



WORDS THAT WORK FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

How do we make a compelling case to not just defend but expand the rights of working people to act collectively? How do we build public will to demand that employers respect the people whose work makes them successful? And how do we debate this on our terms, not on defense?

The recommendations here come from analysis of existing language, 10 focus groups with union and non-union members and an online survey of 750 working adults plus 200 union members and 261 activists for economic justice. We probed competing values, tested moment-to-moment reactions to messaging from both sides and measured movement toward our policy solutions after people heard all of the messages.

The messages recommended here **engage our supporters and persuade the middle while distancing ourselves from the beliefs of our immovable opponents**. We defined our target groups based upon their core attitudes, not partisanship. Our base begins and ends the test on our side: we want messages they not only like but will repeat. The persuadables are as likely to agree with an opposition value about maximizing individual freedom as they are with our belief about coming out ahead by coming together. Our messages are intended to activate the most progressive side of persuadables and move them toward our solutions. The opposition are the folks we will never persuade to our cause because they disagree, at their core, with our premises. We want to marginalize them and their ideas.

Base (25% of sample)	Persuadables (58% of sample)	Opposition (17% of sample)
View unions and working people in unions favorably.	Ambivalent in their view of unions and working people in unions.	View unions and working people in union unfavorably.
Believe the best way for people to get ahead is to join together.	Torn between getting ahead on your own or joining together.	Believe the best way for people to get ahead is on their own.
In a hypothetical dispute, more likely to side with working people over management.	Split between supporting working people and management in hypothetical dispute.	Side with management, not working people, in a hypothetical dispute.
More likely to be Democrats, voters, in union households and part of the New American Majority.	Mirror the demographics of the US adult population, slightly less likely to vote.	More likely to be Republicans, voters, older men and in non-union households.



Messaging Principles...

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 Lead with values like fairness, family and freedom. Co-opting opposition frames isn't just possible, it's potent.

Don't lead with or belabor problems. Present solutions, talk about the future and evoke aspirations.

Anchor to a well-established good – rather than seeking purely to eliminate a bad.

Tie collective bargaining and action to the integral role of working people in our communities and country.

Speak to what humans need for themselves and their families, not simply what they “produce,” nor what the economy desires.

Avoid absolutes both in terms of condemning *all* bosses or rich people and lauding *all* working people.

Give people agency in “coming” or “standing together” as a “team.” Don't imply “the union” is a third party, acting *for* people.

Emphasize *transformational* benefits like improving future workplaces not merely *transactional* gains like current wages and benefits.

Tap into prevailing sentiment of the economy “out of balance” against working people without making harms so dire that change seems impossible.

Words to replace	Words to embrace
Collective bargaining	Negotiating collectively
Collective action	Coming together in union, standing together in union
Group	Team
CEOs do X, bosses do X	A few powerful interests, a handful get richer
All/every/always	Some/many/often
Labor unions, public employee unions	Unions of working people
Good for our economy/productivity	Good for our country / America / families / working people
Exploit/harm/mistreat	Require we do more with less
Workers get / receive/ fight/demand, employer gives	Working people negotiate / earn
Union contract	Negotiated contract
Joining a union	Joining in union
Raise wages, better wages and benefits	People who work for a living ought to earn a living, make a good living and have a good life
Improve wages and working conditions	Set standards, change the rules, create better workplaces
Bargaining units, covered employees, union members	Women and men, we, working people in union(s)

TESTED MESSAGES

Messages were tested in online survey with 750 working adults plus 200 unions members and 261 activists, gauging moment to moment responses. Below is the winning amalgam from the 10 advocacy messages tested, based on **beating leading opposition arguments** among target audiences and moving them toward our solutions.

Future

America is a nation of strivers. Most of us work hard to create a better future for ourselves and the next generation. And we believe that people who work for a living, ought to earn a living. Something is wrong when millions of Americans are working hard and can't make ends meet. We must join forces to make sure that working people can make a good living and have a good life. By making sure anyone who wants to come together and negotiate the terms of their work has that right recognized, we create better workplaces for ourselves and those that follow. United, we make America work.

Working Families

Everyone knows - family comes first. Whether it's for an elderly parent, a spouse just laid-off or a child who depends on you, being there and providing for those you love isn't negotiable. By protecting anyone's right to stand together, we can secure working conditions that let us spend time with our families while earning enough to support them. We need to eliminate the obstacles put in place that keep us from being able to negotiate about our work and enact standards that value families. Working people deserve to make more than a good living; we deserve to have a good life.

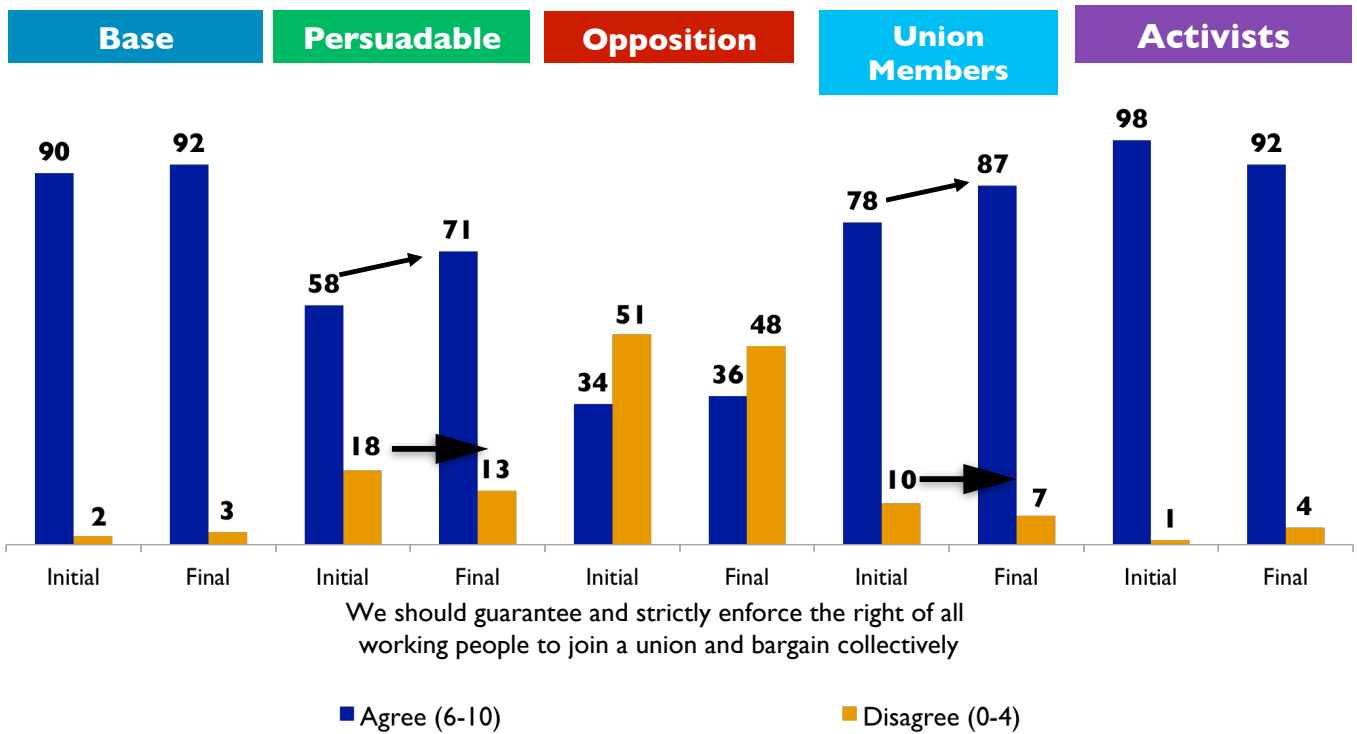
Teamwork - More Perfect Union

It takes a team, where we have each other's backs, to get our country and economy moving forward. That's why we need to come together for a fair return on work, which includes benefits and paid time to be home when our families need us. But today, a few powerful people get even richer from profits we produce, requiring the rest of us to do more with less. By acting as a team, we can change the rules so working Americans can win. What makes America great is our belief in working together toward a more perfect union.

Freedom at Work

In America, we value our freedom. And CEOs are free to negotiate their salaries, benefits and bonuses. Working people deserve the very same freedom: to negotiate the return for the hard work we put in. Working people make up the backbone of our nation, that's why our voices need to be heard and our ideas about improving our own work ought to matter. Those of us doing the work are the ones who know the job inside and out. By coming together, we can set standards that say - people who work for a living, should earn a living. And the people doing the work ought to have the freedom of a say in how it gets done and who benefits from it.

Dramatic shifts by persuadables and union members in favor of collective bargaining after messages



After messages, persuadables move from being split on role of unions to being in solid favor

