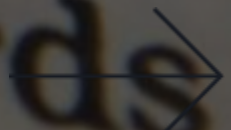


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Disarming the Left's New Rhetoric of State Control

Vocabulary Manipulation and the Erosion of
Personal Responsibility in Public Policy





Hi. I'm Ron Nehring.

Chairman, California Republican Party (2007- 2011)

Chairman, Republican Party of San Diego County (2001 – 2007)

Presidential Campaign Spokesman Sen. Ted Cruz (2016)

Republican nominee for Lt. Governor of California (2014)

Director of the International School of Politics at the Leadership Institute

Elected officeholder in San Diego County



“Unhoused”

- **Language manipulation as a strategic tool of the left.**
- **Shifts the debate away from individual and toward state responsibility**
- **Justifies expanded government control**
- **Promotes dependency-based policies**
- **Erodes civic virtues like accountability, initiative, and self-reliance**

Defining the Vocabulary

Constraining the Argument

**How the left is defining
the vocabulary**

Vocabulary Substitution: Shifting Responsibility Through Language

Traditional Term

Homeless

Illegal immigrant

Ex-convict

Criminal

Drug addict

Welfare dependency

Riots

Teenage pregnancy

Prisoner

Recidivism

Reframed Term

Unhoused

Undocumented

Justice-impacted person

System-involved individual

Substance use disorder patient

Social safety net usage

Protests

Early parenthood

Incarcerated individual

Re-entry challenges

Purpose of Reframe

Shifts focus to lack of housing (state failure), not choices or behavior

Removes illegality, implying administrative oversight

Minimizes personal culpability, promotes entitlement

Suggests victimhood at the hands of the system

Medicalizes behavior, minimizing personal decisions

Portrays long-term dependence as neutral or positive

Downplays violent or destructive acts

Removes implication of irresponsibility or lack of planning

Deflects blame to carceral systems

Blames reintegration difficulty on society, not repeat offenses

Five ways the left constrains the argument

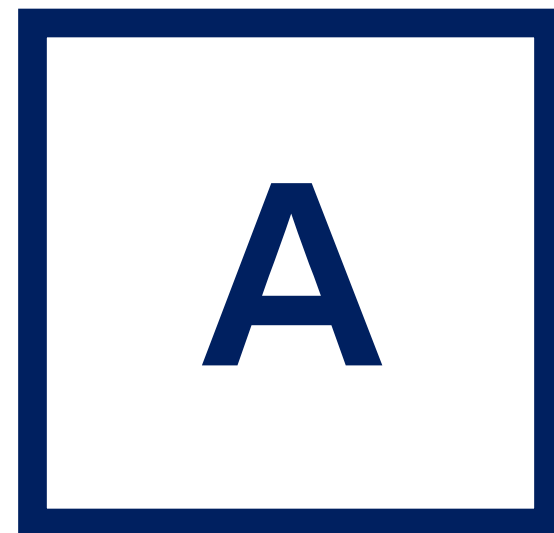
**“Unless you frame yourself,
others will frame you—the
media, your enemies, your
competitors, your well-meaning
friends.”**

**George Lakoff
The left’s linguist**

Their terminology isn't about being precise.

It's about reframing reality.

A lexicon to soften consequences, remove moral implications, and reassign responsibility from individuals to the state.



How the Left Constrains the Argument: Framing Techniques to Empower the State



Victim Narrative Framing.

Individuals as victims.
Shifts blame from personal decisions to societal failure.
Invites state intervention as the rescuer.



Structural Injustice Framing.

Problems are portrayed as systemic (e.g., systemic racism, economic injustice), requiring structural solutions administered by government.



Moral Equivalence.

Flattening distinctions between right and wrong (e.g., shoplifting framed as 'economic survival'), making accountability appear oppressive.



Sanitization.

Language softened to obscure the severity or implications of behaviors (e.g., 'sex work' replacing 'prostitution'), weakening the stigma served as a deterrent.



Pathologizing Personal Behavior.

Labeling personal choices as medical conditions (e.g., 'addiction as disease') to warrant ongoing state-funded treatment rather than expecting behavioral change.

Consequences

The Consequences of Shifting Responsibility



Erosion of Accountability.

When responsibility is shifted from the individual to the state, personal growth and behavioral correction are hindered.



Expansion of the Welfare State.

As problems are reframed as structural rather than behavioral, permanent bureaucracies emerge to manage 'injustice' rather than resolve root causes.



Learned helplessness.

Disempowerment of the Individual: People are encouraged to view themselves as powerless and dependent on state systems.



Policies that don't work.

Policies based on victim framing often fail to reduce crime, improve reintegration, or increase housing because they avoid addressing behavior.

**You cannot win the
argument with your
opponent's vocabulary
and constraints.**



**Fighting the
linguistic battle is
essential to
winning the
ideological battle.**

**“First you win the
argument, then you
win the vote.”**

**Margaret Thatcher
November 26, 1984**



10 ways to disarm the left's new rhetoric of state control

Kenosha, Wisconsin

NEW OVERNIGHT

FIERY BUT MOSTLY PEACEFUL PROTESTS AFTER POLICE SHOOTING

TONIGHT ON CNN



REPUBLICAN
NATIONAL
CONVENTION

MELANIA TRUMP

LIVE

CNN

2:05 AM PT

1. Expose the Reframing for What It Is

Point out the redirection.

When they rename a failed policy with a pretty title, highlight that.

Focus on attempts to shift responsibility.

Translate buzzwords into English.

Don't let them mask radical ideas in dry language.



Example: “Investment”

...in our future...in clean energy...in communities...

“That’s not investment – that’s spending with a new label.”

“They want to debate compassion...not effectiveness. Government should be judged by outcomes, not slogans.”

“Taxpayers aren’t venture capitalists. Government doesn’t invest – it spends. And when it spends too much, we all pay.

Example: “Climate action” / “Energy transition”

CALL IT OUT: “They call it climate action. What it really means is higher power bills, lost jobs, and politicians picking winners and losers.

TRANSLATE: “Energy transition means shutting down affordable power sources before reliable replacements exist. That’s not a transition – it’s an experiment, and we’re the guinea pigs.

REFRAME: “We support cleaner, cheaper, reliable energy – but we won’t destroy American jobs to chase global applause.

2. Speak like a person, not a consultant.

~~Fiscal imbalance~~

~~Regulatory reform~~

~~Infrastructure~~

~~Fiscal responsibility~~

~~Revenue enhancements~~

<u>Jargon Term</u>	<u>Why It Fails</u>	<u>Plain-English Alternative</u>
Stakeholders	Feels corporate and impersonal	People, families, small businesses, taxpayers
Deliverables	Sounds like project management	Results, outcomes, what we'll get done
Capacity building	Bureaucratic development-speak	Helping people get the tools they need
Engagement	Too abstract	Listening, talking with people, staying in touch
Empower	Feels like NGO jargon	Give people the control to decide for themselves
Resilience	Overused buzzword	Strength, toughness, ability to bounce back
Equity	Loaded ideological term	Fairness, equal opportunity
Sustainable	Sounds like a UN report	Lasting results, solutions that actually work
Leverage (as a verb)	Corporate jargon	Use, build on, make the most of
Best practice	Consultant cliché	What works, what's proven to get results
Narrative	Feels contrived	Story, message, what we're saying
At the end of the day	Empty filler	Bottom line, when it's all said and done
Moving forward	Empty forward-looking filler	From here on, next step, now
Synergy	1980s business jargon	Working together, combining efforts
Empirical evidence base	Academic speak	Proof, facts, what we can see and measure
Framework	Bureaucratic construction	Plan, outline, system

<u>Jargon Term</u>	<u>Why It Falls Flat</u>	<u>Better Plain-English Alternative</u>
Freedom (as a slogan)	Used so broadly it's lost meaning — audiences tune it out.	Be specific: <i>freedom to choose your child's school, freedom to start a business without red tape.</i>
Family values	Feels dated and moralizing to younger or secular voters.	<i>Supporting strong families or helping parents raise kids safely and affordably.</i>
Limited government	Abstract — doesn't tell people how it helps them.	<i>Government that minds its own business or keeps out of your pocket and your life.</i>
Tax relief	Sounds like a line from a Treasury briefing.	<i>Letting you keep more of what you earn.</i>
Economic freedom	Think tank language.	<i>Jobs, opportunity, and fair competition.</i>
Individual responsibility	Can sound scolding if not personalized.	<i>People taking charge of their own lives with government staying out of the way.</i>
Traditional values	Vague and signals a culture-war frame even when that's not the goal.	<i>Common sense, decency, doing what's right.</i>
Small business owners (as a class)	Feels like a pollster phrase	<i>Local businesses, job creators</i>
Patriotism (as a bumper sticker)	Empty unless attached to action.	<i>Standing up for Australia, backing the people who serve and defend us.</i>
The left (as a label)	Over-used shorthand that can sound tribal rather than persuasive.	<i>Labor and Greens politicians, the activists who push these policies, or simply name the policy.</i>

Jargon

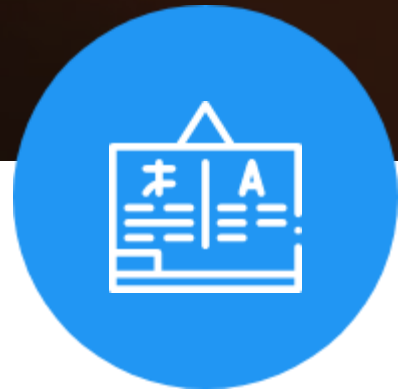
“Our commitment to freedom, family values, and traditional values underscores a framework for limited government that maximizes economic freedom, promotes individual responsibility, delivers meaningful tax relief for small business owners, and safeguards patriotism against the destructive policies of the left

English

“We believe Americans should keep more of what they earn, raise their families without government interference, and run their businesses without being buried in red tape.

We love our country and we’re tired of politicians on the other side making life harder for people who work hard and play by the rules.

3. Win the Presentation Game



Promote truth in language.



Speak like a human.



Don't be in a bad mood except on purpose.



Don't concede the caring or fairness side of the argument:

Follow blunt terms with empathetic statements.



Appear as the reasonable truth-teller.

The background features a dark grey gradient with several light grey hexagons of varying sizes and opacities. Scattered throughout are various white icons on a reddish-brown circular background, including a magnifying glass, a pencil, a list, a cursor, a thumbs down, a thumbs up, a computer monitor, and an envelope. The text is presented in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Speak to the value first

Values: What people believe is important in their lives. Widely shared. Connect on what you have in common early.

Problem or Opportunity

Ideas: Put the discussion on a philosophical plane.

Solution: Involve the particulars of a matter.

Homelessness



VALUE: Every American deserves to be safe, and feel safe, in their neighborhood.

PROBLEM. Many people are not feeling safe in their neighborhood.

IDEA: Public streets and sidewalks should be clear of encampments and open air drug markets.

SOLUTION: Providing temporary shelters and requiring their use.

5. Show how

Truth brings solutions.

Word laundering delays action, and hides problems in a fog of language.

5. Show how **Truth brings solutions.**

“We don’t help addicts by pretending addiction is someone else’s fault. We help them by getting them the tough, real help they need...and holding them accountable to take it.”

Avoid:
~~Sneering~~
~~Sarcasm~~
~~Moral superiority~~

6. Offer Better Solutions, Not Just Criticism



Present credible, value-aligned alternatives.

Don't stop at pointing out what's wrong.

Create a mandate for action.



To apply this rule in day-to-day campaigning:

Always be ready with a proposal.



Pro, not anti:

Instead of framing your idea as the anti-something, emphasize the positive outcome.



Doing so helps inoculate yourself against the gripe 'politicians just complain and don't fix things.'

7. Tell more stories



8. Highlight how their policies create perverse incentives and reward destructive dependency

- 1. They disguise the failures of their bad policies, systems, bureaucracy.**
- 2. They remove conditions or expectations.**
- 3. They reward the failing status quo.**
- 4. Personal responsibility is penalized.**
- 5. The culture shifts toward victimhood and entitlement.**

9. Frame the debate as a choice between competing visions

Frame the debate as a clear choice between two futures.

Make your vision the more appealing one.



Make the choices extremely clear.



Use parallel language to compare.

A classic technique is the 'not this, but that' construction.



Invoke vivid imagery or slogans for each side.

Use short labels to crystallize the contrast.



Keep it relatable and truthful.



10. Use Satire and Parody to Disarm Manipulative Language



Consider humor to deflate the left's language or extreme positions.



Satire highlights absurdity by exaggerating it, making the audience laugh and implicitly question the serious argument that inspired the joke.



Keep it light and clever.



Use parody to simplify the point: Sometimes exaggerating the left's stance exposes its weakness.



Inject cultural references or self-deprecating humor: If you can relate a joke to something people know, it hits harder.



Timing and tone matter.





Message Discipline: Develop your vocabulary and upskill your communicators



Upskill candidates and campaign teams in disciplined language use to avoid getting trapped.



**Adopt a clear vocabulary – and use it everywhere:
Decide the terms you will use and avoid.**



Train for tough questions and trap phrases.



Stay consistent across all platforms and spokespeople.



Message discipline pays off by keeping voters focused on the contrast and solutions you want to present.

Disarming the Left's New Rhetoric of State Control

Their Technique:
Define the vocabulary
Constrain the argument

Victim Narratives
Structural Injustice
Moral Equivalence
Sanitization
Pathologizing

“First you win the argument, then you win the vote.”

You cannot win with their vocabulary and constraints.

1. Call out the reframing for what it is.
 2. Speak like a person.
 3. Speak the truth, speak it well.
 4. Speak to the value first.
 5. Show how truth brings solutions.
 6. Offer better solutions.
 7. Shift from systems to stories.
 8. Show how they create destructive dependency.
 9. Force the choice.
 10. Use satire and parody when appropriate.
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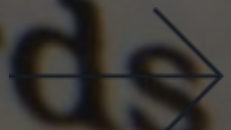
Be disciplined with your attitude and demeanor.
Smile more.
Be confident in the strength of your ideas.

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