

Winning Edge #13 – Persuade to Change the Status Quo

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Persuading swing voters to support your cause can be tricky.

When voters go to the polls, there's one fundamental question being asked with every vote—do they want to keep or reject the status quo?

If you are asking voters to change who's in power, you are asking them to reject the status quo. To do this, you have to convince voters of two things.

First, why the status quo needs to change. Second, why your change is worth the risk.

So, how do you do it? You create a two-part message.

Part 1 of your message talks about the problems with the status quo. Then in Part 2, you want to show you have a plan and tell voters why they should trust your solution.

Here's the tricky part when you talk about the problems with the status quo. For many of your swing voters, they have voted for the status quo in the past. But most of us don't like to admit we were wrong about a decision. This means you need to craft a message that helps the voter not be wrong, but gives them a chance to update their opinion.

You could say something like:

"In the last campaign you heard a lot of promises about reducing crime and inflation. Here's the problem—we are two years later, and things aren't any better. Crime is higher than ever, and a box of cereal costs \$7. They tried their plan, and it didn't work. You gave them a chance, and they let you down."

Here's the formula for this message:

- Pick a failed promise from the last campaign.
 - *In the last campaign you heard a lot of promises about reducing crime and inflation. Here's the problem—we are two years later, and things aren't any better.*
- Show the failure in a vivid way that matches the voters' experience.
 - *Crime is higher than ever, and a box of cereal costs \$7.*
- Explain why the voter wasn't wrong.
 - *They tried their plan, and it didn't work. You gave them a chance and they let you down.*

Now that you have established why the status quo is broken, you have to explain why rejecting the status quo is worth the risk. For this, you need to have a plan and paint a picture of a brighter future. You want to focus on the safety, certainty, and confidence of your plan.

When I'm elected, there are three things I'm going to do...

Then you talk about three issues you are running on. Ideally, the first issue is related to the failed promises of Part 1. Maybe you talk about your plan to fight crime by enforcing the law for criminals and also for prosecutors. Next, you could talk about inflation or whatever the important issues are for the district.

By providing three areas of focus, you are showing you have a plan and giving voters confidence that rejecting the status quo will be a safer bet.

There's a saying that we buy on emotion, and we justify on facts. By creating a two-part message, you are allowing a swing voter to feel the frustration with the status quo and have the facts from your plan to back up the feeling.

When you create a message for your next campaign, first talk about the problems with the status quo. Then, show voters you have a plan and why they should trust you.