

Date: April 9, 2014

To: Friends of Democracy Corps and WWVAF

From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville, and Erica Seifert, Democracy Corps
& Page Gardner, Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund

Framing the Women's Economic Agenda for greatest 2014 effect

Getting it right has power to impact the vote and turnout

The economy remains the top concern for voters, and progressive voters need a framework that motivates turnout and Democratic support in its broad progressive base in an off-year election. This new survey for Women's Voices Women Vote and Democracy Corps says there is such a route. It means advancing an economic agenda dominated by policies that are directed at addressing the key economic concerns of working women.

Unmarried women are the key to 2014, but are underperforming now on vote margin and turnout. But the impact of the women's economic agenda and economic messages in the survey shift the congressional contest – with unmarried women leading the way on vote change and turnout change.

Unmarried women made up a quarter of the electorate in 2012 and gave two thirds of their votes to President Obama. However, even as the fiscal choices made by Congress have significant impact on their personal economies, these voters are vulnerable to non-voting in off-year elections. When we asked last March whether the national political debates were addressing the issues most important to them, nearly 60 percent of unmarried women said “no,” and did so with real intensity. As we learned in 2010, these voters are critical to Democrats' fortunes, but they are unlikely to vote, and less likely to give Democrats big margins, if Democrats are not laser focused on the issues that matter most to them.

To get at these issues and ultimately bring about policy outcomes that help this segment of our population, Democracy Corps and Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund began conducting extensive research on what motivates these voters to turn out and what motivates them to vote for particular candidates. As we found last March, unmarried women, along with other members of the Rising American Electorate, are most motivated by an agenda that addresses essential pocketbook-level economics, including pay, cost of education, and job protection for working parents. We have now conducted three national surveys and a survey in the House battleground districts, as well as dial meter groups during the State of the Union and multiple focus groups around the country. We build upon that body of work as we release the results of a new national survey, which advances this previous work in three major ways:



1. For the first time in this survey, we have linked individual policies to powerful economic concepts (equal pay for women, help for working mothers, and raised pay and affordable school to get better jobs) to see whether they have an effect on turnout and vote.
2. For the first time in this survey, we have framed the policies through the potential economic impact they would have in voters' everyday lives, testing which contexts and impacts have the most power.
3. For the first time in this survey, we measure the impact of these policies on turnout in a very comprehensive way.

The new survey shows the unbelievable power of the women's economic agenda, but particularly shows how relating to key aspects of the pressures facing working women multiplies the power of the women's economic agenda. That has a particularly big impact on unmarried women. The new formulation translates into a big policy agenda.

The challenge:

- Among likely voters, the Congressional race is a dead heat (44 percent to 43 percent). In off-year elections when base voters' turnout and support matters most, both parties will need to work hard to raise support among their core voters.
- Among their base voters in the Rising American Electorate (unmarried women, young voters, and people of color), Democrats are currently underperforming by Presidential year margins. Likely RAE voters give Democratic candidates a 25-point advantage over Republican candidates—the same margin they gave Democrats in 2010, and 10 points below the margin they gave President Obama in 2012.
- Unmarried women, the largest portion of the Rising American Electorate, are also underperforming, giving Democratic candidates a 26-point margin in the generic vote, 8 points lower than the margin they gave President Obama in 2012 and 14 points lower than they gave the President in 2008.
- In addition to lagging on the vote, voters in the Rising American Electorate, including unmarried women, also lag in self-reported intention to vote in November. Drop-off among this group could prove critical.

The opportunity:

However, this survey identifies the policies and messages that move these voters to both turn out in November and to vote for candidates who adopt those approaches. While the agenda we identify is popular among all voters, it is especially powerful among unmarried women and the RAE. We have identified the core of the women's economic agenda, which includes four "legs," all of which are powerful motivators when framed as the Democrats' economic agenda and paired with a strong economic message.

- The four "legs," explained in detail below, include:



-
- **Make sure women get equal pay for equal work and make sure insurance companies no longer charge women more than men,**
 - **Help working mothers by ending discrimination against pregnant workers and new mothers, provide paid leave so people can care for children and families, and expand access to affordable childcare.**
 - **Help working women get better wages and better jobs by raising the minimum wage to \$10.10, expanding access to training and scholarships, and getting school costs down.**
 - **Protect Medicare to ensure there is no reduction in benefits and protect Social Security so seniors can retire at a reasonable age.**

Political environment

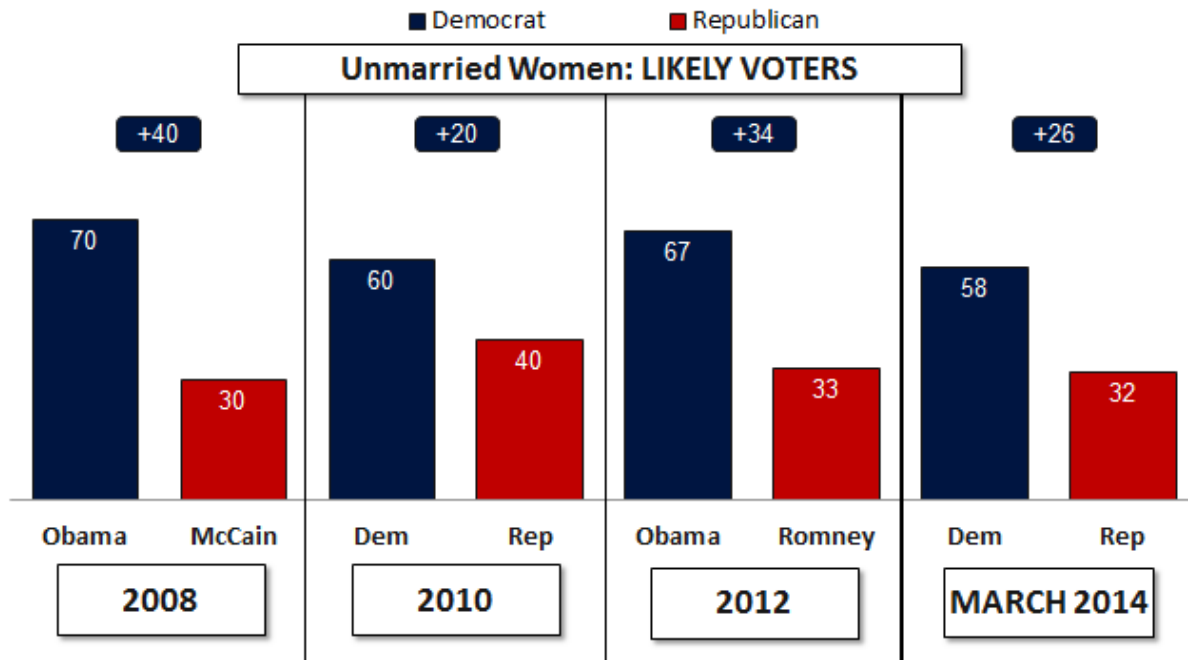
The research shows that Democrats need this agenda because dropoff in turnout and underperformance among Democratic base voters in the RAE could be critical in November.

Among likely RAE voters, Democrats now hold a 25-point margin over Republican candidates in the generic vote. This is close to the margin among this group in the 2010 election—but nearly 10 points lower than President Obama's margin over Romney among this group in 2012. And among likely 2014 voters who are unmarried women, who gave two thirds of their votes and a 35-point margin to the president in 2012, Democrats are winning just 58 percent of the vote—a margin of 26 points.



Democrats lag among unmarried women likely to vote in off-year election, though slightly better than 2010

I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress in 2014, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for – the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?

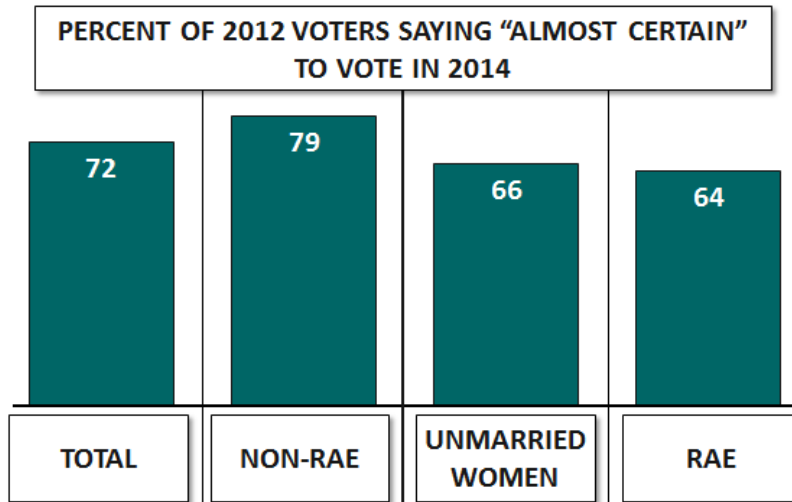


But this is not merely an issue of performance, it is also an issue of turnout. Among all voters who voted in 2012, 72 percent report that they are “almost certain” to vote in November. By contrast, two thirds (66 percent) of unmarried women and two thirds (64 percent) of RAE voters who voted in 2012 report that they are almost certain to vote in 2014.



Rising American Electorate uncertain to vote, compared to others

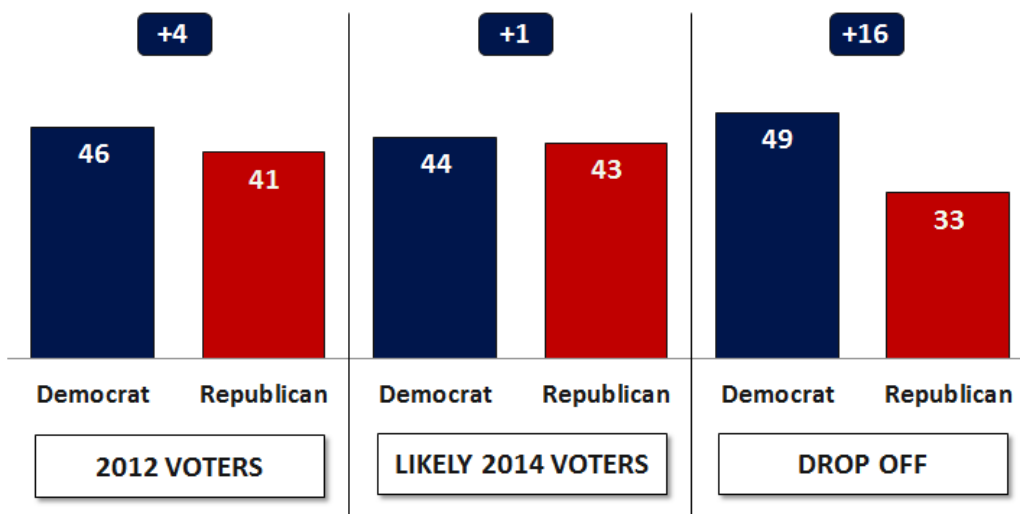
I know it's a long way off, but what are the chances of your voting in the election for Congress in November: are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or don't you think you will vote?



The result is that Democrats could leave a lot of deciding votes on the table. Among voters likely to vote in 2014, the generic ballot is tied. Among those who voted in 2012 but who are not likely to vote in 2014, Democrats hold a 16-point margin. This is a big deal.

Drop-off voters would give Democrats big margin

I know it's a long way off, but thinking about the election for Congress in 2014, if the election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you be voting for – the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?





Reframing the Women's Economic Agenda

As we know from our prior work, these voters can be motivated to turn out and to vote for Democrats, but they need to hear leaders addressing the issues that matter to them most. As our focus groups and surveys found last year, these voters are particularly motivated by an economic agenda with policies that specifically address the everyday paycheck and pocketbook issues of working women. This survey not only distills the core of this agenda, as seen below, but it also shows that these policies should be framed as a general economic agenda and followed with a powerful middle class message. When done well, this agenda is not only motivating among unmarried women and the RAE, but also all voters.

In this survey we linked the policies previously tested in the women's economic agenda to different aspects of the economic lives of working women and their families. Previously, we found that equal pay on its own was a popular policy, for example, but now linked with equal healthcare and framed as a policy to help women get treated equitably and help them succeed, it becomes even more powerful. Work place and family policies linked together in an effort to recognize the struggles of working mothers also is very powerful – and more powerful than previously tested.

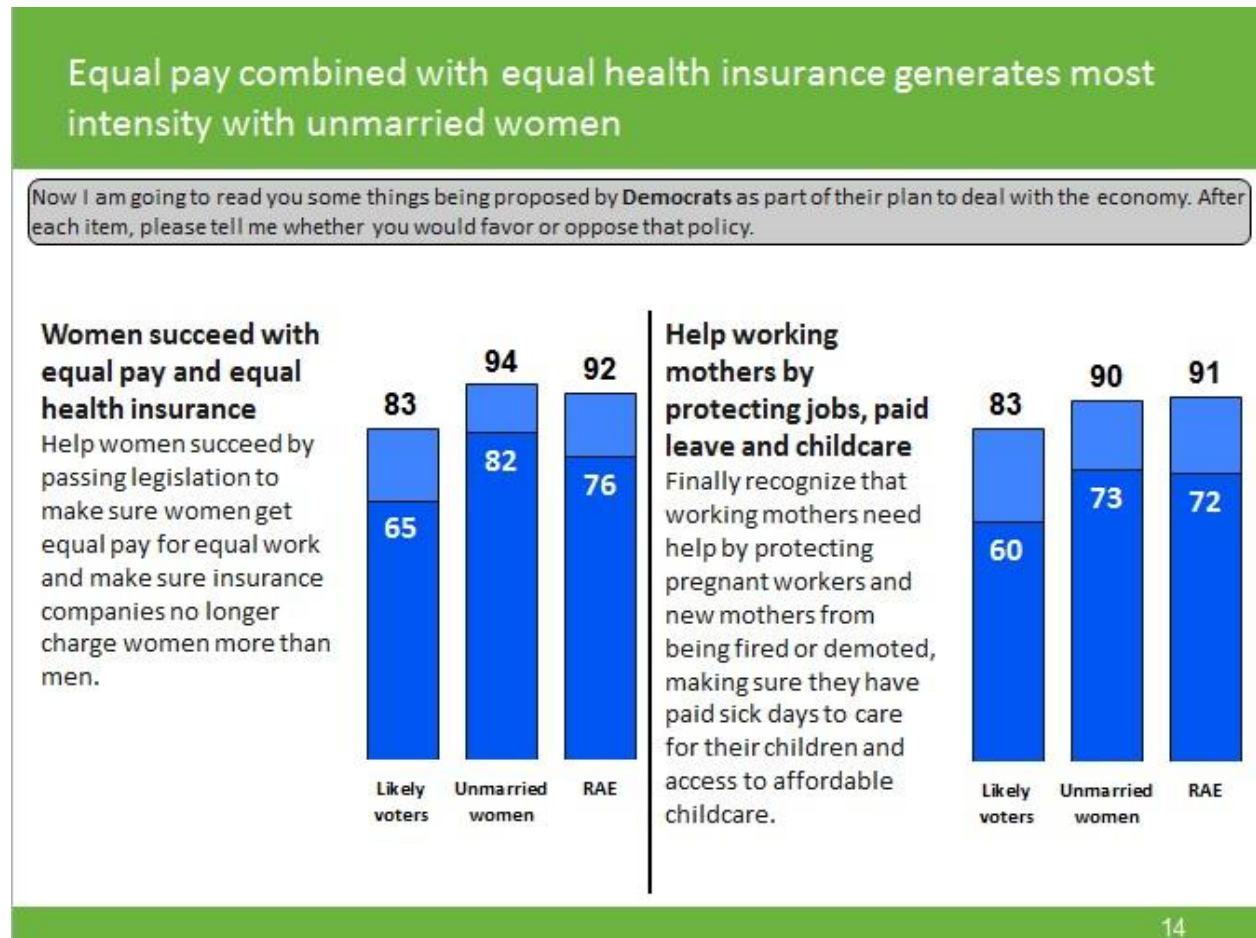
The four policies that emerge from this survey should form the core of the women's economic agenda. They are:

1. **Make sure women get equal pay for equal work and make sure insurance companies no longer charge women more than men.** We are saying women will succeed when we do more to ensure they get equal pay in the work place – now buttressed by the president's new policy with federal contractors. But do not forget women not paying more for health insurance, which is really happening. Despite DC dysfunction, this is real and happening as a result of Democratic efforts.
2. **Help working mothers by ending discrimination against pregnant workers and new mothers, provide paid leave so people can care for children and families, and expand access to affordable childcare.** This starts with *finally recognizing working mothers* need help and offering a group of policies that can really provide that support.
3. **Help working women get better wages and better jobs by raising the minimum wage to \$10.10, expanding access to training and scholarships, and getting school costs down.** This recognizes working women's struggle with pay and helps them get better jobs in the future by investing in training and working to reduce the cost of college. Combining minimum wage with training and college is more powerful than minimum wage on its own.
4. **Protect Medicare to ensure there is no reduction in benefits and protect Social Security so seniors can retire at a reasonable age.** Including this in the women's economic agenda recognizes that senior women are disproportionately



unmarried women and retirement security is central to their economic stability. As retirement security is also under threat in the Ryan budget, this leg also sets up an important contrast with Republicans.

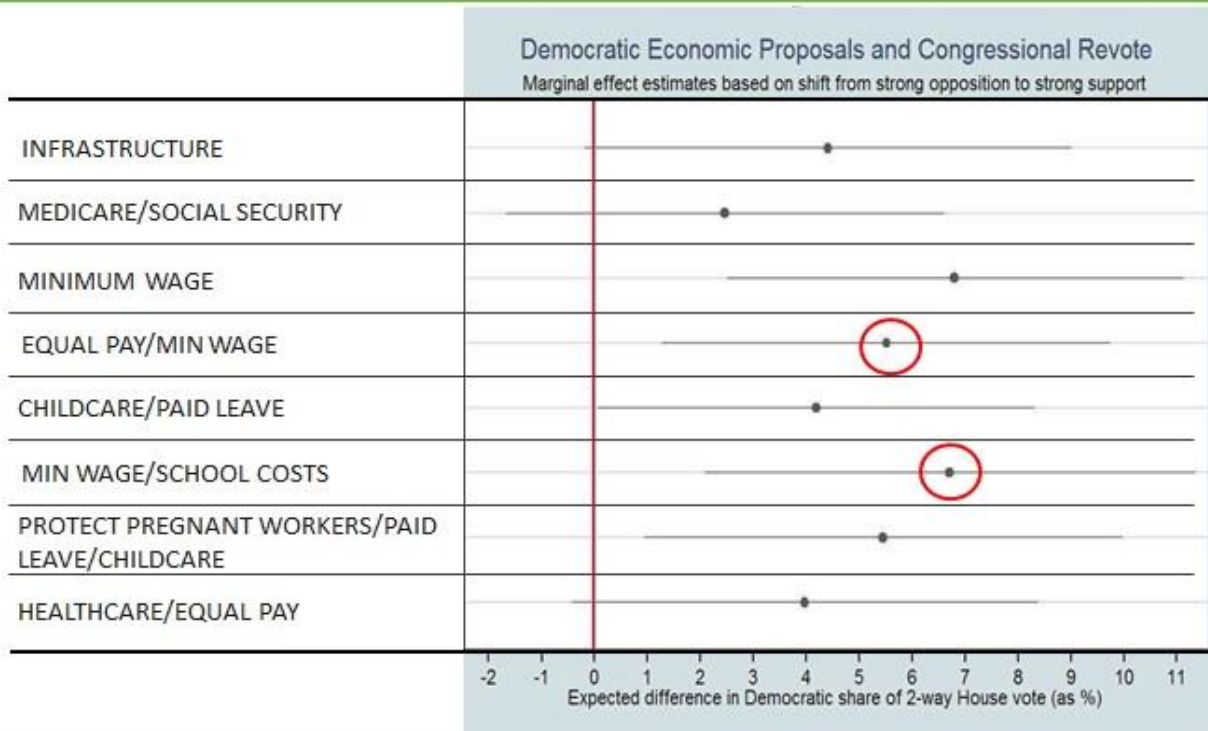
Among unmarried women, equal pay and equal health insurance was the strongest policy, even stronger than Medicare and Social Security. And for Democrats, this link is crucial. Ending gender rating in health insurance has already happened through the Affordable Care Act. Linking it with something Democrats are fighting for now—equal pay—elevates both policies.



In regression analysis, we found that all of the policies in this agenda were stronger than the Republican policies we tested in motivating both the vote at the end of the survey as well as intention to vote. In vote performance for Democrats, policies addressing pay were strongest. These include paycheck fairness combined with equal health insurance, paycheck fairness combined with minimum wage, and minimum wage combined with addressing the cost of education and job training.



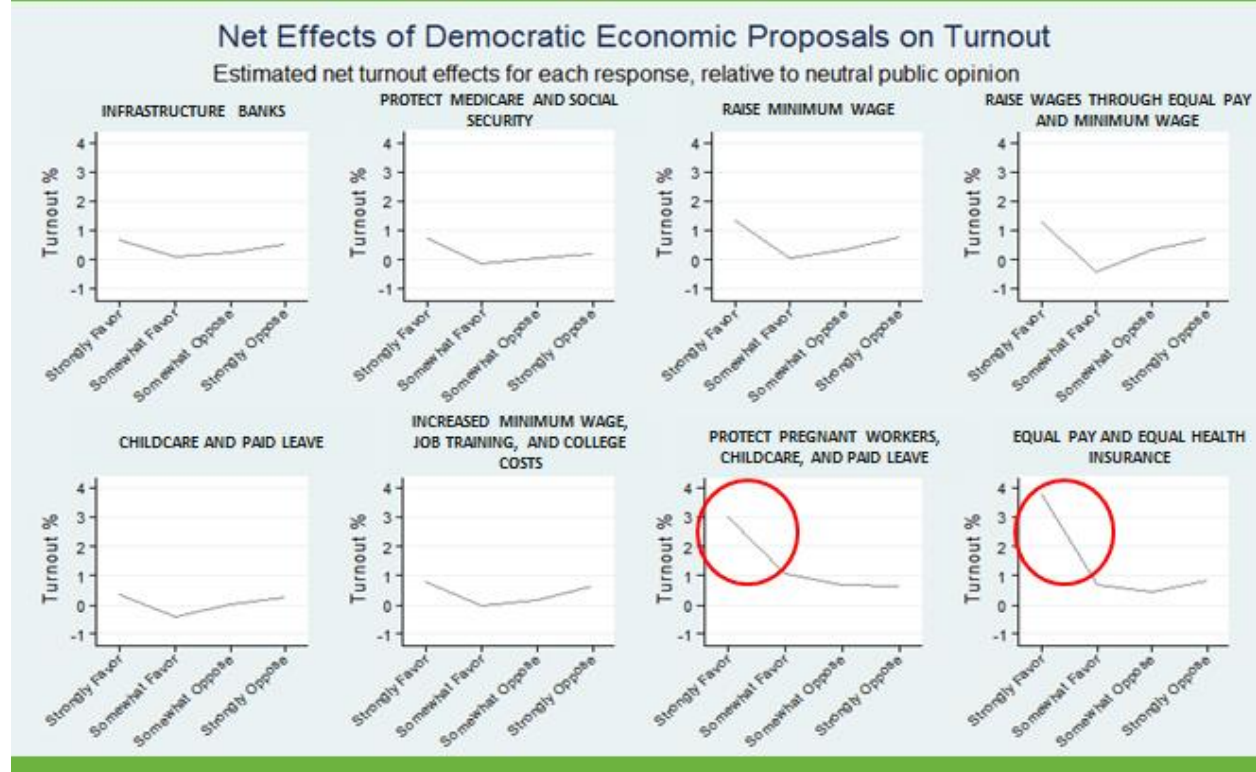
Strongest effect on vote: minimum wage policies. Minimum wage with education has independent effect as strong as minimum wage



And in motivating turnout, equal pay combined with equal health insurance, as well as protecting pregnant workers and ensuring access to childcare and paid leave, were strongest.



Strongest net effect on turnout: Sharp increases of turnout correlated with equal pay and equal health insurance, as well as protecting pregnant workers, childcare, and paid leave



When we pair this agenda with a strong middle class message, the impact of the agenda grows and it broadens the audience – while still leading with policies that form the core of the women’s economic agenda.

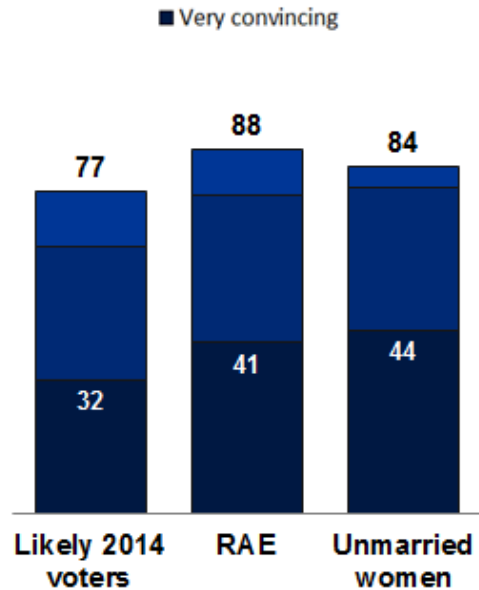
This message recognizes that folks are working harder just to get by and says that the economy is not producing jobs that pay well enough to keep up with costs.



Message helped when also part of message for middle class.

Now I am going to read you some things Democrats are saying about their plans for the economy. After I read the statement, please tell me how convincing a reason it is to support the Democratic candidate in November .

Incomes of CEOs and the top 1 percent are soaring, but everyone else is working harder to just get by. The economy does not produce jobs that pay enough to keep up with the basic cost of living. Our economy will not grow until ordinary people can afford education and train for jobs of the future, unless pay is pushed up, we stand up for American jobs and ensure people can retire comfortably. If the middle class succeeds, America succeeds.



Note: Women’s Voices. Women Vote Action Fund is a nonpartisan 501(c)(4) social welfare organization that promotes civic engagement and policies to help unmarried women and other under-represented segments of the American population.