

Frank Luntz Republican Playbook
PART X "APPENDIX: THE 14 WORDS NEVER TO USE"

In the tenth and final installment of the text version of the Luntz Republican playbook, Frank warns conservatives of the 14 words they should never, ever use -- and then graciously provides 'proper' alternatives.

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APPENDIX: THE 14 WORDS NEVER TO USE

Sometimes it is not what you say that matters but what you don't say. Other times a single word or phrase can undermine or destroy the credibility of a paragraph or entire presentation. This memo was originally prepared exclusively for Congressional spouses because they are your eyes and ears, a one-person reality check and truth squad combined. However, by popular demand, I have included and expanded that document because effectively communicating requires you to STOP saying words and phrases that undermine your ability to educate the American people.

So from today forward, YOU are the language police. From today forward, these are the words never to say again.

1. Government - Washington

NEVER SAY: Government
INSTEAD SAY: Washington

The fact is, most Americans appreciate their local government that picks up their trash, cleans their streets, and provides police and transportation services. Washington is the problem. Remind voters again and again about Washington spending, Washington waste, Washington taxation, Washington bureaucracy, Washington rules and Washington regulations. Then remind voters that if Washington created this mess, it is

Washington's responsibility to fix it. "If we expect to succeed we must look to ourselves and not to Washington to raise our kids, start our businesses and improve our day-to-day lives." If you must talk about government, use the context defined by President Bush: "Government should help people improve their lives) not try to run their lives.

2. Privatization/Private Accounts - Personalization/Personal Accounts

NEVER SAY: Privatization/Private Accounts
INSTEAD SAY: Personalization/Personal Accounts

Many more Americans would "personalize" Social Security than "privatize" it. In fact, two-thirds of America want to personalize Social Security while only one-third would privatize it. Why? Personalizing Social Security suggests ownership and control over your retirement savings,

while privatizing it suggests a profit motive and winners and losers, BANISH PRIVATIZATION FROM YOUR LEXICON.

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3 Tax Reform - Tax Simplification

NEVER SAY: Tax Reform

INSTEAD SAY: Tax Simplification

While a majority of Americans are generally in favor of tax reform, one-third of the population fears that they would end up paying more in taxes if the tax code was in fact reformed. However, almost all Americans believe they would personally benefit from a tax code that was simplified - in terms of money they owe, time they spend and anxiety about the IRS. When more Americans fear the IRS than root-canal surgery, something should be done to simplify the tax code.

4. Inheritance/Estate Tax - The Death Tax

NEVER SAY: Inheritance/Estate Tax

INSTEAD SAY: The Death Tax

While a sizeable 68% of America thinks the Inheritance/Estate Tax is unfair, fully 78% think that the Death Tax is unfair. And while a narrow majority would repeal the inheritance/estate tax, an overwhelming majority would repeal the death tax. If you want to kill the estate tax, call it a death tax.

5. A Global Economy/Globalization/Capitalism - Free Market Economy

NEVER SAY: Global Economy/Globalization/Capitalism

INSTEAD SAY: Free Market Economy

More Americans are afraid of the principle of globalization than even privatization. The reason? Globalization represents something big, something distant and something foreign. It's the same reason why Americans like their local government but dislike Washington -- the closer you are, the more control you have. So instead of talking about the principles of globalization, instead emphasize "the value and benefits of a free market economy." Similarly, capitalism reminds people of harsh economic competition that yields losers as well as winners. Conversely, the free market economy provides opportunity to all and allows everyone to succeed.

6. Outsourcing - Taxation, Regulation, Litigation, Innovation, Education

NEVER SAY: Outsourcing

INSTEAD SAY: Taxation, Regulation, Litigation, Innovation, Education

When you use the words of your oppositions you are basically accepting their definition and therefore their conclusion. We should NEVER use the word outsourcing because we will then be asked to defend or end the practice of allowing companies to ship American jobs overseas. Rather, we should talk about the "root cause" why any company would not want to hire "the best workers in the world." And the answer: "over-taxation, over-regulation, too much litigation, and not enough innovation or quality education." Because it rhymes, it will be remembered.

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7. Undocumented Workers - Illegal Aliens

NEVER SAY: Undocumented Workers
INSTEAD SAY: Illegal Aliens

The Dems have adopted the phrase "undocumented worker" but you shouldn't. Call them exactly what they are. In fact, instead of addressing "immigration reform," which polarizes Americans, you should be talking about "border security" issues. Securing our borders and our people has universal support.

8. Foreign Trade - International Trade

NEVER SAY: Foreign Trade
INSTEAD SAY: International Trade

For many reasons unrelated to this issue, the word "foreign" conjures up negative images. Americans simply don't like "foreign oil," or "foreign products" or "foreign nationals." International is a more positive concept than either foreign or global.

9. Drilling for oil - Exploring for energy

NEVER SAY: Drilling for oil
INSTEAD SAY: Exploring for energy

It's the picture people paint in their minds, the difference between an old-fashioned oilrig that gushes up black goop vs. 21st Century technology and innovation that provides us the ability to heat our homes and drive our cars. When you talk about energy, use words like "responsible" and "balanced" and always address your concern for the environment.

10. Tort Reform - Lawsuit Abuse Reform

NEVER SAY: Tort Reform
INSTEAD SAY: Lawsuit Abuse Reform

The term "tort" has very little meaning to the average American, and at best reminds one of a French pastry. "Lawsuit Abuse" is something most Americans understand and resent. If you really want to make your case, add the word "frivolous."

11. Trial Lawyer - Personal Injury Lawyer

NEVER SAY: Trial Lawyer

INSTEAD SAY: Personal Injury Lawyer

It is hard to distrust a trial lawyer because we see them portrayed so favorably on L.A. Law and Law & Order. But personal injury lawyers, also known as ambulance chasers, remind people of those annoying, harassing commercials we see at 1:00 am cajoling us to sue someone. If you want to get the frill bang for the buck, call them "predatory personal injury lawyers."

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12. Corporate Transparency - Corporate Accountability

NEVER SAY: Corporate Transparency

INSTEAD SAY: Corporate Accountability

I constantly hear the need for "transparency" coming from members of the financial services industry as well as Members of Congress. But if you asked the American people, corporate accountability is a much higher priority. The fact is, a majority of Americans can't even explain what transparency actually means. But everyone understands and demands accountability from all sectors of the economy ... and the government.

13. School Choice - Parental Choice/Equal Opportunity in Education

NEVER SAY: School Choice

INSTEAD SAY: Parental Choice/Equal Opportunity in Education

Americans are still evenly split over whether they support "school choice" in America's schools. But they are heavily in favor of "giving parents the right to choose the schools that are right for their children," and there is almost universal support for "equal opportunity in education." So frame the issue right and you get the support you need.

14. Healthcare "Choice" - "The Right to Choose"

NEVER SAY: Healthcare "Choice"

INSTEAD SAY: "The Right to Choose"

This is an important nuance so often lost on political officials. Almost all Americans want "the right to choose the healthcare plan, hospital, doctor and prescription drug plan that is best for them," but far fewer Americans actually want to make that choice. In fact the older you get, the less eager you are to have a wide range of choices. One reason why the prescription drug card earned only qualified public support was that it offered too many choices and therefore created too much confusion for too many senior citizens.