

WINNING BOTH SHOWCASE SHOWDOWNS

*How a long-term investment in small, red towns
can stop authoritarianism and correct the
pre-conditions that led to its rise.*

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL



Probiotic Millionaires picks a small NC town to test plan for higher taxes for the rich



*“Economic and political inequality have grown
so extreme that many are rejecting democracy.
This is fertile ground for authoritarianism.”*

— Dr. Joseph Stiglitz

THE GREAT ECONOMY PROJECT & AMERICAN DECIDERS

A Patriotic Millionaires Initiative

THE THREAT

- The U.S. has reached a level of inequality that has destabilized the nation and created the perfect preconditions for the rise of an authoritarian leader.
- The 2020 election.
- If the Right is not effectively challenged in 2024 and if the trends to conservatism are not conclusively reversed during the 3 years that follow, by 2028, the U.S. will fall to authoritarian forces.
- The fall of democratic capitalism in America will open the door to the global dominance of the oligarch class, which the dynamics of A.I. and climate change, will render permanent.
- This will be awful for ordinary people and very bad for most rich people as well.

WINNING BOTH SHOWCASE SHOWDOWNS

The goal of the Great Economy Project is to win both Showcase Showdowns, to both prevent the authoritarian takeover of the government and to create the political dynamics required to address the underlying economic issues that created the vulnerability in the first place.

If Democrats don't think they need to raise the minimum wage in order to win, they won't. If Republicans aren't compelled to the negotiating table, we can't pass the 60 vote threshold needed for policy change. In fact the only way to address the actual problem - the structure of our political economy which guarantees greater levels of inequality - is to win politically on the solutions to the problems. Some Democrats are clearly too beholden to their corporate donors to be sufficiently committed to change so that they can actually persuade people they will actually do something. And even if they win, they can't actually do anything to fix the problem without the votes.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Small red towns provide a laboratory in which reformers can learn the best way to execute a conversation shift at scale among working class independents and conservatives.

WHY?

- When you talk to one person in a small town, you are soon talking to everyone in a small town.
- Engaging, persuading and activating people - particularly people who are likely working 2 jobs or more - takes time, investment and personal connections.

The Great Economy Project is a long-term public education initiative focused on increasing economic knowledge and economic-centered activism in working class communities. We focus on conservative small towns with conservative representation in pivotal states that follow the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

WHY THE ECONOMY? AND SPECIFICALLY, WHY WAGES AND TAXES?

In polling, Democrats grossly underperform Republicans on the question “who’s better for the economy.” In order to prevent an authoritarian takeover of the US government, the GOP dominance on this issue must be challenged. The economic policies of the last 60 years have been a slow walk to the perfect preconditions for the rise of an authoritarian leader, and it is only by gods blessing that the chosen despot was so totally incompetent that he lost reelection (and not by much). There are two problems. First, the economy is structured so that the country will become even more unequal even more quickly over time - without immediate action that mathematically changes that trajectory - we should.

The first and most important step is to stabilize the economic lives of working people with policies that put money directly into their pockets. The most efficient, sustainable mechanism for this cash transfer is wages, not direct government support. Second, you have to limit the growth of wealth of the wealthiest Americans through the tax code.

***“Millionaires...
who want to pay
more in taxes?
Why that just
puzzles me.”***

*— Thomas, Republican
GEP Participant*

WHY THE PATRIOTIC MILLIONAIRES?

As an organization composed of business leaders and investors (and people who have personally benefited from the structure of the economy), the Patriotic Millionaires provides a unique perspective on economic issues that we posit can be disproportionately compelling to working-class conservatives and independents.

Traditional progressive organizations are unlikely to be persuasive to conservative voters because of the cultural differences and as such, even if their message is deeply persuasive, the messenger will be unlikely to convert the other. Republican politicians have shown no interest in fixing the tax system or the wage floor so they will avoid these issues with their constituents.

Democratic politicians may offer some support for higher wages and a fair tax system, but the party brand will not be persuasive to conservative audiences. While it's not a given that the Patriotic Millionaires will be persuasive, early results in our pilot programs suggest that Patriotic Millionaires will be a strong messenger on economics.

MEDIA

The PM organization has a unique ability to attract earned media coverage. Last year, our work received \$160 million worth of media coverage in 98 countries and all 50 states plus DC. This media power will be brought to bear on the Great Economy Project, driving local and national media coverage of the “millionaires recruiting working class voters to a cause.” The media coverage not only covers what is happening from a news perspective, it also provides the impression that something even bigger is happening. It is a rare group that can get national media attention for talking to 50 people. The Patriotic Millionaires is that group. The NPR story is a perfect example of that. Local media will draw attention to both the project and the underlying economic issues.

2,900
media hits in 2022

PARTNERS

The PM organization works closely with numerous partners to advance our economic agenda. Partners include grassroots organizations (One Fair Wage, Center for Popular Democracy, Ultraviolet and others are frequent partners) as well as a number of think tanks (IPS, Oxfam, EPI among others) We are involved in both the Americans for Tax Fairness Coalition and the NELP Minimum Wage coalition. Because we are trying to attract a mix of Republicans, Democrats and Independents to the Great Economy Project, potential progressive partners in these areas can be of only limited help. We also want to make sure that the effort isn't perceived as a partisan program.

THIS IS ABOUT MONEY.

One strength of the GEP program is its steadfast focus on economics. Social issues currently dominate the American political conversation with cynical politicians ruthlessly exploiting differences in order to gain political power. While social/personal issues are definitionally emotionally compelling regardless of one's specific perspective, the Patriotic Millionaires organization posits that explicitly focusing on “money” can help build alliances of common purpose across disparate communities including those with very conservative perspectives on personal issues and that the Patriotic Millionaires brand could be uniquely persuasive to working class conservatives.

“Runaway inequality is eroding trust in democratic societies and paving the way for authoritarian and nativist regimes to take root.”

—2020 United Nations Report

“The Great Economy Project gives me hope that we can change lives for the better for the middle class and folks who are living paycheck to paycheck. It has been an eye opening education. Looking forward to a continued conversation with many more people who need to know how the economy is rigged against us.”

—Andy Hinson, GEP Participant, Independent