

“The fact that different organizations place varying degrees of emphasis on certain tactical approaches is not indicative of disunity. Unity has never meant uniformity.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., from Why We Can't Wait

With real Presidential leadership, the battle for a national climate policy is finally, officially on. But it is far from won, and time is very short. Opposition from vested interests will be ferocious.

The following message themes are offered in that context.

These themes are purposefully drawn from familiar currents in communications to promote convergence. Each theme includes a footnote on why it's strategic and how it can be used to steer us away from division and toward unity.

- **We can repower, refuel, and rebuild our economy with clean energy and transportation choices¹.** These solutions will drive economic recovery, deliver green jobs, and promote broadly-shared prosperity. Strategic public investments will help kick-start the new energy economy. But building this economy over time requires a clear, long-term policy commitment: a cap on climate pollution that drives private innovation and investment in solutions.
- **Get real about reducing fossil fuel dependence. Put responsible limits on climate pollution².** For decades, our leaders have warned against the dangers of fossil fuel dependence – the economic drain, the security risks, climate disruption. It is time to finally step up to this challenge. Small policy tweaks won't do it. We need a real, solid policy commitment to reduce fossil fuel dependence, with enforceable limits and timetables: a cap on climate pollution.
 - **The sky is a valuable, limited, *public* resource. Polluters should only be allowed to use it within safe limits, and they should pay for that use.³** Congress will debate alternative ways to return the value of these payments to the people. But there can be no debate about who owns the sky. We all do.
- **Do it now⁴.** There can be no further excuses for delay. The economy can't wait. The climate can't wait. The world can't wait.
- **Restore and advance American leadership:** Recognize that the climate crisis is truly global in nature, and that our best efforts at home must be part of an international response in which all nations do their fair shares. Rapid, meaningful domestic action and genuine international cooperation are both fundamental to effective American leadership. With greater trust and courageous international engagement, America can help forge a global green new deal that delivers climate solutions as big as the problem, while setting the stage for broadly-shared prosperity globally.

- **Protecting working families from high and volatile fuel costs is vital⁵.** Fossil fuel costs are a huge drain on our struggling economy. Climate policy will strengthen the economy and protect families by reducing dependence on fossil fuels. It must be designed to drive new energy innovation and ensure that basic energy service is affordable.
- **Building our new energy economy requires accelerated public and private investment⁶.** We can't just constrain our way out of fossil fuel dependence. We must build and invest our way to a brighter future.
- **Building the new energy economy and delivering real climate solutions is the change we need⁷.** The new energy transition can mobilize America at its best – innovative, forward-looking, determined, and compassionate. The only limiting factor is our will to work together for change.

A specific message about cap and invest and cap and dividend:

- **Cap and dividend and cap and invest share the same fundamental purpose and principles:**
 - Build the new energy economy.
 - Promote investment in a rapid transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.
 - Make a serious commitment – with timetables and accountability for results -- to reducing fossil fuel dependence and delivering climate solutions by capping carbon.
 - Protect working families and the economy by reducing fossil fuel dependence and accelerating the transition to a new energy economy.

Cap and dividend differs from cap and invest only in how it proposes to return the value of auctioned pollution allowances to the public. Direct payments or tax credits to households, public investments that ease and accelerate the clean energy transition, and addressing the impacts of fossil fuel dependence on people and natural systems are all important public purposes. Open, constructive debate will help Congress find the right mix.

¹ Whatever our policy design preferences, it's clear that we must begin by taking the economic high ground. This echos the C-Campaign and We campaign messages for taking that high ground, and features a carbon cap as the platform for building the new energy economy, as President Obama did in his address to Congress. There are other good "economic high ground" messages; we featured these because they have a high level of existing convergence and visibility.

² If a cap on climate pollution comes to be understood as the serious, no-nonsense answer to reducing fossil fuel dependence, it is much easier to establish and hold the economic high ground. It also builds the imperative for a carbon cap by incorporating the strong public demand for economic recovery and national security. People understand that fossil fuel dependence is an economic and security threat, and they are frustrated by the lack of a real commitment to reduce it. The debate about investments, dividends, and even carbon taxes needs to be in the context of this basic, threshold public policy commitment to achieve the

necessary emission reductions. That's the key policy imperative here, and questions about the relative merits of public investments, dividends, tax credits, and carbon taxes only matter if we aggregate enough power to meet that imperative.

³ While we debate the most strategic mix of public investments, dividends, tax benefits, etc., we need to work together to establish the fundamental principle that this is a public resource and that its value belongs to the people. Public investments, dividends, and tax credits are all legitimate ways to return that value (though we differ on their tactical merits). This message is embedded under the cap message because there's a lot of evidence suggesting that people don't like the idea of letting polluters pay to pollute. They don't think it should be allowed at all. So it's important that the paying part comes after the limiting part.

⁴ We delude ourselves when we try to neatly separate public messaging from inside strategy discussions. On numerous recent occasions, our speculation on timing and sequencing has been used to publicly and harmfully reduce expectations. It's not too late for a strong climate policy, but it sure as hell isn't too early. We need urgent action, and public musing about how or why or whether action will be deferred undermines that urgency. Leave it to the pundits to speculate. Advocates should advocate.

⁵ The effect on consumers is a key tactical difference between dividends and investments. However, we should note that in both cases, consumers enjoy the benefits of reduced fossil fuel dependence and return of the resource value of the sky (whether as direct payments, tax offsets, or public investments).

⁶ The differences over the disposition of auction revenue are NOT an argument about whether investment in the new energy economy, green jobs, transition, international adaptation, and other policy imperatives are necessary or desirable. The cap drives accelerated private investment, and, regardless of how auction revenues are used, public investment is also necessary. The policy difference is only about the extent to which auction revenues are the appropriate way to fund these investments. This message also positions climate policy as a building and creating mechanism, not just a constraining and mitigating mechanism, based on a great deal of communication research showing that this distinction is critical. *It is important that cap and dividend advocates avoid language that can be inferred to disparage public investment, and cap and invest advocates embrace the goal of protecting household budgets.. (Not pointing fingers; looking forward.)*

⁷ The most important messenger for this message is obviously the President, and he seems to be on it. Linking the overall mandate for change to these objectives is obviously critical in establishing the political will to get us to the point where policy design debates become more than hypothetical.