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## Top Political Fortune Teller Luntz: Geography Needn't Hinder W.Va.

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**Pollster Frank Luntz will address guests Sept. 2 during the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting and Business Summit.**

By Christine Miller Ford  
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When it comes to laying hold of a prosperous future, one of the nation's top political minds says West Virginia needn't be held back because of its geography.

Instead, he says what's needed is for the state's movers and shakers to send a clear, pro-business message.

"Language transcends any geographic barriers," said Frank I. Luntz, a highly regarded pollster and political consultant who will speak Sept. 2 at the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce's 2010 Annual Meeting and Business Summit.

"It doesn't matter whether you're living in West Virginia or West Hartford [Connecticut], where I'm from, effective communication is what matters. Geography shouldn't," he said.

Luntz, the 48-year-old seen regularly on Fox News and regarded by many as one of the most accurate pundits in Washington, D.C., will speak to hundreds of the state's business leaders during the Business Summit, which is an annual three-day conference at The Greenbrier.



Frank Luntz

His focus will be on the importance of adopting the right vocabulary, said Luntz, whose 2007 book, "Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear," made the New York Times bestseller list.

Citizens are extremely disenchanted with the status quo, said Luntz, whose latest book is "What Americans Really Want ... Really: The Truth About Our Hopes, Dreams and Fears."

"For example, Americans don't like terms like 'capitalism' anymore — because of the damage done in 2007, 2008, 2009. There's a huge lack of trust associated with that word right now," Luntz said.

Luntz said that when a government official or business leader continues to use a term that no longer connects to his or her audience, trouble follows.

"You really end up working against yourself — and you especially can't afford to do that now, at a time when so many people are angry with Wall Street, angry with Washington. The old terms just don't work anymore."

The answer, according to Luntz, lies in selecting words and phrases that paint the picture you desire. “Talk about ‘economic freedom’ or ‘free enterprise’ and you’re going to get a much more favorable reaction,” he said. “By choosing a different term, you change the dynamic of the conversation.”

There’s a need for a lexicon that offers the public hope, and business leaders are in prime position to offer a way out of the current doldrums, Luntz said.

“Americans are hungry for hope and optimism,” he said. “People know the solution — jobs — is going to come, not from Washington, but from the private sector. The business community is at the forefront now.”

For business leaders in West Virginia, Luntz said that unique challenges could emerge, depending on how the current debates in Congress on energy and tax laws get resolved.

“I wish I were speaking in West Virginia a little later so we’d know the outcome,” he said. “But it’s clear if certain philosophies are pursued in Washington, then West Virginia could become a victim. There could be a significant impact on the West Virginia business community.”






Luntz, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Oxford University who also has taught college students, is seen by many as a thorough pollster and a master in the art of word selection.

Known for substituting a new term in order to shift political debate, Luntz is associated with a variety of phrases that have entered popular vocabulary in recent years, including “energy exploration” in place of “oil drilling” and “death tax” rather than “estate tax.”

He also has his own business: The Word Doctors, which specializes in image management. Luntz serves as chief executive of the Alexandria, Va.-based company.

The company’s client list includes mammoth corporations such as Pepsi, Kroger, McDonalds and FedEx, as well as the National Association of Broadcasters, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other associations and foundations.

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