

## Value Them Both Fails to Persuade Kansas Voters

Abortion is already a polarizing issue and since the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* which effectively overturned *Roe v. Wade* left the nation in shock. Last month, on August 2, the state of Kansas voted on a constitutional amendment that would allow the state legislature to pass laws that could further restrict access to abortions. During the campaign in the Summer, “Vote Yes” signs started popping up on lawns and along public streets. A campaign called “Value Them Both” emerged in an effort to persuade Kansas to vote Yes on the amendment. This campaign was mostly funded by Catholic churches in Kansas and conservative PACs like Kansans for Life. Through the use of Social Media channels, TV ads, and online content, the Value Them Both campaign used various persuasion techniques including: slogans and images, downplaying techniques (diversions and omissions), and inflated language in an attempt to persuade Kansas voters to vote yes on the constitutional amendment on August 2, 2022.

The official website for the vote yes campaign uses the very short and sweet slogan: Value Them Both. This also happens to be the name of the campaign and the slogan is accompanied by a purple graphic of a mother holding a baby that in a way resembles a heart shape. The slogan also happens to be a glittering generality. It’s intentionally framed in a positive way that makes it sound agreeable. Who would argue with valuing them both? It sounds inherently good and when it’s accompanied with the purple logo of the mother and child it creates a positive image of the campaign. On Twitter, the campaign tweeted an image of a baby wearing a onesie that said, “Value Them Both, Vote Yes August 2!” with a tweet that read, “If you’re looking for a sign to vote YES on August 2nd, here it is .” With a heart eyes emoji at the end (Value Them Both, 2022). This helps create an image that represents the campaign and for

Value Them Both the choice was clear to choose a cute baby that voters would associate with abortion. Images of babies were used throughout the campaign, primarily on the website. The header photo on the campaign is website is actually a mother kissing a baby's cheek with the baby looking directly at the viewer (Digital@masterworks.agency, *Value Them Both* 2022). Using an image like that one evokes certain emotions and responses in voters and can help persuade them to vote yes. The use of images and the slogan together evoke positive emotions in voters and hopefully persuade them to vote yes.

Getting voters to vote yes can be a difficult task, but for the vote yes campaign they used downplaying techniques in their video ads in order to frame the issue of abortion laws in a more positive light. Diversions were used such as ad hominin attacks on the opposition. One TV ad in particular mentions "the radical lying about value them both" instead of using facts and figures they flat out attack their character, which is irrelevant (*Stop Them* 2022). The campaign also uses cherry picked data to frame the issue on abortion differently. The campaign ad states that abortions would increase by 1000% if the amendment doesn't pass. This data was cherry picked from a Kansas City Star article from June 2022 (*Stop Them* 2022). This claim was also mentioned on their campaign website as well as in other ads online and on TV. It makes it appear that abortions would skyrocket in Kansas if the amendment fails. This is simply false since it's a prediction and not real data that has been collected from clinics within the state. It creates a sense of urgency and tries to persuade votes to get out and stop the "radical left". Half-truths were used as well, like in an informational video claiming that the Kansas Supreme Court, in 2019, protected a, "nearly unlimited right to an abortion" in Kansas, which is technically true since there already are some restrictions (Digital@masterworks.agency, *Value Them Both* 2022). This technique of using a half-truth framed the issue differently by making it appear that there are few

restrictions on abortion, when in reality it's illegal to perform an abortion after 22 weeks in Kansas. The language used by the campaign was one way they tried to convince voters to vote yes.

Inflated language was used throughout the Value Them Both campaign to change the perception of abortion. Many campaign videos used terms such as abortion industry to make it seem like abortions are happening regularly and are run by big corporations. A video on the campaign website uses the term “preborn babies” instead of fetus to make it seem like abortions kill babies, when in reality a more appropriate term is fetus (Digital@masterworks.agency, *Value Them Both* 2022). They also refer to fetuses as “the unborn” which is technically true, but it sounds better than saying fetus. These terms are dressed up to appear more positive and tailored for specifically for the cause. The website has a section that has the amendment written as it will appear on the ballot which is written in a confusing fashion. It uses gobbledygook and legal jargon to confuse voters in hope that they vote yes. Directly on the website is this statement, “A vote **for** the Value Them Both Amendment would reserve to the people of Kansas, through their elected state legislators, the right to pass laws to regulate abortion because there is no Kansas constitutional right to abortion or to require the government funding of abortion.” Which isn't written in a clear and concise manner (Digital@masterworks.agency, *Value Them Both* 2022). This language is intentionally used to persuade voters to vote yes on the ballot measure by using confusing words and lengthy legal jargon. Unfortunately, for the Value Them Both campaign, the majority of people in Kansas voted no and the measure failed.

This was a major loss for the Value Them Both campaign and in the end their persuasion techniques like using slogans and images, diversions and omissions, and legal jargon and gobbledygook failed. Ethically, the campaign used some morally questionable techniques, like

using ad hominin attacks in their TV ads as well as half-truths. Cherry picking data is also never good and doesn't paint the full picture. They also used misinformation, which was not heavily mentioned in the paper, to try to persuade voters. Lying was a key tactic of the Value Them Both campaign as they claimed there would be late term abortions if voters voted no. The world of political campaigns could use more honesty and more ethics when making TV ad and campaigns. There were so many obvious lies and false facts presented. My view of persuasion has changed since I now understand what goes into a political attack ad and how unethical the world of political campaigns is. I think the people working on campaigns should be better about being ethical and not relying heavily on immoral tactics.

## References

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