



PR with Principles

SPIN Project e-newsletter #11: March 2005

Welcome to the SPIN Project's e-newsletter, our monthly compendium of news, notes, and ideas.

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Talking Points: Key Messages on Social Security Reform and Judicial Nominations

As Washington gears up for another year of hard-fought legislative battles, The SPIN Project has decided to produce a series of talking points on key issues coming before Congress. What you'll find below are media messages in our tried-and-true Problem/ Solution/ Action model to help you if your organization decides to take a position on these important issues. And coming next month: talking points on Tort Reform and Immigration Reform. Admit it: you can't wait.

Social Security Reform

Background

President Bush has proposed allowing workers to set aside a portion of their Social Security withholding tax in private accounts. While he has yet to introduce a detailed plan, he's been criss-crossing the country talking up the idea of private accounts. Unfortunately for him, the latest polling shows that his efforts have so far failed to convince a majority of Americans that his plan makes sense, and the Democratic caucus seems unified in their opposition to Social Security privatization. Here's why President Bush's plan is a bad idea:

Problem

President Bush is manufacturing another "crisis": this time it's Social Security. The only crisis would come from the massive borrowing required to finance the private accounts and the cuts in benefits that would result from Bush's plan. His plan turns a reliable safety net that has protected generations of American's seniors from poverty into a risky stock-market gamble.

Solution

Social Security's finances are secure for at least the next thirty-five years. The program's longer-term sustainability can be assured by minor changes to the payroll tax or retirement age. Social Security provides reliable monthly benefits to some 44 million Americans who are retired or disabled. It provides most of the income for older Americans, and we need to ensure that these vital benefits are maintained for future generations.

Action

Social Security is the crown jewel of American government—a singular achievement that protects our seniors' quality of life. Call your Congressional representatives and urge them to protect this vital safety net. The seniors who built our economy and our society deserve better.

Additional Resources

Josh Michael's talkingpointsmemo.com has been tracking this issue closely, including up-to-date coverage of the swing votes in Congress. For a list of the Democrats in the "Fainthearted Faction", visit <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/fainthearted.php> and for a list of Republicans in the "Conscience Caucus," see <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/conscience.php>. If your representative appears on either of these lists, make sure you let them know how you feel about the President's proposals.

Judicial Nominations

Background

Accusing Senate Democrats of "obstructionism," despite the fact that more than 95% of his nominees have been approved by the Senate, President Bush has renominated several far right-wing candidates to the federal judiciary after they were filibustered in the last Congress. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid has promised they will receive the same treatment in the current Congress. Here's why Senate Democrats are right to block judicial nominees that fall far outside the mainstream of American society:

Problem

President Bush threatens to pursue his pattern of sending extremist judicial nominees to Congress all the way to the Supreme Court. An ultra-conservative justice will have the power to undermine vital legal protections such as a woman's constitutional right to choose, and other civil and constitutional rights regarding individual liberties, privacy, health and safety, and the environment.

Solution

The American people deserve federal judges who are committed to upholding the hard-fought constitutional rights secured through U.S. Supreme Court. The US Senate must ensure the moderate balance of the courts by confirming only those judges who reflect mainstream American values.

Action

Call your Senators and urge them to use all the means available to them under Senate rules to fulfill their constitutional responsibility to "advise and consent" to seat only judges that will uphold the values of fairness, equality and democracy on the bench.

The SPIN Project's 2005 Progressive Editorial Calendar: March Highlights

A quick reminder of what's coming up in March for your news-hooking pleasure:

March 8 International Women's Day

March 19 Shock and Awe
Second anniversary of the beginning of the second war
in Iraq.

March 31
Cesar Chavez Day (official in California, recognized in many
communities). This is an important day to recognize farm laborers and – more
broadly – immigrant rights. “Honor the hand that harvests your crop” --
Dolores Huerta, co-founder (with Chavez) of the United Farm Workers.

Free Press National Conference for Media Reform

Our friends at Free Press asked that we pass along word about their upcoming National
Conference:

Please join us in St. Louis May 13-15 for The National Conference for Media Reform - an
exciting forum for discussing solutions to the problems of our media.

As more and more Americans begin to understand the impacts of our broken media system,
thousands of activists will converge in St. Louis to learn, strategize, network, and build
momentum to fight for reform.

Click here to learn more: www.freepress.net/conference

Speakers already scheduled for the event include FCC Commissioners Michael Copps and
Jonathan Adelstein, comedian Al Franken, author Naomi Klein, journalist Juan Gonzalez,
FAIR's Janine Jackson, Democracy Now's Amy Goodman, syndicated columnist Arianna
Huffington, TransAfrica Forum's Bill Fletcher and author David Brock. Activist leaders and
members of Congress will be there as well.

Registration is now open. Register on-line by March 31 for the discounted early bird rate:
www.freepress.net/conference.

Scholarships are available. Free Press has secured a limited amount of funding to provide
scholarships to offset attendance costs for activists who could not otherwise afford to attend.
Free Press is committed to supporting increased participation by people from constituencies
traditionally under-represented in media policy work (including people of color, women, youth,

GLBT, labor and grassroots activist constituencies). We also seek broad geographic representation. See www.freepress.net/conference/=scholarship to learn more and apply. The application deadline is March 15.

For more details, including info on the venue, schedule, program, lodging information, and much more, please visit the conference web site, www.freepress.net/conference.

We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!

That's it for this issue of the SPIN Project e-newsletter. Please feel free to forward any of this information to anyone you think might be interested—we'd greatly appreciate it.

Thanks,

The SPIN Project Staff

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