COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIONS, CITIZENS, AND MUNICIPALITIES: TOWARDS A COMMON NARRATIVE

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OVERVIEW

I. • Framing the Problem: Alternative Perspectives

II. • Changing the Frame

III. • Opportunities for Collaboration
GOVERNOR CUOMO’S FRAMING

http://youtu.be/y-CRuYH1k-Q
In real terms, tax expenditures and property taxes were **flat or falling** even before the tax cap was enacted.
Unrestricted State Aid to municipalities has fallen by 75% in inflation-adjusted dollars over the last 30 years.
It can be hard to get citizen support on these issues because they are complex and anti-tax attitudes persist.

Research from FrameWorks Institute and Demos can help to frame the narrative in a way that will connect with citizens.
CHANGING THE FRAME

Data Sources: Demos and Frameworks Institute

Draw explicit links between budgets and taxes

- “Investment Trap”
- Shift from individual action to collective responsibility
Never repeat a negative frame

- Repeating something negative reinforces it
- Replace with a new narrative
- Ex: St. Paul Federation of Teachers
Use metaphors to bridge gaps

- Help simplify complex concepts
- However, metaphor must match the situation
  - Ex: Household budget metaphor

Data Sources: Demos and Frameworks Institute
CHANGING THE FRAME

Data Sources: Demos and Frameworks Institute

Use a “Can-Do” belief system

- “Sympathy for the poor” makes people feel problems are impossible to solve
- Make citizens feel connected to the solution, emphasizes collection action
- Ex: Ithaca trash tags
Always interpret data; don’t just present it

• Narrative connects more with people than just facts or numbers
• Cuomo does this in his campaign video
CHANGING THE FRAME

Data Sources: Demos and Frameworks Institute

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Research and findings under the direction of Dr. Mildred Warner, Department of City and Regional Planning
Interviews with local government organizations, labor union officials, and civil society groups pointed to common goals:

• More exemptions to the Property Tax Cap
• Increase Infrastructure Spending
• Increase State Aid to Municipalities
SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

Rochester
SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

Open Buffalo
SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Building better communities
A fair funding toolkit for Canada’s cities and towns
THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

- Elements of an alternate frame in NYS
- Common ground between unions, municipalities, and citizens
- Possibilities for collaboration

For the full report, visit
www.mildredwarner.org/restructuring/fiscal-stress