

## Frank Luntz HealthCare Messaging: A Case Study

**Background:** Dr. Frank Luntz is a renowned pollster and messaging consultant for conservatives. In late May 2009, he released a set of ten rules for healthcare opponents, titling it "The Language of Healthcare 2009". The detailed rules in a 28 page memo are to be used to bring down healthcare reform. The rules and talking points have been used by Congressmen, political professionals, and other opponents of reform. The below press release is an example of Luntz' messaging.

*Example is a recent press release from the Texas Medical Association (TMA). From TMA president William H. Fleming III, MD, regarding H.R. 3200, "America's Affordable Health Care Choices Act of 2009," Congressional legislation to reform America's health care system. Analysis added in parenthesized bold, italics.*

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The physicians of the Texas Medical Association believe our health care system is broken and needs reform. (*Acknowledge the crisis or suffer the consequences, Luntz Rule #2*)

However, we have concerns about the current House proposal, H.R. 3200, 'America's Affordable Health Care Choices Act of 2009.' While it addresses some of health care's ailments, it leaves gaping wounds which do not serve Texas patients well. (*Humanize approach by mentioning patients, Luntz Rule #1*)

"As physicians, our primary goal is to improve the health of our patients. We believe that patients and their physicians must be free to make choices that best fit their individual health care needs. This legislation severely limits those choices. (*Protection of personalized doctor-patient relationship, One-size-does-not-fit-all, Luntz Rule #7*)

"Therefore, TMA cannot support a proposal to create another government-payer health plan while existing government-payer plans, such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the military health care program, TRICARE, are failing patients. (*Arguments against Democrats must center around government, Luntz Rule#4*)

We are deeply troubled there is no fix to the flawed Medicare funding formula, which limits seniors' ability to see a doctor when they need to; and the absence of medical liability reforms, which provide greater access to care to Texas patients. We remain extremely concerned that the 'public option' will soon become the controlling payer in all health care (*One-size-does-not-fit-all, Luntz Rule #7*), resulting in an unworkable government price-setting scheme (*Government waste and abuse, Luntz Rule #8*) like we now see in Medicare. TMA physicians also are concerned that this plan limits at which hospitals patients can receive care. (*Stress healthcare denial from government run healthcare plans, Luntz Rule #5*)

"TMA physicians will continue to review and analyze H.R. 3200, and pledge to work with Congressional leaders and the Obama administration in crafting legislation that truly would improve health care ? the patient-physician relationship ? in the United States and Texas. As physicians, it is our ethical duty to provide leadership on these public policy decisions. (*Not enough to say you are against, say you are working for solution, Luntz Rule #10*)