



## How to Talk About Government Toolkit: Talking Points

*The following are talking points to use as a reminder during media interviews or when writing, and are based on FrameWorks' research. Specific policy proposals can be introduced after these concepts are established.*

- **One of the most important jobs of our public institutions is to set and enforce standards that protect our health, our financial wellbeing and our environment.** The federal, state and local agencies we have created are responsible for food quality rules, environmental controls, financial securities regulations, consumer fraud protections, workplace and product safety standards, to name a few. These are the tools we have in our society to protect us all from the carelessness or negligence of a few.
- **American economic prosperity relies on the public structures we have created.** Individual effort, expertise and entrepreneurship can only succeed when various critical structures are in place to enable and support those energies –from highway systems, to court and legal systems to resolve disputes and establish the rules of fair play, to regulations that keep our communications systems organized and functional. Managing these public structures that are essential to our success is one important reason we need government. And building new public structures to meet emerging needs – from early child education to affordable public college systems – is necessary if we are to keep our country vital and competitive.
- Another critical role of public institutions is to take on the kind of **long-term planning** that businesses often don't have the luxury of indulging in, for instance. Whether the goal is to stock enough vaccine to get us through the next flu outbreak, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions substantially over the next twenty years, or to build the levees and sea walls that will protect us from storms in the coming generations, we need the capacity for long-term planning. Through our public institutions, the

kinds of profitable and innovative thinking that businesses excel at can be harnessed successfully to long-term projects.

- **Our nation's success depends on teamwork between all sectors of society. We all benefit when citizens, businesses and government work together** to identify and solve problems. When a citizens group, a city council and a business organization to consensus on a vision to improve their community, success is much more likely – and the same is true on a state or national scale. Whether it is revitalizing a crumbling downtown, restoring parkland, or updating health and safety regulations, our nation's quality of life now and into the future depends upon citizens, businesses and public agencies working together for the common good.
- **Only public institutions can achieve a scale broad enough to deal with many of our most pressing challenges.** Individual doctors do good work with their patients, for instance, but they're not in a position to defend the country from epidemics, or monitor and coordinate responses to larger health trends. For that we need public institutions, like the Centers for Disease Control, which see the bigger picture and work on behalf of us all. Likewise, individuals and businesses can do their best to be responsible about what they dump into the environment, but only an organization like the Environmental Protection Agency can keep an eye on the overall health of the nation's water supply.
- **The day to day quality of life that Americans enjoy is largely a product of various public structures.** The Public Structures we have created – from town councils to agencies that regulate utility companies to libraries to city sewer systems – are like the inner workings of a house that make life better even when we don't notice them. We often can't see the wiring and heating system, roof, plumbing, or foundation of a house, but they are very important day to day. In the same way, our public institutions are the vital but hidden support system for our way of life.

(revised, January 2011)