

# CalFresh Forum

*Sacramento, CA – February 20, 2013*

## Making the Case for Cal Fresh



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[www.publicworks.org](http://www.publicworks.org)

# The Work of Public Works

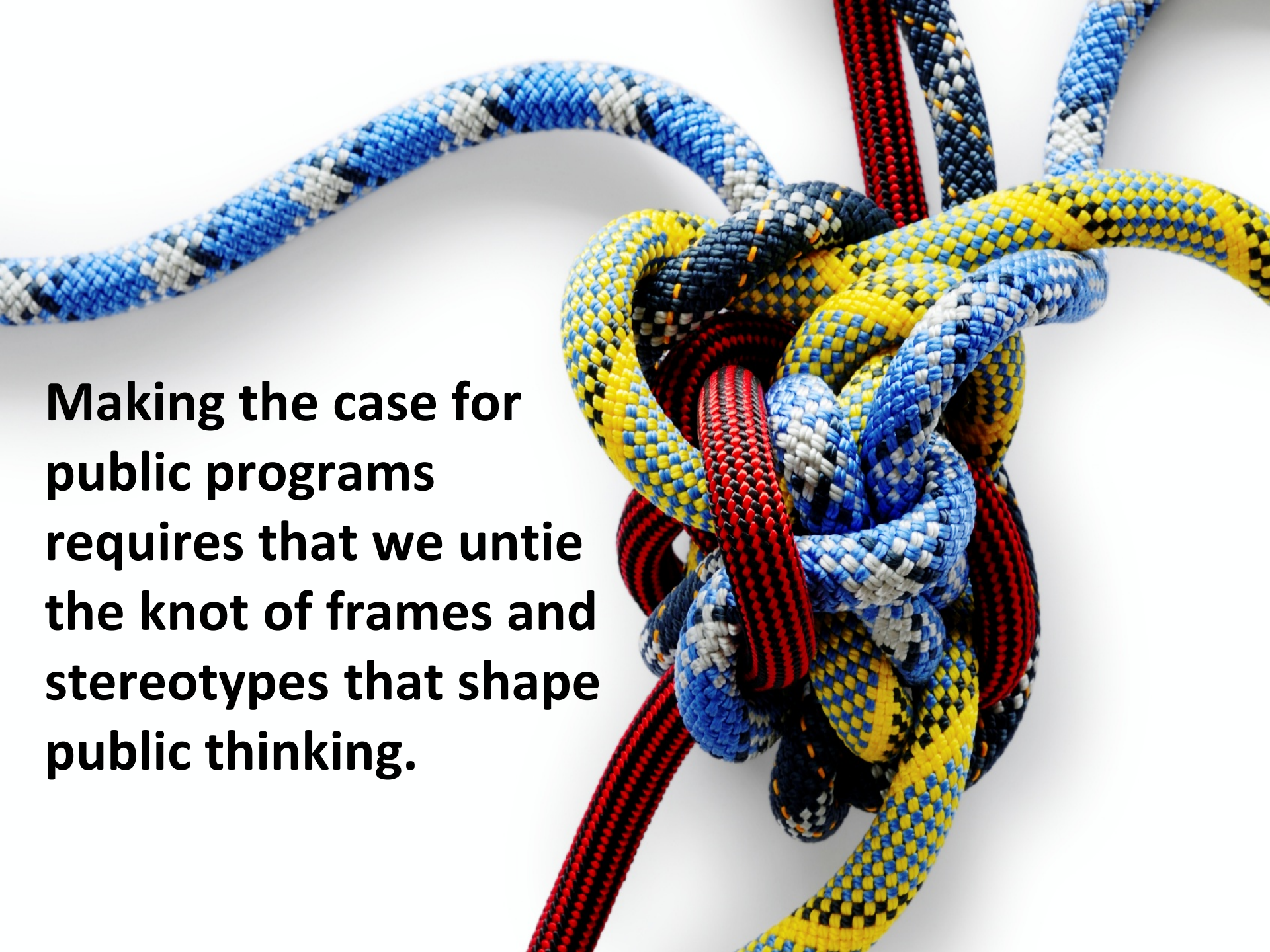
## Research

- Government
- The Economy
- Budgets & Taxes

## In the Field

- Advocates
- Organizers
- Coalitions
- Public officials,  
workers and  
managers

**Making the case for  
public programs  
requires that we untie  
the knot of frames and  
stereotypes that shape  
public thinking.**

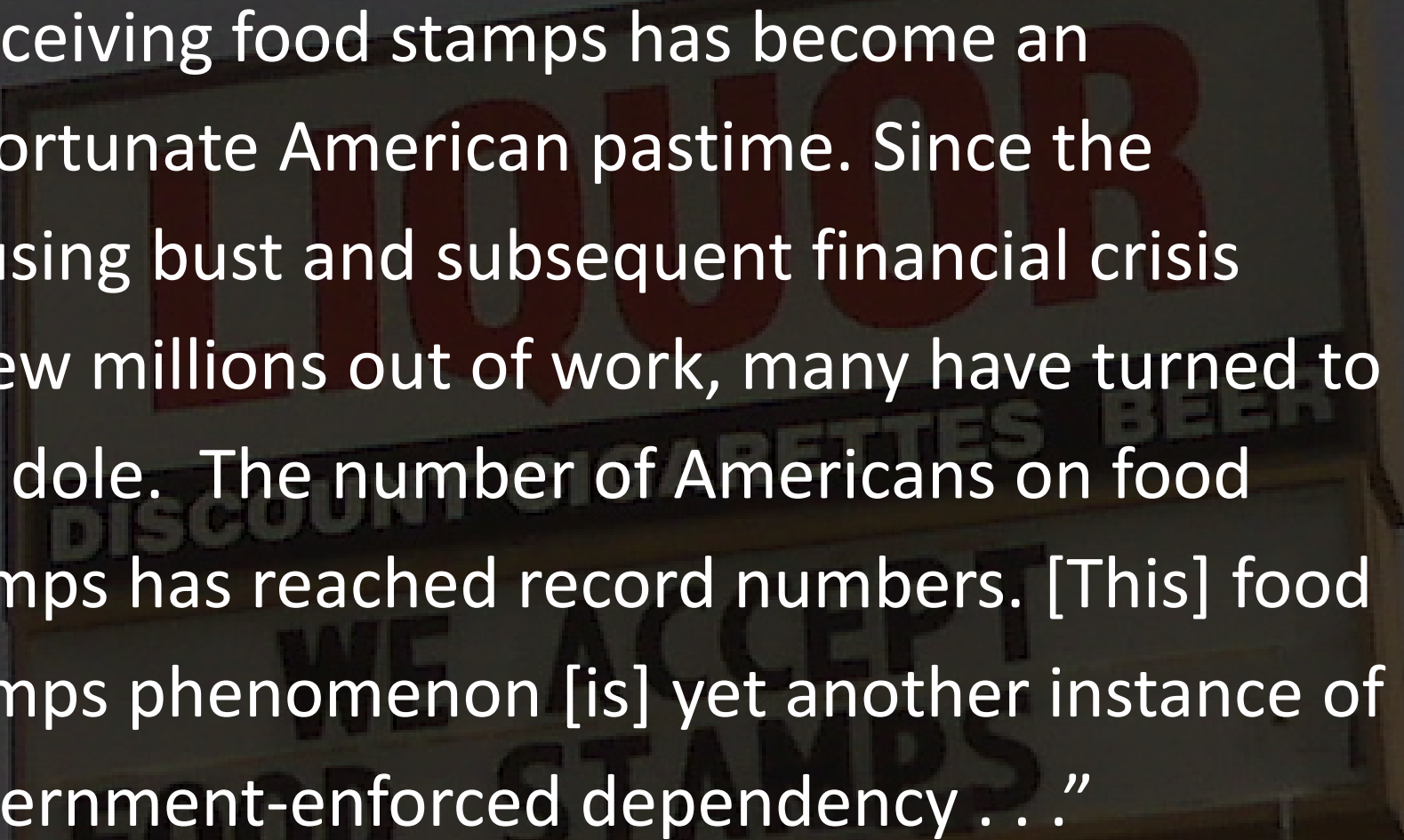


# When we try to talk about social welfare programs . . .



. . . we run up against powerful cultural narratives about poverty and “poor people” and government as the “Nanny State.”

Untangling this knot of public perceptions and misperceptions is a central task.



“Receiving food stamps has become an unfortunate American pastime. Since the housing bust and subsequent financial crisis threw millions out of work, many have turned to the dole. The number of Americans on food stamps has reached record numbers. [This] food stamps phenomenon [is] yet another instance of government-enforced dependency . . .”

<http://millergd.blogspot.com/2012/04/should-libertarians-accept-food-stamps.html>



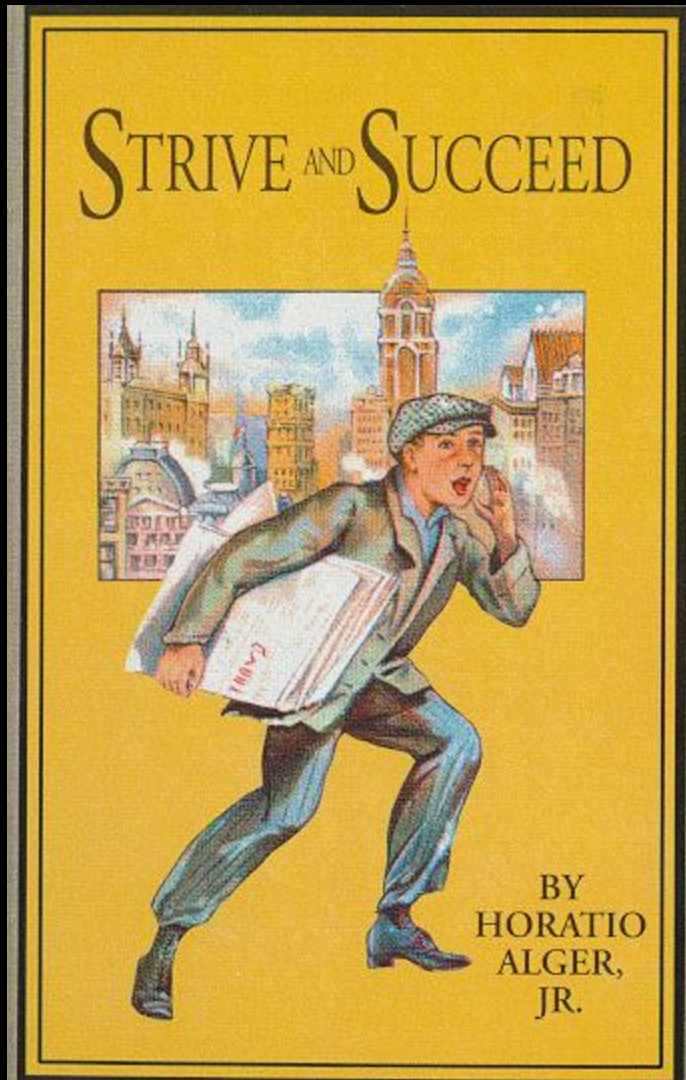
# The Poverty Knot



DOVEDTV



# Narratives We're up Against



## Poverty is....

- a result of poor choices or bad morals
- not as bad as it used to be or as it is elsewhere
- a temporary state because of America's unique economic mobility
- not solvable and attempting to solve it will be expensive and will cause dependence



Do you think the government does too much, not enough, or about the right amount for the following people?

1. Older people



2. Middle class people



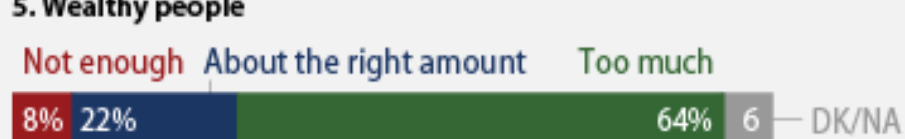
3. Children



4. Poor people



5. Wealthy people



Source: Sept. 22- Oct. 4, 2011 Pew poll.

But . . .  
people also  
believe  
government is  
not doing  
enough for  
those most  
effected by the  
economic  
downturn.

# The Triumphant Individual



"Self-Made Man" – Irene Ritter

## Independence

# The Benevolent Community



Dave Kolpack / AP

## Interdependence

# Individual Problem



# Personal Solutions

# Collective Problem



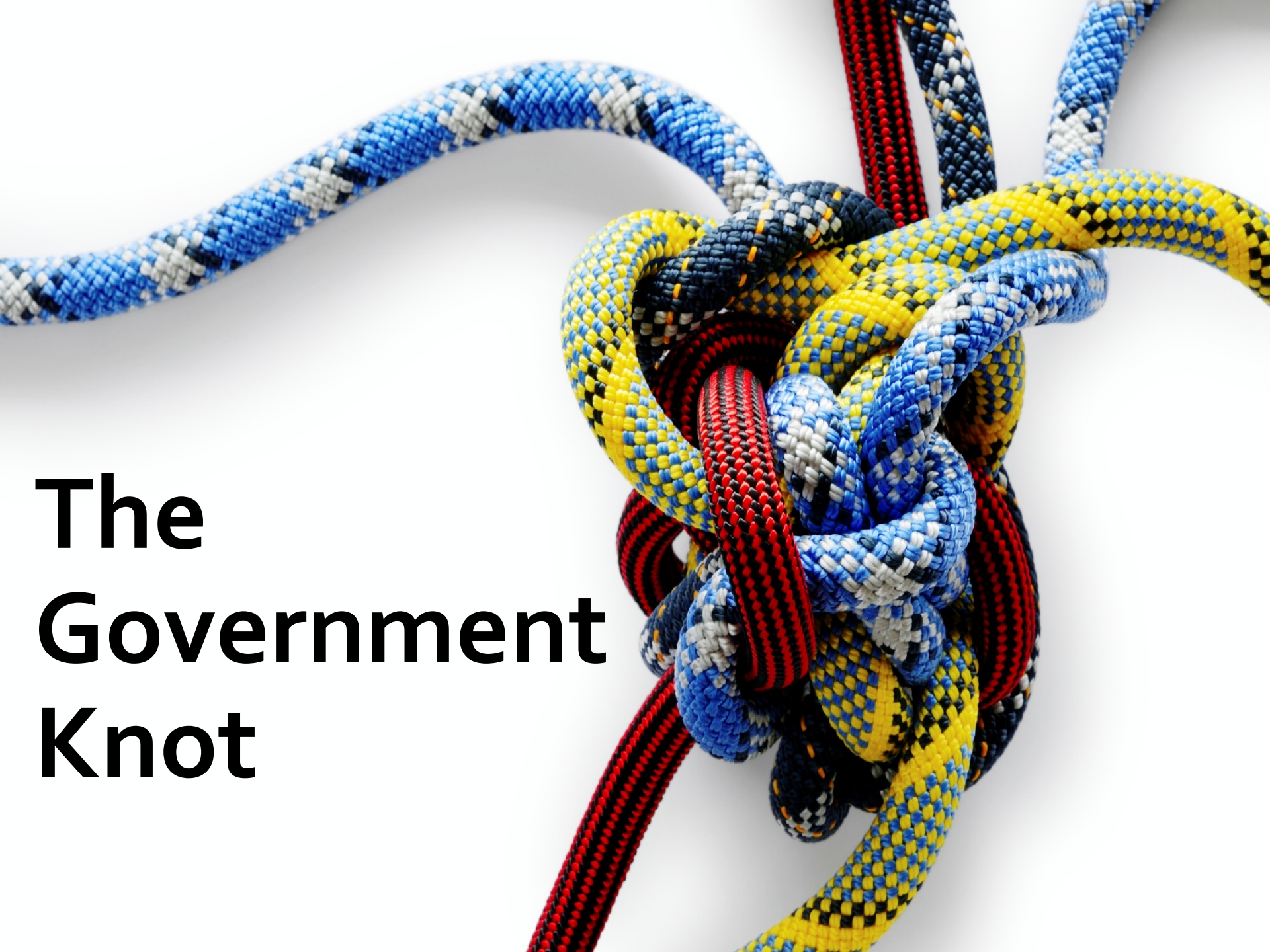
# Structural Solutions

# Don't "Otherize" . . .

- Avoid talking about “the poor” (or *participants in CalFresh*) in ways that sets them apart as “not like the rest of us”
- Avoid the three P’s—poverty as poison, plague, or paradox—and similar distancing language
- Avoid language that suggests “the poor” are categorically distinct from groups like the “working class” or “middle class”

*Adapted from remarks by Shawn Fremstad*





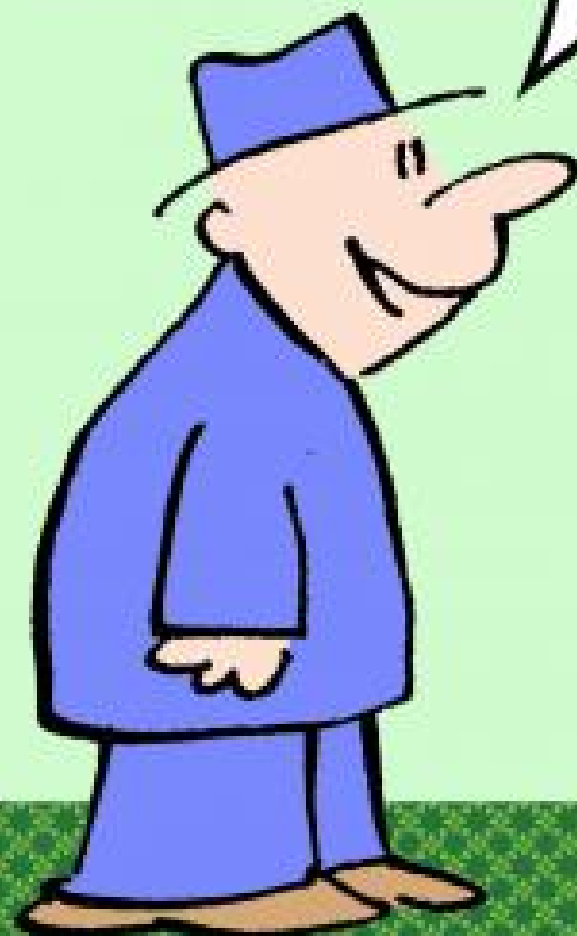
# The Government Knot



**IF GOVERNMENT IS  
THE ANSWER, IT WAS  
A STUPID QUESTION**

01/03/2010

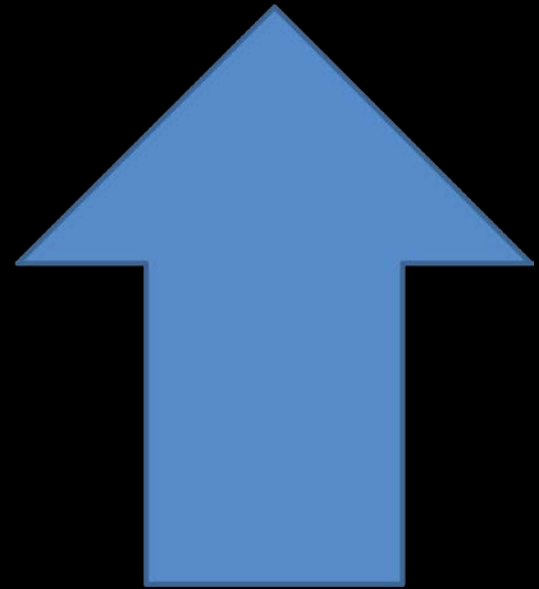
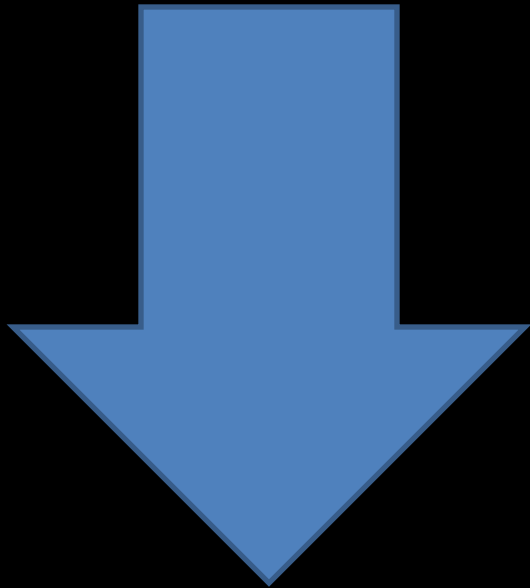
**WHAT HAVE YOU GOT ON HOW TO  
APPLY FOR GOVERNMENT HANDOUTS?**



Self-Help  
Books

Baloo

**20%** think  
government programs  
decrease poverty



**49%** think  
government programs  
increase poverty

# Shaping Economic Outcomes



**Policy?**



**Hard Work!**



# Dominant Stories



**Just Politics**



**Bureaucracy**



**Vending Machine**

***...can't solve anything . . . not my responsibility***



# New Stories



**Mission & Purpose**



**Systems & Structures**



**Citizen-Thinking**

*... our tool for solutions & the common good ...*

# Asserting a Role for Government

- Public systems and services are essential to the quality of community life and to an economy that provides opportunities for all . . .
- CalFresh is an important public program that we have put in place to provide nutritious food to Californians facing economic hardships . . .

# Use Values to Make Your Case

# Values Matter

- We reason first from deeply held values.
- Values help answer: “Why does this matter to me/us?”
- We need to start with **Values**, not with the policy and program details

# Why does this matter?

“Every child should have access to immunizations but too many families in our community are not bringing their children in to our clinics. This is why we are proposing a new agency rule requiring more clinic hours . . .”




# Speak to Values First

“The health of the whole community is **protected** when we ensure that our children are immunized. One of the ways we do this is through **our public health agencies** that provide free and low cost **immunizations for all children**. We need extended clinic hours to keep up with growing demands.”

# TANF


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# Portrait



# Landscape

Analysis of news reports suggest that when poverty is framed as a societal problem (*landscape*), society is deemed responsible. Alternatively, when news presentations illustrate poverty with a specific example of a poor person (*portrait*), responsibility is assigned to the individual.

(adapted from Iyengar, 1990).

# Ripple Effects



How does CalFresh impact community well-being?



Data released today showing a surge in Oregon's hunger rate remind us of the importance of the expansion of food stamp benefits in the federal recovery package.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that more than one in eight Oregon households (13.1 percent) struggled to put food on the table at times during 2006-08. Oregon's rate of food insecurity was unchanged from 2003-05 and not significantly different from the national rate for 2006-08.

But the share of Oregon households experiencing hunger, "very low food security," increased to 6.6 percent (one in 15 Oregon households) in 2006-2008, up from 3.9 percent in 2003-05. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Oregon and Mississippi had the largest percentage point increases in their rates of very low food security.

The nation as a whole saw increases in both food insecurity and hunger or very low food insecurity in 2008 compared to 2007. Because it is necessary to combine three years of data to get reliable state-level estimates, the picture at the state level is not as clear.

The lush red strawberries caught the attention of Rachel Patrick, a mother of five shopping at a farmers market along the Mississippi River here. She selected two cartons and ignited a little-noticed chain reaction that is an important part of President Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan.

Ms. Patrick handed a plastic card loaded with her monthly food-stamp allocation to farmer Ed Kraklio Jr., who swiped it through his electronic reader. Mr. Kraklio now regularly takes in several hundred dollars a month from food-stamp sales, a vital new revenue stream that has allowed him to hire another assistant to help tend a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables. The new worker, in turn, spends her income in nearby stores, restaurants and gas stations. . .

The president's stimulus plan has been aimed primarily at the top of the economy, pumping money into banks and car companies and state and city governments. But it also has put more money into the hands of the poorest Americans by boosting monthly food-stamp allocations. Starting in April, a family of four on food stamps received an average of \$80 extra. Money from the program -- officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -- percolates quickly through the economy.

# How We Tell the Story Matters

- “Us” not “Them”
- Interdependence not Independence
- A Positive Role for Government
- Values not Policy Details
- Landscapes not Portraits
- Ripple Effects



**“... A talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change ...”**

**- Richard Rorty**