ To those who say Big Money should be kept out of politics, I say show me where in the Constitution it calls for a separation of cash and state!
- \$ There's no better business than politics. And in George Bush's America, the business of politics has been pretty damn good – *for us!*
- \$ George understands our long term vision for a Government of, by and for the corporations—and he's making it happen!
- \$ George Bush is helping to reduce our dependence on domestic labor.

Answers to Questions – In Character

Q. Who are you guys?

- \$ We are Billionaires for Bush – The political action committee of CEOs, corporate lobbyists, dissolute heiresses and other winners under George Bush's economic policies.
- \$ We are the CEOs who make 280 times the pay of an average worker.
- \$ We are the 1% who own more than 40% of the wealth in this great land!
- \$ We are the 10% who give 90% of the campaign contributions!
- \$ We are the Pioneers, and Rangers, and the as yet unnamed category of
- \$ fundraisers who bundle together \$100,000, \$200,000 and now \$500,000 in
- \$ contributions for George Bush's campaign coffers.
- \$ We are a who's who of corporate America and we are organized!

Q. But aren't the *actual* billionaires *against* President Bush?

We all hear about a few renegade class traitors like George Soros and Warren Buffett who are against President Bush, but most of Corporate America and the really really rich are behind Bush 110%.

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. But in George Bush's America, we Billionaires can come forward without any shame. We run this country, and we do a damn good job of it.

Answers to Questions – Out of Character

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

Q. But you guys aren't really 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 because it's a great way to show how Bush and Cheney are way too cozy with Big Business. The humor and creativity of this approach gets people's attention because it's the joke that tells the truth: how Bush & Cheney's CEO buddies get no-bid contracts and relaxed pollution rules, while the rest of us are denied overtime pay, see our healthcare costs go up and are saddled with huge student loans.

Q. What is Billionaires for Bush?

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 the Bush administration's economic policies have been a disaster for most Americans. We have over 40 chapters nationwide. Our efforts are primarily focused on influencing voters in the key battleground states.

Q. How did Billionaires for Bush get started?

Billionaires for Bush was started last fall by a group of comedians, artists and social activists in New York City and Los Angeles.

Q. What kind of organization are you?

Billionaires for Bush is an independent 527 PAC. Which means we're not affiliated with either party and we can't tell you who to vote for, but we can sure as hell lay out the facts about, say, how Bush & Cheney invited Enron in to write the nations energy policy, and then let you decide who to vote for.

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

Most of our funding comes from individual donors. We raise some money by selling bumper stickers and pins on our website and by hosting fundraisers. We don't accept any money from political candidates or their campaign committees.

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

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

- 💰 "...Bush's massive tax cuts to millionaires & billionaires will saddle future generations with crushing deficits and cripple our economy for years to come"
- 💰 "...Bush's wartime spending and no-bid reconstruction contracts are costing US taxpayers dearly, and with increasingly questionable results."
- 💰 "...Bush's corporate cronies dictate his environmental policies. He is gutting protections for our land, air and wildlife - all for the sake of higher profits."

Q. But the economy is starting to produce jobs now. Isn't it because of Bush's tax cuts?

Since George Bush took office, our economy has suffered a net loss of 2.8 million jobs. The legacy of the Bush tax cuts will be deficit and debt for generations to come.

BUSH vs. KERRY

What every billionaire should know and repeat ad nauseum.

Bush

(short answers)

Q. Why do you support George Bush?

- 💰 If you're really really really really rich, like us, George W. Bush is a great investment.
- 💰 Never before has one man done *so much* for *so few* at the expense of *so many*.
- 💰 With George Bush, no industry lobbyist has to ask twice!
- 💰 He helped out big tobacco, allowed us to drill in the Alaskan wilderness, and gave us juicy no-bid defense contracts.
- 💰 And he topped it off with \$1.1 trillion in tax cuts – just for us!
- 💰 George Bush is the best president money can buy.
- 💰 George Bush liberated our oil reserves, which were somehow trapped under other peoples' countries.

Why we love George W. Bush.

(issue by issue)

Corporate Takeover

- 💰 Halliburton's earnings quadrupled under the Bush Administration with the help of several no-bid reconstruction contracts in Iraq.
- 💰 Bush took more soft money just from Enron than John Kerry has taken from all donors in his entire 16 year career.
- 💰 He helped out big tobacco, allowed us to drill in Alaskan wilderness, and gave us juicy no-bid defense contracts.
- 💰 Vice President Dick Cheney – whom we all knew back in the days when he was CEO of Halliburton – invited energy executives and lobbyists to write the nation's energy policy.
- 💰 We're not worried about name callers and their charges of "corporate cronyism" – Cheney's duck-hunting pal on the Supreme Court helped ensure that the Bush Administration is allowed to keep our identities on the Energy Task Force secret until after this November's election.
- 💰 George was investigated for insider trading in 1991 by his father's own appointee—inconclusively, ahem, of course—so he knows from experience how we billionaires need to stick together in hard times.

Jobs

- 💰 He saved us a bundle in labor costs by cutting the right to overtime pay for eight million Americans.
- 💰 He was at the helm during an economic recovery which saw corporate profits rise but almost no new jobs were created – this is fantastic for us CEO's!
- 💰 Bush did cut combat pay for soldiers serving in Iraq, but we're pretty sure that none of them are Billionaires.

Health Care

- 💰 President Bush increased the profits of our Big Pharma companies by \$139 billion by preventing Medicare from negotiating prices with them. Similarly, he let HMO's charge Medicare whatever they want.
- 💰 Now, he's sending out prescription drug discount cards to seniors but what's great for us is at Big Pharma is that the discounts don't kick in till 2006.

- ✶ The average American family is paying \$2700 more in premiums than they were four years ago, which is great news for insurance companies. We are counting on President Bush to protect those profits.
- ✶ President Bush has already closed veterans' hospitals and proposes to double veterans' prescription drug co-payments, and his plan includes a \$2.6 billion shortfall in veteran's healthcare funding. That's \$2.6 billion more for our tax cuts!

Environment

- ✶ Bush has undone decades of terrible, anti-billionaire 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.
- ✶ His energy plan has 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?
- ✶ George Bush freed us from the green jackboot of the Kyoto Protocol. Remember: global warming means better tans.

Taxes

- ✶ Bush taxes wages (that's how YOU make money), not wealth (how WE make money). His tax cuts to millionaires delivered savings 140 times larger than the tax relief given the average working family.
- ✶ He wants to make it possible for us to pass on our super huge fortunes to our little lovelies Chad and Muffy, without a dime going to public schools, build hospitals or fix roads!
- ✶ He gave \$1.1 trillion in tax cuts to the wealthiest 1% of Americans – even in the face of a recession, state bankruptcies, and an expensive war. Now the next generation will pick up the tab!
- ✶ Thus, he's keeping his promise to the children of America—that when they grow up, they'll get to pay OUR taxes!
- ✶ In a masterful act of “creative austerity”, he shackled the federal government with such deficits that no new public initiatives will be viable for decades to come.

Kerry

(short answers)

Q. Why don't you support John Kerry? After all, he's practically a billionaire!

- ✶ John Kerry is a bad investment for Billionaires.
- ✶ Having spent his life in public service, he doesn't understand how to do business in Bush's America, for example... :
- ✶ Kerry refuses to appoint our lobbyists to write the laws of the nation.
- ✶ For 16 years John Kerry has refused to take any of our PAC money!
- ✶ Worst of all, he panders to the special interests of ordinary Americans.
- ✶ He wants us and all our really rich friends (making more than \$200,000) to give up our tax cuts!
- ✶ George Bush has a better return on investment.

Why Billionaires Do Not Want John Kerry in the White House

(issue by issue)

Corporate Takeover

- 💰 That goodie two shoes Kerry is too pure for Enron's money, and for his entire 16 year career wouldn't accept PAC money at all. Now that's no way to build a strong relationship with Billionaires.
- 💰 He wants to spend more money on health and education, and cut back on corporate subsidies. What good does that do us?
- 💰 He has repeatedly voted against expensive Pentagon pork contracts that would have delivered juicy, profitable projects for us.
- 💰 Kerry wants America to use hydrogen energy by 2020, when we Billionaires make our living off of oil.

Jobs

- 💰 Kerry supports increasing the minimum wage and indexing it to inflation, but we have rather enjoyed seeing our profits increase faster than workers' compensation, and Kerry's proposal would reverse this trend.
- 💰 He talks 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.
- 💰 I've never had even one job, and now Kerry wants to create 10 million new jobs in the next 4 years. Whatever for?

Health Care

- 💰 Kerry plans to cut health care costs for working class people to \$4,000 a year. But affordable health care for Americans is bad for our insurance and pharmaceutical companies.
- 💰 Kerry plans to use the government's buying power to force drug companies to lower prices, hurting pharmaceutical companies' bottom lines.
- 💰 Kerry wants the un-American re-importation of drugs from Canada, again challenging our pharmaceuticals.

Environment

- 💰 Some caribou-loving environmental group called League of Conservation Voters gave him a lifetime score of 96%, a pretty strong indication that he'll play favorites with the environment over our fat bottom line.
- 💰 He is going to take away the negotiating power that HMO's and pharmaceuticals have over Medicare, threatening our investments.

Taxes

- 💰 He wants to repeal tax cuts for people making more than \$200,000/year, even Billionaires!
- 💰 He is threatening to take away our rights to off-shore corporate tax shelters.