

## HOW TO ENSURE MESSAGE DISCIPLINE

In a campaign, message discipline is the frequent repetition of a simple message. It requires two basic prerequisites:



**TIP:** Don't get too caught up in developing a catchy tagline – not all effective campaigns have one. It's better to have strong, simple messages.

1. A simple set of talking points and/or a tagline (e.g., “good for farmers, good for families”) that briefly defines the problem, solution, why it matters, and why it's urgent/why now.
2. Alignment internally and (as applicable) with coalition partners about the talking points and/or tagline. Make sure you have an understanding of whose buy-in you need both internally and externally. For example, some organizations will require sign-off from their editorial team while others require sign-off from their political or communications team (or all three!). Talking to the right people within your organization and your partners' organizations creates alignment on the value of sharing messages across platforms and makes it likelier to create the surround-sound messaging effect you're looking for.

Once your messages have been developed and alignment is ensured among relevant internal and coalition stakeholders, here are a few ways to develop messaging discipline that makes your message stick.

- **Repeat again and again.** Studies show that people need to hear something at least seven times before it truly sinks in, but we've found lawmakers often need to hear something far more frequently than that. For someone to become an advocate for your cause and effectively repeat your message, the number is likely far above 14 times. The ability of your partners, peers, lawmakers, and/or everyday people to internalize your message and organically become a messenger for your cause is what makes a campaign sustainable in the long run.
- **Convey clarity and simplicity.** Your message needs to be clear, concise, and easily identifiable to your listener. Remember, your goal is for someone to be able to repeat your message confidently. The message that will resonate will be simple and clear.
- **Prioritize:** When in doubt, air on the side of saying less and choosing your words carefully. You only have a person's attention span for a limited amount of time, whether that's in a one-on-one meeting, on live television, or during a webinar, so make sure the time you're investing is spent wisely.
- **Carefully select your messengers.** Given the value of repetition, cultivate a deep bench of messengers available and prepared to effectively deliver your campaign's message. A strong messenger to one audience may be a weak messenger to another. Think about what the person or people you're talking to will find compelling due to their professional or personal circumstances.