Energy: Statistic, Story & Solution

In the last Winning Edge, we explored how to frame the Pennsylvania budget using the Statistic, Story, and Solution formula.

But how do you apply this approach to a complex issue where voters in different regions have different perspectives?

Let's take a look at how to talk about the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) or, more simply, a carbon tax or energy tax. Most voters aren't familiar with RGGI, so simplifying the language is key.

But beyond that, how do we frame this issue in a way that resonates with different audiences?

Ask: What's the feeling we want to create?

Bucks County
(Moderate/Suburban)

Acknowledge voters' concerns about carbon emissions and highlight that Pennsylvania is already reducing them—without a costly carbon tax.

Westmoreland County
(Conservative/Rural)

Reinforce the skepticism many voters already have toward carbon tax schemes and government intervention.

Step 1: Find the right statistic

For both counties, we'll use a simple stat: *"Pennsylvania's CO2 emissions dropped 10.8% from 2022 to 2023."*
Now, frame it for each audience.

"Electricity is becoming cleaner, and Pennsylvania's CO2 emissions dropped nearly 11% in just one year."

"The media talks a lot about carbon emissions, but here's what they don't report: Pennsylvania actually reduced emissions by nearly 11% in one year—without government mandates."

Step 2: Make it a story

A single statistic is forgettable. A story makes it stick. Over the past decade, Pennsylvania has dramatically shifted how it generates electricity. A decade ago, coal made up almost _40% of the state's electricity production_. Today, it's down to just 5%, driving a sharp drop in emissions.

Now, let's tailor this story for each audience.

Bucks County

"We hear a lot of bad news about climate change, but here's something encouraging: A decade ago, Pennsylvania relied heavily on coal for electricity.

"Today, coal makes up just 5% of our power mix, and our carbon emissions have dropped nearly 11% in a single year. This progress isn't the result of government mandates—it's driven by private-sector innovation in clean natural gas."

Westmoreland County

"We hear a lot about carbon emissions and the environment, but here's what the media doesn't tell you—Pennsylvania has actually reduced emissions by nearly 11% in just one year.

"Over the past decade, we've moved away from coal, not because of the government, but because of our booming natural gas industry. PA now produces so much electricity, we're the nation's largest exporter of power, keeping the lights on in neighboring states."

Step 3: Offer a solution

A strong message needs to inform and give people a clear takeaway.

"Pennsylvania is making real progress in reducing carbon emissions while strengthening our energy sector. We should keep doing what's working and avoid carbon tax schemes that would drive up electricity costs."

"We're producing cleaner energy, growing jobs, and exporting power to other states. Now isn't the time to start a carbon tax and raise electricity rates."

Talking about energy and a carbon tax isn't one-size-fits-all. In Bucks County, voters care about the environment but don't want higher costs, so they need to hear that PA is already cutting emissions without a costly carbon tax.

In Westmoreland, voters are skeptical of government mandates and should hear that Pennsylvania's energy industry is thriving because of natural gas, not regulations.

The Bottom Line

A strong message starts with a statistic, makes it a story, and gives people a clear takeaway. Pennsylvania's energy progress isn't happening because of the government—it's happening in spite of it.