

Gun Business Tax Communication Guidelines

Below are insights on messaging frames that have helped increase understanding and support for gun excise tax policies. These frames can help inform both the policy formulation and public messaging.

PRIMARY POSITIONING

The gun business tax is a funding stabilization measure designed to **save community safety programs** that break cycles of violence. It ensures the gun industry shares some financial responsibility for the significant economic impact associated with gun violence.

This policy is structured as a revenue measure, **not a restriction on lawful gun ownership**. Its purpose is to stabilize and strengthen programs that are already improving community safety including community violence intervention, victims services, mental health, veterans services, and school safety.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When crafting strong messaging for this policy, it should be...

Focused on saving community programs

There is a serious lack of funding for life-saving community safety services that make our neighborhoods better, safer places. This tax ensures the gun business shares the responsibility for offsetting the impact of violent crimes by keeping these programs viable.

Solutions-first

Bills that focus on what the tax will solve—alleviating tax burden while saving proven community programs—often demonstrate greater resonance with supporters over messaging that focuses only on the problem.

Specific

Ensure your allocation is specific, clearly communicated, and routed to existing programs. For example, Bills that failed often lacked specificity for where the revenue would be routed. Prop KK is an example of a bill that succeeded in large part because of the communication around saving existing programs and the specificity of how those programs would be supported through the policy.

Familiar

The existing programming language could be key for some voting blocks. Allocations that go to programs that have demonstrated past success help shape a better policy and make it easier to communicate the benefits to voters.

Localized

Meet the social needs and voter priorities of your specific state or locales. For example, Prop KK was led predominantly by organizations working in domestic violence, but a survey they ran showed that Colorado voters better understood the policy when it was formulated around popular issues they understood and supported. The policy then grew to include mental health funding, veteran's support, and school safety.

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PRIMARY MESSAGING

Primary messaging should be crafted around the specifics of the policy. When crafting your communications, make sure you're answering the following...

- ↳ **What is being funded?**
- ↳ **Why is this important for your state or community?**
- ↳ **What do you stand to lose if this policy does not pass?**

SUPPORTING MESSAGING

Supporting messaging points that can be used in coordination with the policy specifics include...

Saving community safety programs

The gun business tax creates a dedicated, reliable funding stream for violence prevention, victim services, mental health support, veterans' services, and school safety initiatives. Instead of leaving these essential programs vulnerable to budget cuts and political cycles, it ensures consistent investment in community safety over the long term.

Relieving pressure on taxpayers and local budgets

Cities and states currently absorb the bulk of costs tied to gun-related injuries — from emergency response and trauma care to long-term disability services and law enforcement. This policy helps offset those expenses, easing strain on local budgets and reducing the need to divert funds from schools, infrastructure, and other essential services.

Ensuring shared responsibility for the costs of gun violence

- The gun business tax restores fairness by requiring businesses to offset a small fraction of the costs associated with consumer access to guns.
- This policy asks the industry to contribute in a measured way to the community safety services that benefit everyone — gun owners and non-gun owners alike.
- Taxpayers shoulder a significant part of the economic impact of gun violence.

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✓ MESSAGING DOs

- Emphasize that the tax applies to commercial gun sales, not individual ownership.
- Highlight historical precedent for industry-specific excise taxes tied to public costs.
- Stress that revenue supports existing, widely backed community safety programs.
- Focus on stabilizing long-term funding for prevention and victim services.
- Frame the policy as offsetting documented public costs currently borne by taxpayers.
- Use “shared responsibility” language rather than punitive framing.
- Underscore that funds are dedicated and protected for safety-related purposes.
- Describe it as a sustainable, predictable funding stream.
- Be clear that this is a business-level excise tax, not a tax on lawful gun owners.

✗ MESSAGING DON'Ts

- Avoid framing the policy as a penalty or punishment.
- Do not characterize it as targeting lawful gun owners.
- Avoid language suggesting ownership restrictions or access limitations.
- Do not describe it as “gun control.”
- Avoid zero-sum framing (e.g., “us vs. them” or industry vs. consumers).
- Do not suggest the tax is designed to reduce lawful sales.
- Avoid overstating claims or using emotionally charged statistics without context.