

MESSAGING DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Reframe the debate around abortion: Rather than debate the reasons Minnesotans decide to have an abortion, and, regardless of how any individual feels about abortion, I agree that Minnesotans should be able to decide whether and when they become a parent — not the government.

2. Move past the decision: When we talk about abortion, we're moving past the decision point and starting the conversation after a person has decided to have an abortion. Each Minnesotan is capable of making their own decisions, and we must think about what happens after the decision has been made. "When a person has decided to have an abortion..."

3. Don't say what things "are not" or "don't do": By using anti-abortion extremists language, we reinforce their narrative. It's not possible to negate a frame ("I am not a crook" or "Don't think of an elephant"). Saying what you are not, or what something is not, only reinforces the brain's connection between those things. Example:

- ~~Abortion isn't dangerous.~~
- Abortion is safe.

4. Use gender inclusive language: Not all people who have abortions identify as women.

Gender inclusive language examples:

- Minnesotans who access abortion care
- People who are pregnant
- Parent(s)
- Pregnant Minnesotans
- Patients
- Women and people with uteruses

5. Avoid stigmatizing abortion: A common way this has been done in the past is by saying abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare". This messaging reinforces the narrative that abortions are bad, and therefore should be rare. There are no good or bad abortions, just abortions that Minnesotans decide to have.

6. Avoid getting into the reasons why people decide to have abortions: There are a myriad of reasons why pregnant Minnesotans may decide to have an abortion. No matter what the reason, we respect the decisions of other Minnesotans. The government should not be able to control our ability to become, or not become, parents for any reason.

INSTEAD OF...	SAY THIS...	WHY?
Pro-Choice or Pro-Life	Pro-Reproductive Freedom; anti-abortion, abortion opponents	People often identify as both pro-choice and pro-life, so the labels are not useful in messaging.
Women's healthcare or reproductive choice	Abortion, Reproductive Freedom	Audiences often feel euphemisms are evasive and stigmatizing.
Exclusively saying "women or woman"	Person, Patient, Minnesotans who need abortion, Person who needs an abortion	It is important to use gender neutral language; women are not the only people who get abortions.
Parent or mother	Person, Patient, Minnesotans who need abortion, Person who needs an abortion	Continues to remind audiences of people's autonomy and status separate from their pregnancy.
Person's choice	Personal decision	A "decision" is more serious than "choice," which can be perceived as less thoughtful and impulsive.
Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare.	Legal abortion must be available and affordable.	Saying "rare" increases stigma and can create support for restrictions.
No one wants to have an abortion/ This is a devastating decision.	We don't know every person's circumstances. This is a deeply personal decision.	Convey seriousness without stigma or assuming anything about the feelings of the person.
Deserves	Ability; should be able to; need	"Deserves" is a term that can result in pushback from audiences.
Listing details or reasons why a person is having an abortion (e.g. rape, incest, etc).	Mention decision-making process: "thinking through a decision"; "talking it over with loved ones." Remind audiences that "they have made their decision".	Listing reasons or exceptions increases judgment and can lead to support for restrictions.
Fair, unfair, fairness.	We should not treat people differently just because they are poor; live in a certain zip code; etc.	"Fair, unfair, fairness" are terms that can result in pushback from audiences
We can't go back to pre-Roe days with women dying from back alley abortions	We all want to be able to live a safe and healthy life and be free to design our own path.	So much has changed since 1973, including internet access to medication abortion. Threats of people dying are less believable and not helpful. Communicate positive values to build support for abortion that is safe, affordable, and available.