

## Winning Edge #56 – Being Popular Doesn't Balance the Budget

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



What do you do when you have a popular politician but unpopular policies?

That's the challenge with Governor Josh Shapiro. He's positioned himself as a moderate, but he governs as a liberal. Because of his political talent and the millions of dollars he spends on his public persona, he's currently the most popular politician in Pennsylvania.

But voters don't like all of his policies, especially this year's budget.

Shapiro had a chance to lead. He could have stood up to his party and used his political capital to rein in spending. Instead, we have the largest proposed budget in Pennsylvania history: more than \$50 billion, with a \$5 billion deficit.

Back in [Winning Edge #36](#), we talked about the principle of helping undecided voters not be wrong.

The key idea? People have a deep internal need for consistency. They don't like to admit they were wrong, especially about someone they supported. So instead of making them feel foolish, you give them a path to feel right again.

There's a simple three-step approach:

### 1. **Respect their thinking**

Acknowledge why they supported the politician or policy. Give them credit for making the decision they thought correct with the facts they had.

### 2. **Highlight what's changed**

Point out how things have shifted. Show how the politician's actions no longer match what voters originally believed or expected.

### 3. **Show how they can be right again**

Make it easy to update their view. Smart people change their minds when the facts change. That's not weakness, but it's how you stay right.

So what does that look like with Governor Shapiro and the state budget?

You start by saying:

*A lot of Pennsylvanians voted for Gov. Shapiro because he pretended he was a moderate. It sounded good. He said he supported school choice, tax cuts, and pro-business policies.*

*But unfortunately, that's not how he's governed.*

*He allowed runaway spending, sided with the most progressive positions, and proposed the largest budget in state history, over \$50 billion with a massive deficit.*

*Being a nice guy doesn't balance the budget. Saying yes to every big spender might make you likable, but it doesn't make you a leader.*

*Voters trusted Shapiro to lead as a business-minded moderate, and he let them down.*

The reality is, you can be personally popular while backing unpopular policies. At least for a while.

But eventually, voters who trusted you start to question your ability to get the job done. And once you start losing trust, it's hard to earn it back.

So the next time you're talking to voters, don't try to prove them wrong. Help them stay right. Respect their thinking, highlight what's changed, and show them how they can be right again.