

MESSAGING ON POLICING BALLOT INITIATIVES TIPS



WE MAKE
THE FUTURE
ACTION

This tip sheet is based on the messaging work of the Yes For Minneapolis and Yes On 24 campaigns in Cleveland.

Use and share these tips to boldly, loudly, and repeatedly share your vision for reimagining policing in your upcoming ballot campaigns.



TIP #1 Don't assume that Black people will automatically support the initiative or show up on election day. Make a direct appeal to Black voters. Organize! Organize! Organize!

TIP #2 Speak to what your initiative will create, not just what you want to see eliminated.

#2

Examples

No matter our race or income, most Clevelanders believe that our children deserve to come home safe at the end of the day.

Across race, income, and every neighborhood of Minneapolis, the residents are setting a new standard for public safety by funding the health and safety professionals who we know help keep us safe.

TIP #3 Don't take the opposition's bait by negating their baseless attacks.

#3

Examples:

Reporter Asks: Will this take money away from police services or defund the police?

Your Answer: This campaign is about delivering real justice and accountability for our communities by ensuring that we get fair and independent investigations into police misconduct.

Reporter Asks: Is this an effort to defund the police?

Your Answer: This is about fully funding public safety. Everyone, including police officers, agree that we are asking too much of them. It's time to rework public safety so qualified experts, like mental health and social workers, can work alongside the police to give people the help they need to keep communities safe.

TIP **Have a quick and concise way of describing what your ballot initiative does?**

#4

Examples: This ballot measure delivers real accountability, independent investigations into police misconduct, and ensures that all our loved ones can come safe at night, no exceptions.

This measure would create a comprehensive public health approach to public safety, so that all of us, no matter what we look like or which neighborhood we live in, have an equal opportunity to live safely and securely by adding qualified experts, like mental health and social workers to our current armed-police only model. We can then have the right response when we need help.

TIP **Consider your opposition's dog whistles about 'crime,' 'violence,' and 'law and order' as opportunities to share your vision.**

#5

Example: This is exactly why we need measures like this one. For too long, leadership has failed to address the harm and violence that continue to plague the police department and city. This is an opportunity to take it seriously by creating accountability.

TIP **Stay away from partisan language. There are likely people on both sides of the aisle who can get behind your initiative. Using partisan language will cut you off from some voters, even if they really agree with you.**

#6

TIP **Create cohesive messaging that can be shared across supporting organizations. Message discipline is very important for these campaigns. Your opposition will likely engage in disinformation to sway voters. You need your supporters and allied organizations echoing a similar message in order to drown them out.**

#7

TIP **Include a description of how your ballot initiatives will help everyone.**

#8

Example: When police departments are not accountable to anyone but themselves, it leads to even more dangerous decisions by police, hurts our families, and deepens mistrust within our communities.

TIP **You do not have to advocate for more police funding to win. Most people want some version of reform, reimaging and change. You just have to make your case.**

#9

TIP **Motivate Black voters by talking about the future we desire to build. Drilling down on the history of injustice can demotivate Black people and make it harder to convince them that voting will make things better.**

#10

Check out videos from the [Ohio](#) and [Minnesota](#) campaigns.

You can also view the Minnesota campaign report [here](#).

These tips are compiled based on the messaging work of the following campaigns.