

Rogers Messaging Strategy

CD2 Republican Primary · Aug 18, 2026 · message architecture, anchored to Guidant message-test · confidential

The architecture in one line: identity mobilizes the base, federal affordability persuades the middle. The base already knows it wants an America First fighter — Rogers's identity messages test 62–72%. But the race is decided among the 39% undecided and the moderates, and that slice is **almost pure affordability**. So the addition to the plan is a disciplined **federal cost-of-living lane** — inflation, wasteful spending, taxes, energy, and protecting Social Security & Medicare — the levers a member of Congress actually controls. Keep it federal; insurance and property taxes are state/local and off-limits for this office.

TIER 1 — Identity · the base mobilizer · lead with this on cable/TV

Rogers's proven anchor. These are the Guidant top-testers — run them to consolidate and turn out the America First base (47% of the electorate self-ID as "Trump Republicans").

TESTED MESSAGE	% MORE LIKELY	DEFINITELY
Protect American jobs & national security — ban CCP purchase of U.S. farmland	72	46
Staunchly conservative, pro-family Evangelical Christian — fighter for the unborn	64	38
Saw DC corruption firsthand ; in Congress will back President Trump 100%	62	37

"Austin Rogers — a Christian conservative who'll ban Communist China from buying our farmland, and back President Trump 100%."

TIER 2 — Federal Affordability NEW / EXPANDED · the persuasion lane · moderates & undecideds

The biggest **movable** issue (economy = 28% when asked that way; moderates 39% economy / 0% immigration). Rogers already owns two economic-security pieces that test well — extend them into an explicit cost-of-living message a congressman can deliver.

MESSAGE (FEDERAL LEVER)	STATUS	BASIS
Protect Social Security & Medicare ; gut waste, fraud & abuse in healthcare spending	64	tested (Guidant)
Protect American jobs & food security (CCP farmland)	72	tested (Guidant)
Cut Washington's wasteful spending that drove up prices; balance the budget	add	#1 issue, untested — test in wave 3
Tax relief for working families & seniors	add	federal lever; pairs with above
Unleash American energy to bring down gas & utility costs	add	federal lever; cost-of-living

"Washington's reckless spending made your groceries, gas, and rent unaffordable. Austin Rogers will cut the waste, protect Social Security and Medicare, and fight to make life affordable again — the right way, from Congress."

Discipline: keep it on the **federal** drivers — inflation, federal spending, taxes, energy, Social Security/Medicare. Do **not** promise insurance or property-tax relief; those are state/local, and a congressional candidate who claims them invites "what can you actually do?" (The lone federal insurance hook, if ever needed: NFIP flood-program reauthorization.)

TIER 3 — Biography & Contrast credibility + the wedge vs Gross

MESSAGE	% MORE	NOTE
Panhandle native — moved home to raise his kids where he was raised (faith, family, hunting & fishing)	52	inoculates the DC-years attack
Former General Counsel to Sen. Rick Scott — battle-tested against the deep state	55	credibility; handle w/ care (see guardrail)

Guardrail — the one real vulnerability. "Moved away from the Panhandle, only recently returning" tests **-31% / +17%** — his worst number. Run the "came home to raise my family" message (and the Hala video) **proactively**, before Gross frames the DC years. Never claim "outsider"; the honest frame is "I saw how Washington works from the inside — that's why I'll fight it."

MARKET TAILORING

MARKET	LEAD WITH	WHY (FROM THE ISSUE MAP)
Panama City (west)	Identity + jobs / American security (CCP farmland), plus the local roots	Home turf; jobs & security resonate; Gov't Corruption runs slightly higher here
Tallahassee (east)	Fiscal discipline — cut spending, balance the budget, tax relief	The market where we trail; it skews Taxes/Spending +5 and government — the federal affordability lane lands hardest here

HOW IT BEATS GROSS

GROSS'S MOVE	OUR COUNTER
"Make Florida Affordable Again"	His slogan is state-flavored — most FL affordability pain (insurance, property tax) is the Legislature's job, not Congress's. Own the federal version he can't deliver: inflation, spending, taxes, energy. "Nice slogan — but that's Tallahassee's job. I'll fix what Washington broke."
Self-funded "outsider success story"	Tier 3 contrast: Georgia Democrat / perennial loser / say-anything (see contrast playbook). Rogers is the authentic Panhandle conservative; Gross is the chameleon.
Runs as the "one man & one woman" family-values conservative	The values-hypocrisy contrast (below). His own website vs. his own marriage. Highest-potency contrast in the race — but only if framed as the lie , never as the orientation.

THE VALUES-HYPOCRISY CONTRAST **STRONGEST**

The charge is the lie, not the man. Gross's campaign website states: *"Marriage is a God-ordained, sacred and legal union of one man and one woman. No government has the authority to alter this definition."* He is married to a man. This is the most documented, self-inflicted hypocrisy in the field — **his words vs. his life** — on the single most salient values issue for this electorate.

"Keith Gross wrote the rule. Then he broke it. He'll say anything to get elected — even things he doesn't believe about his own life."

FRAME	MODELED NET (ROGERS WIN-ODDS)	WHY
Values hypocrisy — his site vs. his marriage	≈ +4	Charge is fraud, not identity → low backlash, high potency. Lands hardest rural/evangelical.
Folded into the full record contrast (6 attacks)	≈ +12–15	The values hit compounds the Georgia-Democrat / perennial-loser / self-funder record.
The flighted PAC ad — Georgia Democrat + "openly gay" highlight, as aired	≈ +4	Net positive in THIS electorate. The strong Georgia-Democrat frame carries it; the gay highlight costs ~2 pts vs. a clean cut but does not sink it. Panhandle Patriots (independent).
Pure "he's gay" — no hypocrisy hook, standalone	≈ wash	Audience-adjusted up from –6 (this electorate barely feels the sympathy backlash) to roughly break-even — within model noise of zero. But it is not additive and turns clearly negative in any wider audience or if it draws press. No upside; avoid as a standalone.

Audience adjustment (2026-07-24). Backfire on any sexuality-based frame was recalibrated **down** for this specific electorate: a low-turnout August GOP primary in the Panhandle / Big Bend, 53% over 65, heavily White evangelical Protestant (PRRI's least-same-sex-marriage-supporting group, ~38%). The general-population backlash literature overstates blowback here. This is why the flighted ad nets **positive** and the pure-identity penalty shrank from –6 to about –2. A non-zero floor remains — a bare identity attack still nets negative — because the residual risk (bad press, general-election spillover) reaches beyond the primary audience.

Discipline — the line that decides whether this helps or hurts. The power is in **his quote next to his marriage**: let his own website make the argument. The instant a piece editorializes about him being gay rather than letting the contradiction speak for itself, it slides from the **+4** version toward the pure-identity version (a wash here at best, clearly negative in any wider audience). Test: *if a piece only makes sense because he's gay, it's the wrong piece.* Same standing rule — the PAC carries the contrast;

Austin carries the biography. Vehicle: mail or CTV (the visual reveal — his ad, then his post). Geography: rural Tallahassee, where the marriage issue is most sacred and Gross's image is still intact (he is already 27/35 in Panama City).

How these net numbers are produced. They are not poll results — they are outputs of the CD2 Scenario Lab, which runs 2,500–4,000 simulated elections per setting. Each attack's damage = **potency × medium reach × how definable Gross is**, distributed across the three markets (PC / Leon / rural TL) and offset by **backfire on the attacker**. The identity vs. hypocrisy split lives in that backfire term, now **audience-scaled** for this evangelical primary (see green box above). "Net" is the change in Rogers's share of simulated first-place finishes vs. baseline. The simulation now also carries a **systematic poll-bias band** (the July 16 poll itself could be off), which puts the baseline race at a near coin-flip and adds ±2–3 pts of run-to-run noise to every figure — **hence the ranges and the "≈"**. Magnitudes are an **upper bound** calibrated to an informed-ballot question; the literature (Lau/Sigelman/Rovner 2007) finds real-world effects smaller. **Trust the ranking and the sign, not the decimal.** Full method note accompanies this document.

Message-test data: Guidant Polling, CD2, March 2026 ("Positive Rogers Messaging," % more likely / definitely more). Issue framing: co/efficient (Jul 2026) + Guidant. "Add" messages are federally-appropriate cost-of-living lines not yet tested — recommend testing in a third wave. Confidential campaign strategy.