



# Public Works

*Building Public Will for the Common Good*

## Toward More Constructive Conversations about the Role of the Government

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Oregon Advocates College 4 Session 2

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# TALENT OF OREGON



1859

## This is not about:

- “Liking” the government as it is, or telling people “government is good”
- Making excuses for government when it does not work
- “Big” government or “small” government

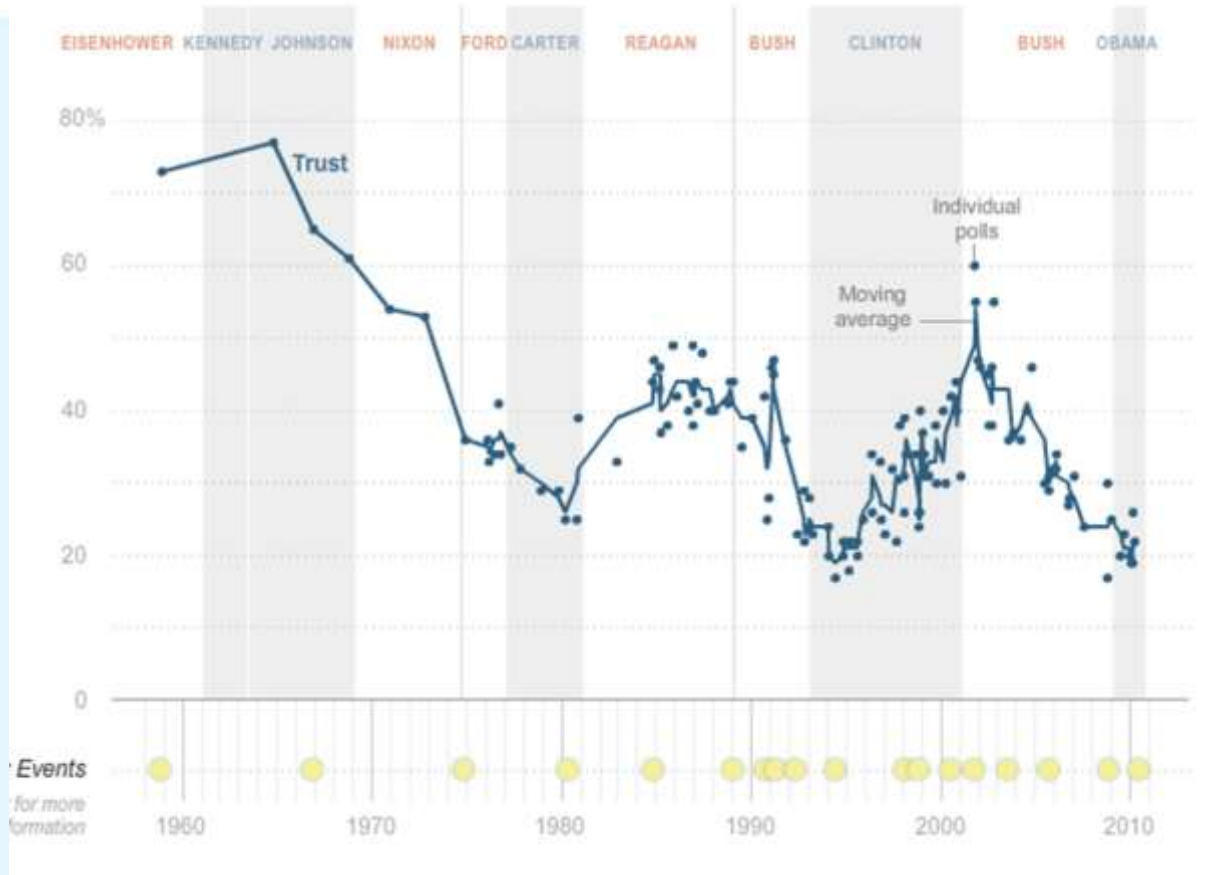
## This is about:

- Recognizing the unique role of government in society
- Aspiring to create the government we need & deserve
- Public systems and structures that are essential to quality of life



By Thomas Hawk

# Trust in Government Declining



<http://people-press.org/2010/04/18/public-trust-in-government-1958-2010/>

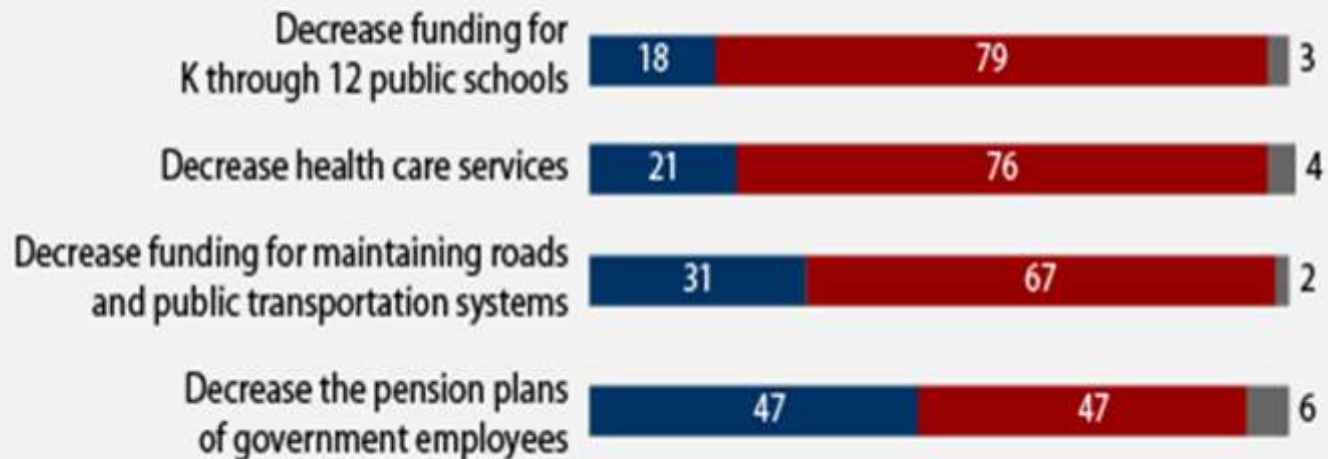


When asked to choose a single word to describe government . . .

# But.....Americans don't want services to be cut

If your state government needs to find ways to balance its budget this year, do you think your state should do the following or not?

■ Yes, state should ■ No, state should not ■ Don't know/refused



Source: February 2-7, 2011 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press political survey. N=1,385.

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**



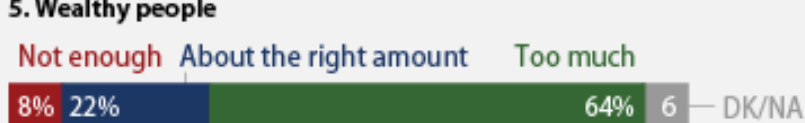
**3. Children**



**4. Poor people**



**5. Wealthy people**



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

And...they believe that we are not doing enough for those most affected by the economic downturn.

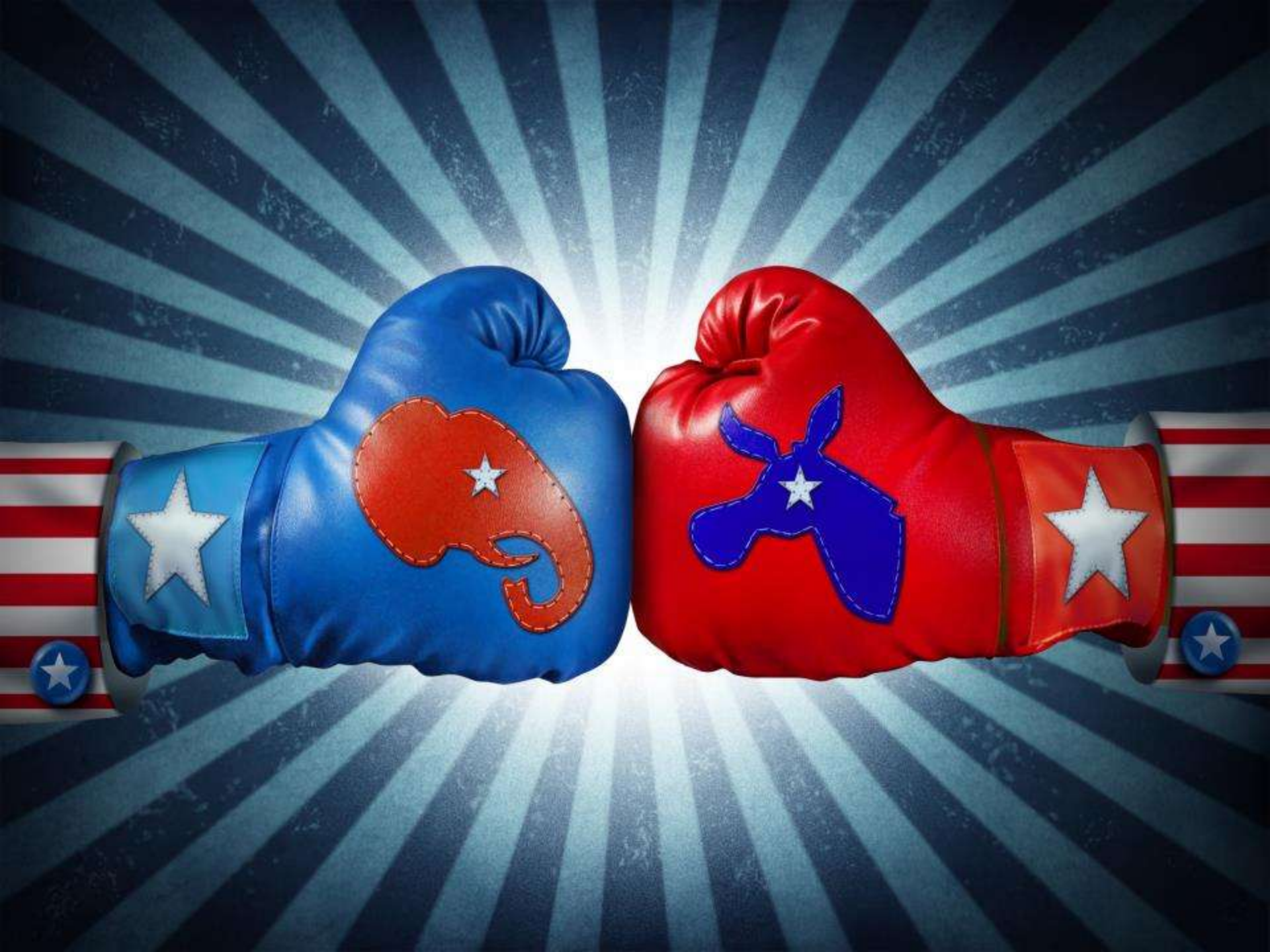


**But when we try to talk to  
people about government . . .**

What People  
Think of Government:  
Default Responses



**GOVERNMENT**







# Which “model” is being triggered?

Access to health care, good nutrition and cash assistance is vital to low-income families. Yet, enrolling in programs like Food Stamps and Medicaid has gotten harder and harder over the last year. The new computer eligibility system is riddled with problems. And, turnover in state workers means untrained workers are often ill-prepared to help families get the benefits for which they qualify.

# Which “model” is being triggered?

Of every tax dollar collected by the state of Minnesota, roughly 80 cents is returned to communities and individuals in the form of aid and grants. The remaining 20 cents pays for such things as state highways, appropriations to colleges and universities, prisons, state parks and state government. Some areas receive less than their citizens pay in, while other areas receive more.



# Which “model” is being triggered?

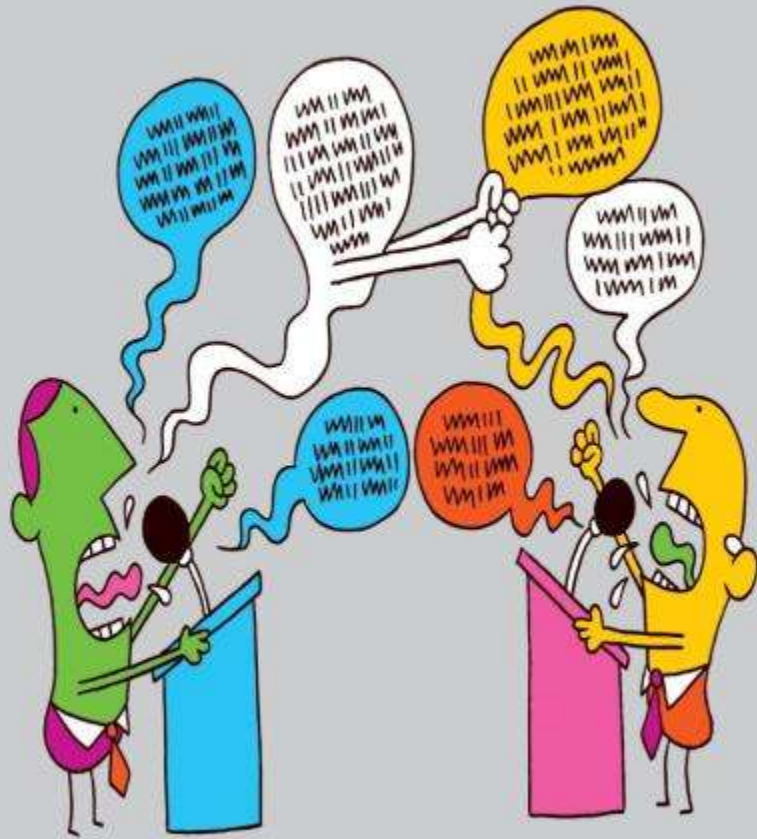
Our children deserve better. They need an education accountability system that provides fair, accurate and understandable information on the effectiveness of our schools. But, rather than debating the merits of our accountability system our Governor and Legislature are slugging it out in that legislative boxing ring we call the Capitol.

# The Challenge

- Dominant and Resilient images consistently misdirect thinking.
- Concrete images of the systems and structures of government are missing.
- Consumerist thinking narrows understanding and responsibility.

# The Good News

- The “idea” of government is not lost
- Responsible citizenship is still valued
- A desire for collective action, respecting consensus, and problem-solving
- Stewardship and planning for the future – roles for government



# Mission and Purpose



## VALUES

- Common Good
- Quality of Life
- Community Wellbeing
- Public Purpose

## ROLE

- Protector
- Manager & Planner
- Steward
- Consensus-Builder



- 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.”



**TEXANS CARE**  
*for* **CHILDREN**

**How do you talk about a \$27 billion budget shortfall?**

*KIDS COUNT Conference  
Nov. 17, 2011*





# Appeal to Texans' core values and vision

- Give ordinary people a voice
- Provide our own narrative about who we are as a state

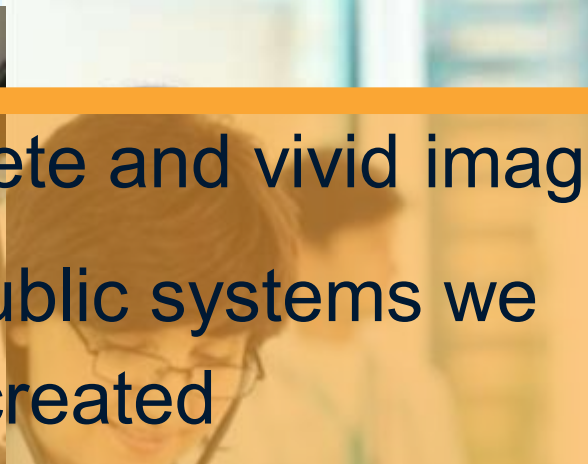






# Systems and Structures

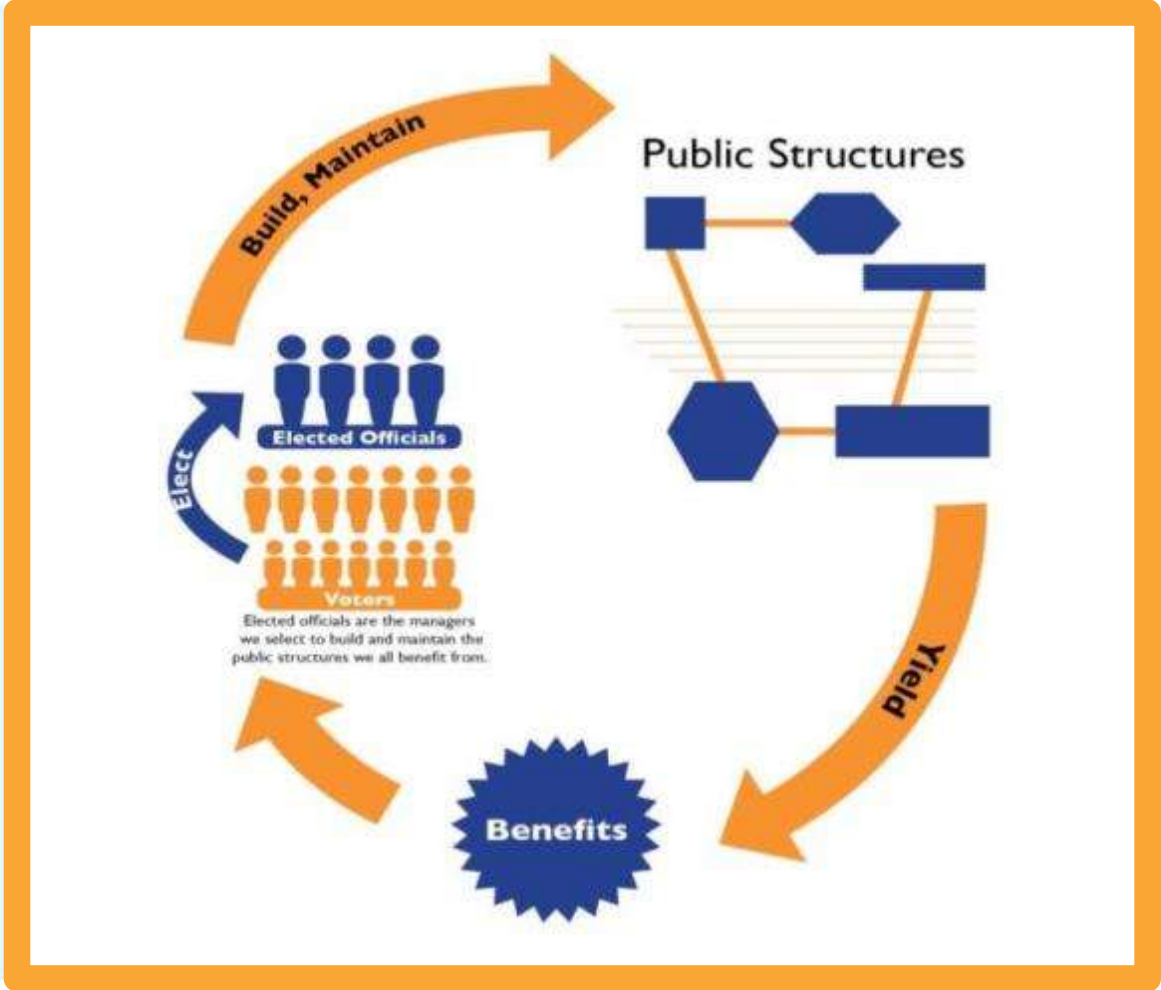
- Concrete and vivid images
- The public systems we have created
- How they work
- Why they are important



# Limited View of Relationship with Government

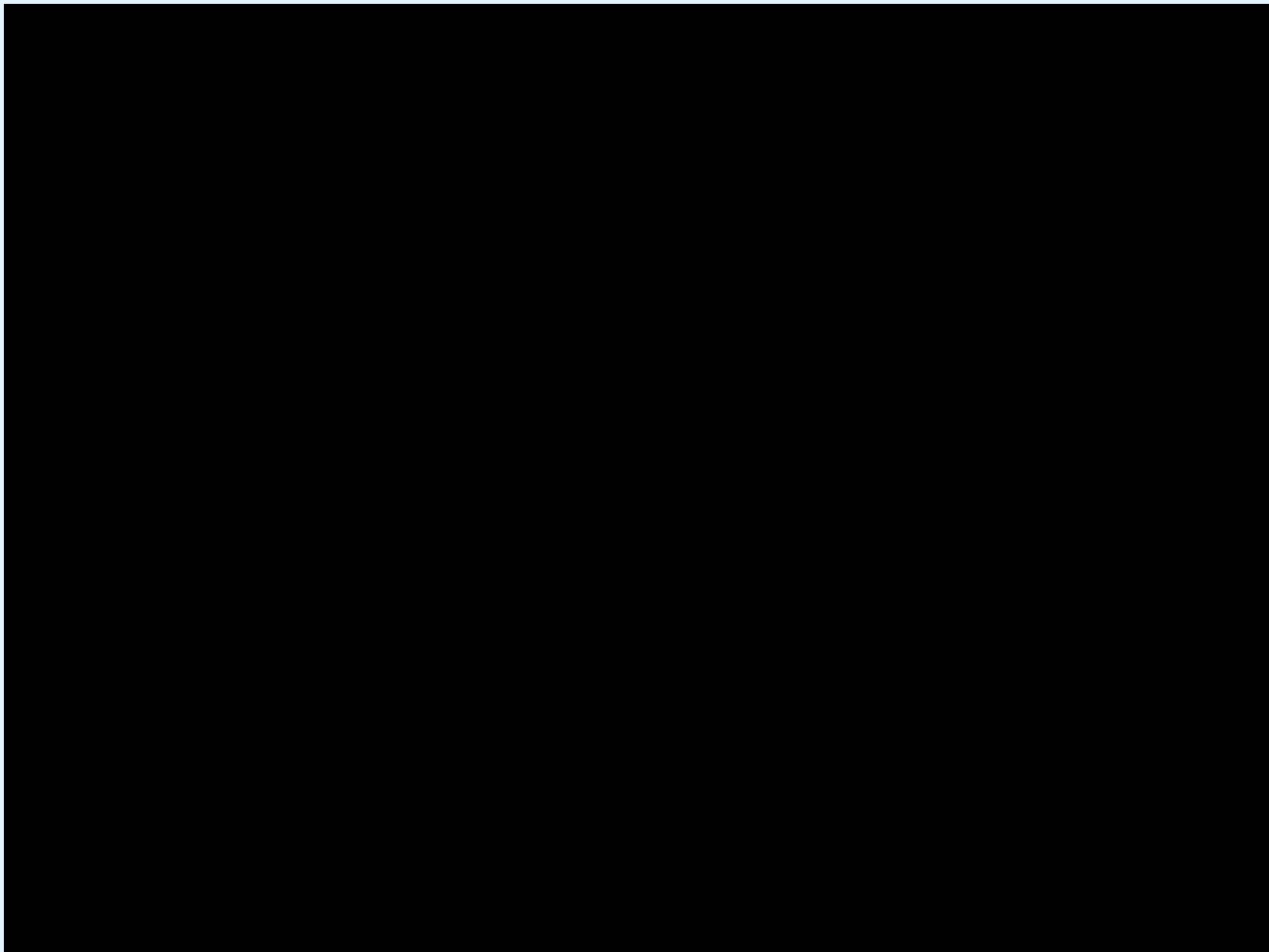


# Rounding out the Story



# Government as Public Structures

The main advantages that make America so successful come from the **Public Structures** it has created. These Public Structures include the **physical structures** (highways, airports, and communications grids) and the **organizational structures** (the postal system, courts) we need to get things done, and the **social support systems** that help to ensure the health and well-being of our communities. It is our well-functioning and supported Public Structures that are essential for overall success.



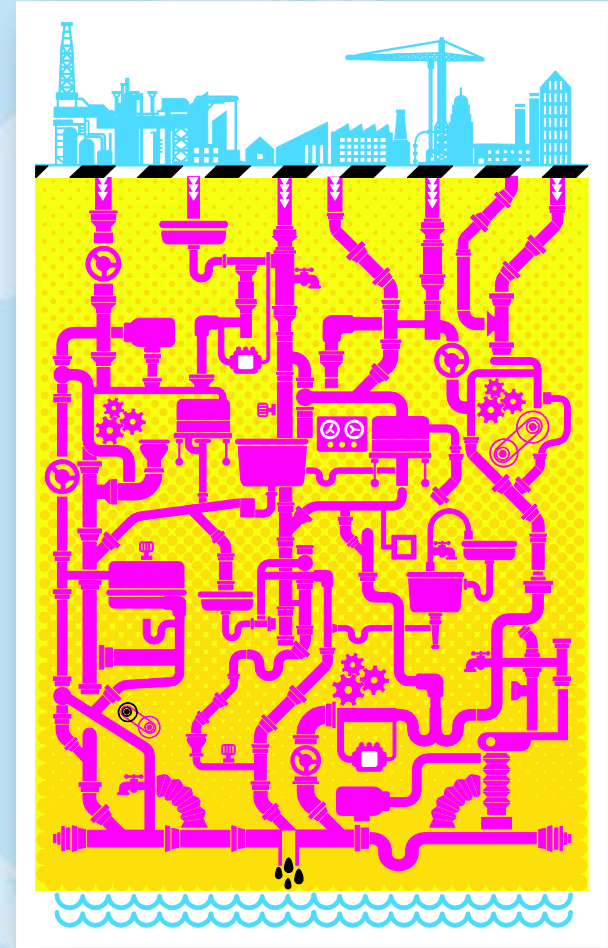




After being exposed to the core ideas in a short text . . .

- Can you name some important public systems or structures?
- Why are they important?

# Creating a Vivid Understanding of What Government Does



# Urban renewal's power: Public investments boost prosperity for all

*by Tom Hughes, president of the Metro Council and former mayor of Hillsboro. OR. November 02, 2011,*

Our nation's investments in roads, bridges, research and other public structures distinguish us from countries in the developing world. Similarly, investments in local communities throughout our own urban region help make the most of our cities, towns and neighborhoods and distinguish us from sprawling regions around the nation . . .

If we cast aside the important role of the public sector in creating great communities, it will cost us billions of dollars in lost jobs and productivity, and our children and grandchildren will be poorer as a result. We need more tools, not fewer, to ensure strategic public investments continue to pave the way to prosperity for everyone in our community.





# Fostering “Citizen Managers”



- Interdependence
- Working together
- Problem-solving
- Everyone has a role to play
- The Common Interest
- “Our” Government

# Accountable

To Whom? For What?



We need to run government “more like a **business**” and focus on ROI for our **customers**.



Because we need to account for every tax dollar of the “**people’s money**,”

**Consumer**



So that we can prove to the **customers** of government that their **dollar** is being well spent.

We must be **good stewards** of the **public systems** that we all rely upon.



Because the public sector must be transparent, efficient and dedicated to **results for the public good**.

**Citizen**



So that we are **best able to meet the challenges and opportunities of a changing world**.

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# Interdependence

## Building the Case for Publicly-Funded Human Services

### INDEPENDENCE

- Self-determination/Self-discipline
- Rugged individualism
- Benefits based solely on effort
- Limited obligation to collective good
- Neutrality of major social institutions
- Voluntary and moral nature of behavior

**LIMITED GOVERNMENT  
INTERVENTION**

### INTERDEPENDENCE

- Shared responsibility
- Strong obligation to collective good
- Unequal starting positions require remedy
- Focus on social conditions
- Basic benefits should be assured
- Community well-being supersedes individual well-being

**GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT  
NECESSARY**

The Rockridge Institute

# Critiquing without Undermining

Every time we engage in discussions about government or its programs and services we are either cuing up helpful or damaging frames.

Our short term fights must reinforce our long term goals.

Once again the actions of our city housing department show that its all about who you know if you want to get anything done. If you don't have some big money political clout you can't get any response out of that bureaucratic mess of an agency. As always our working-class neighborhoods are just overlooked. But we are taxpayers too! We paid our share into the city coffers and we should be getting some attention and services in return.

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**Just Politics**

**The Bureaucratic Blob**

**Consumer-Thinking**

in return.

One of the most important jobs of our city government is to help create clean and safe neighborhoods where residents can live, work and play. Unfortunately, our housing department is not living up to that essential responsibility. The system needs to focus first on the neighborhoods and residents that create our thriving city, not the developers. It is time for all of us to work together to get this public agency back on track and focused on community needs.

# Dominant Stories about Government



Just Politics



Bureaucracy



Vending Machine

# Dominant Stories about Government



**Can't solve anything...  
Not my Responsibility.....**

Just Politics

Bureaucracy

Vending Machine

# New Stories about Government



Mission & Purpose



Systems & Structures



Citizenship



# New Stories about Government



## Our Tool for Solutions And the Common Good

Mission & Purpose

Systems & Structures

Citizenship

# Practicing our Stories

## ..... About Public Sector



- **VALUES:**

Articulate the Public Good behind the policies and programs

- **SYSTEM THINKING:**

Help reveal our essential Public Systems & Structures

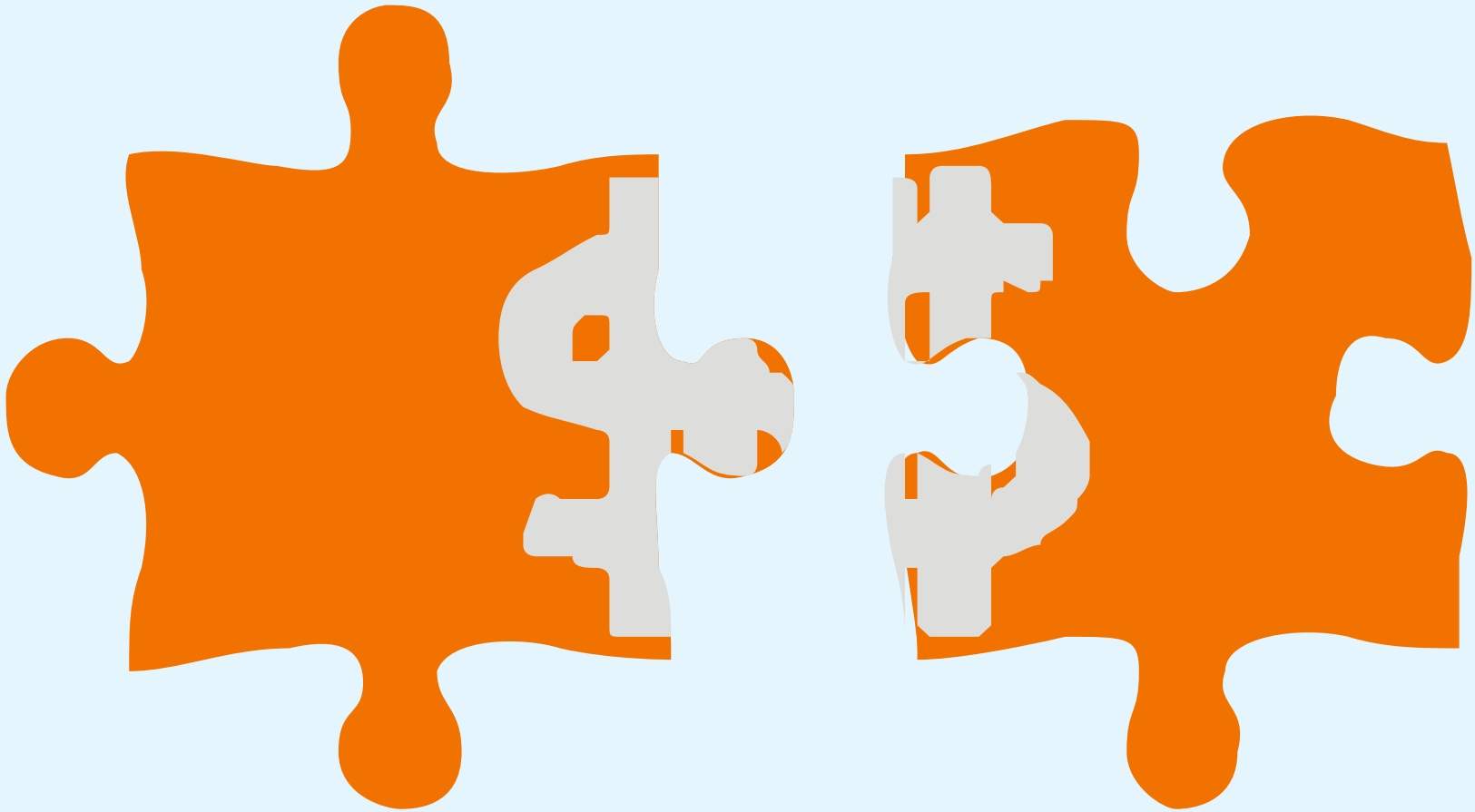
- **AWAKEN THE CITIZEN:**

What is our shared stake and responsibility?



**Talking  
about the  
Need for  
Revenue**





**Taxes have become  
disconnected from their purposes.**



stoplight

power lines

traffic sign

NO  
TURN  
ON  
RED

street sign

street light

phone lines

CUT TAXES  
NOT  
DEFENSE

STOP  
TAXING  
WELFARE

ZERO  
TAXES

power  
for  
traffic  
light

road

sidewalk

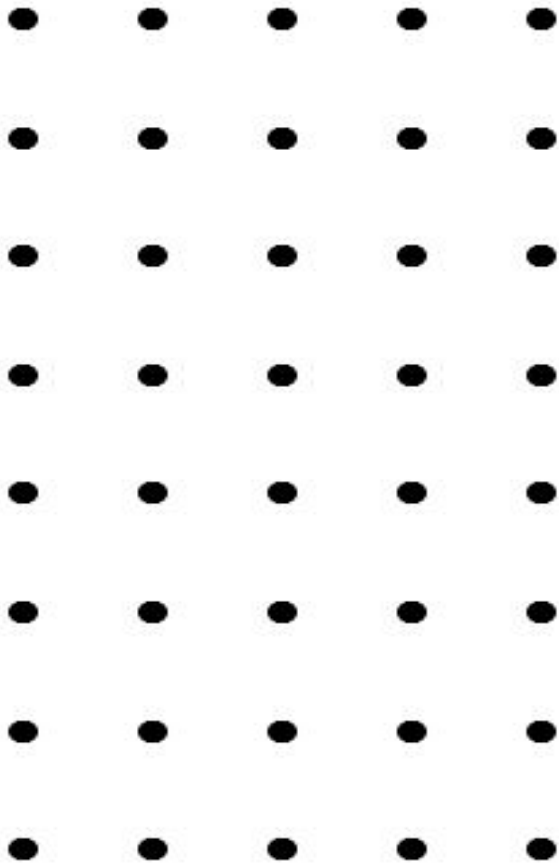
# Changing the Conversation

# Reconnect Taxes to Purposes





# Tax Conversations...



...must connect the dots between the shared goals and desires people have for their communities and the public tools and resources necessary to achieve them.

# Pragmatic Management

We need to promote a pragmatic manager stance – budget & tax decisions are the way we build and maintain the things that keep our communities functioning, now and into the future.

# Finding the courage to build community

As a small-business owner, I'm convinced that in order for Oregon to prosper we need to have the courage and the will to create an environment that's profitable both for businesses and for the communities on which our businesses rely. Unless we properly fund our education system and protect working families and the services they need, we're going to struggle to compete in the growing global economy. The days in which low skills could generate high pay are disappearing.

These tax measures are the next necessary steps to promoting the health and well-being of our state as a whole.

*Rep. Chris Harker, Beaverton  
The Oregonian - October 30, 2009*

# Shared Values and a Focus on the Future



Key elements of the successful Prop 30 message

A horizontal banner with a blue background. On the left, there is a bright sunburst effect with rays extending across the banner. A yellow horizontal band runs across the middle of the banner, containing the text "RECLAIM CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE" in white, uppercase letters.

## RECLAIM CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

“Prop 30 is the first step to investing in California’s families -- our future. Our families can’t succeed unless our schools have teachers, colleges are affordable, libraries stay open, and neighborhoods stay safe. This initiative puts the state’s priority back on what matters: our future, our families, our neighborhoods.”

<http://www.reclaimcaliforniasfuture.org/>

# Measure 84 and Our Family Farms

The Estate Tax has been an important Oregon policy since 1903. It's one of the ways we make sure that future generations of Oregonians have access to the foundations that make success possible, like a good education or care for our seniors. And it's designed to protect another important state resource—our family farms.



A decade ago, we as Oregonians reaffirmed our commitment to keeping this key source of revenue, because we knew that 100 years of progress in Oregon had been bolstered by the funding it provided to support our state and our families.

From the beginning, we've known that the legacy of family farms is one of Oregon's unique resources, so we've adjusted the Estate Tax to make sure there are ways for farms to stay in the family. If your family's assets are worth less than \$2 million, you're automatically exempt from this tax.



# Don't Reinforce Bad Frames

## Avoid these:

- Tax Burden
- Tax Relief
- Hard-earned tax dollars
- Taxpayer

# Parallel Challenges

- Mission and purpose obscured
- No system awareness
- Limited sense of personal role

**Government**


**The Economy**



# How do the Public Understand the Economy?



# A “Natural Economy”



Based on this latest survey, most Americans believe that the U.S. economy won't reach **placid waters** for some time. But as they struggle to **steer through the rapids**, each major group in society increasingly appears to be piling into its own boat. And more and more of us feel as if we are paddling alone.

*Paddling Alone On The Economic Rapids  
Allstate/National Journal Poll - Oct. 10, 2009*

# The Individual Actor Model

## *Implications:*

- A broadly shared model
- Moral qualities and personal choices shape economic actions and outcomes



# Inequality Happens





# Suspicious of Governmental Role



## Last Resort

Government intervention should be a last resort (e.g. Banks should be bailed out only when things were on the verge of collapse.)



## Dependency

Government is seen as creating dependency (e.g. Unemployment benefits deter people from getting back to work.)



## Stifles business

Government inherently stifles the efforts of private business (e.g. minimum wage laws prevent hiring)

# Limitations on Government Actions



**Policing** the “Bad Actors”



**Protecting** the “Deserving”

.... and after the fact

# Limited Vision for Our Roles



**Worker**



**Consumer**



# What Shapes Economic Outcomes?

**Policy?**  
Maybe.

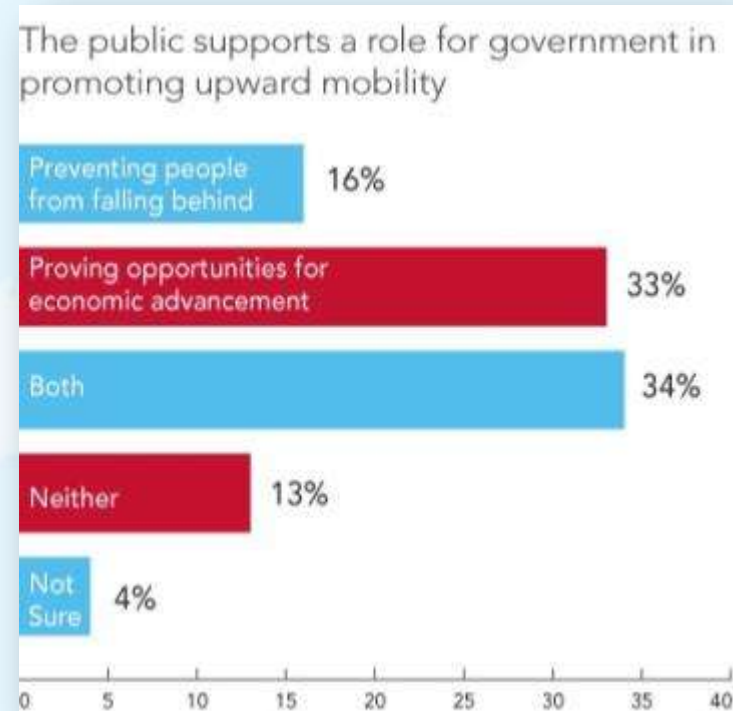


**Hard Work?**  
Absolutely!



# Americans want the government to play a role in promoting economic mobility.

An overwhelming **83 percent** want the government to either provide opportunities for the poor and middle class to improve their economic situations, prevent them from falling behind or both.



2011 - The Pew Economic Mobility Project

**However, Americans believe the government is currently doing an ineffective job.**

# The Desired Transformation

## Default Understanding

The economy is “free” & “natural”  
– have to adapt.

Individual character/luck  
determine outcomes.

Everyone competes for their own  
interests.

The strength of the overall  
economy – GDP, Stock Market –  
matters.

Government’s role is minimal and  
reactive.

## The New Economy

The economy is man-made and  
intentional.

Systems & Structures affect  
outcomes.

Everyone’s interests are  
connected and interdependent.

The economic wellbeing of  
average people matters.

Government’s role is  
fundamental and proactive.

# Connecting the Dots



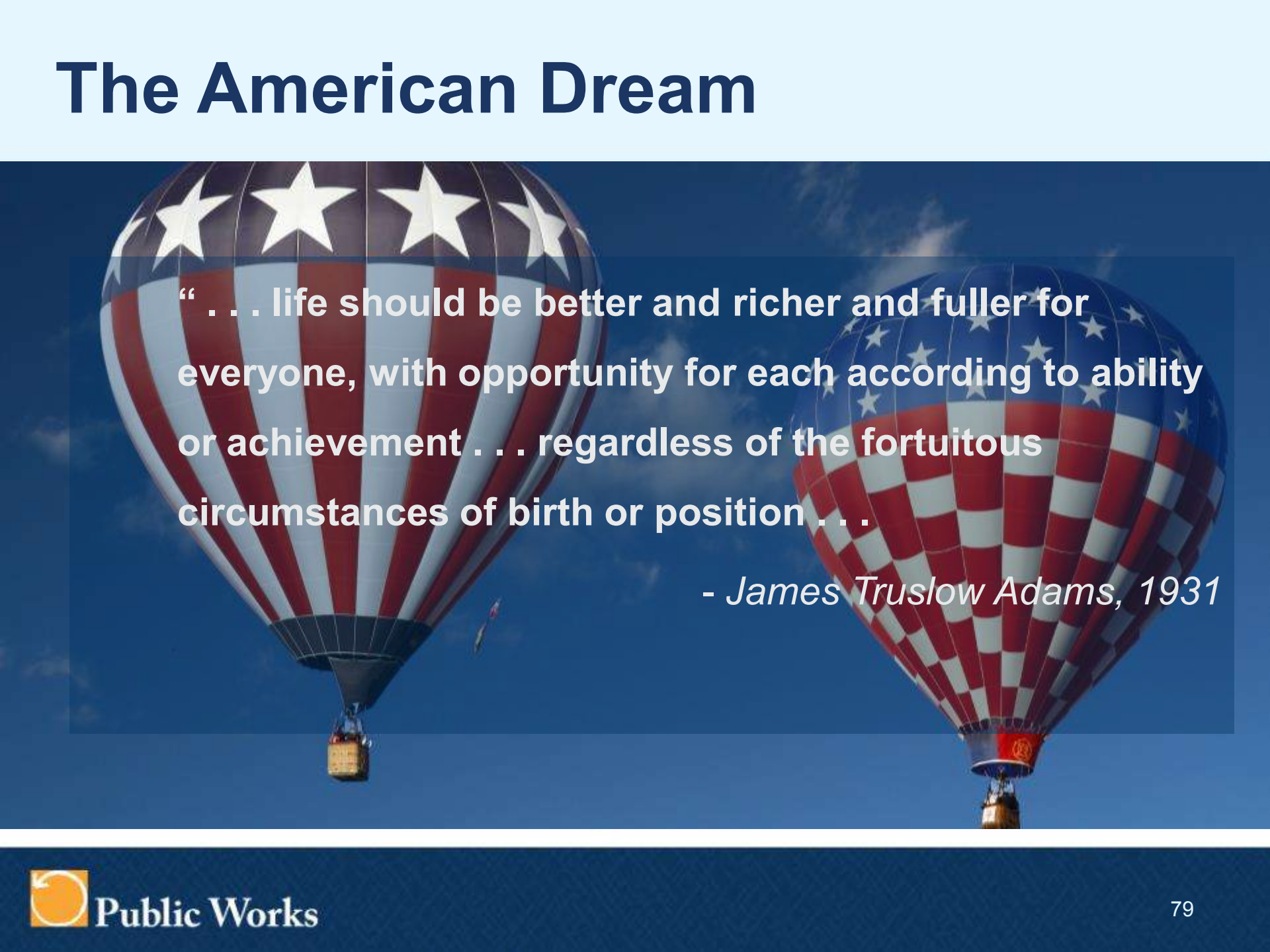
- ✓ ***Purpose***  
**What is the Economy for?**
- ✓ ***Intentionality***  
**How do we create the Economy we desire?**

# The Power of the Middle Class



- Deep American mythos
- Shared values
- Heart/bedrock of the country
- Economic engine

# The American Dream

Two hot air balloons are shown against a clear blue sky. The balloon on the left features a design with white stars on a dark blue background at the top, transitioning into vertical red and white stripes. The balloon on the right has a red and white checkered pattern on the lower half and a blue top section with white stars. Both balloons have baskets hanging below them.

“ . . . life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement . . . regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position . . .

- *James Truslow Adams, 1931*

# How do we tell the story?

*A middle class doesn't arise by accident . . .*

- Something we work towards
  - Quality of life to sustain or aspire to
  - Not “give me mine”
- Not just about individuals
  - Engine of the economy
  - Holds society together

# The Intentional Middle Class



A strong middle class – the engine that drives our economy - doesn't arise by accident, but is the result of deliberate and proactive policy choices.



# Middle Class as “Job Creators”

“We’ve had it backward for the last 30 years. Rich businesspeople like me don’t create jobs. Middle-class consumers do, and when they thrive, U.S. businesses grow and profit. That’s why taxing the rich to pay for investments that benefit us all is a great deal for both the middle class and the rich.”

*- Nick Hanauer (Venture capitalist), February 2, 2011*

# Public Structures as Economic Foundation



*Public structures are foundational to our economy . .*

Explains how it works as well as intentionality and interdependence:

- Government creates and maintains
- Fundamental to prosperity
- Builds and strengthens the middle class

# An example of how to use the Public Structures concept

*Public Structures (like the FDIC, community colleges, & Social Security), that have been created and maintained by government are foundational to prosperity, opportunity, economic stability, and a strong middle class.*

# The Public Foundations of Economic Success

“There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own . . . You moved your goods on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for.”

*- Mass. Senate Candidate, Elizabeth Warren, 2011*



# We need to tell a New Economy Story

**We need to beyond the dominant story....**

“The only thing that has ever created a good economy is the hard work, ingenuity and smart choices of our people. Government involvement creates dependency and stifles personal and business initiative.”

**...to a More Productive Story**

“Our economy rests on a foundation of public systems and structures. Economic activity depends on things like transportation systems, a healthy and educated workforce, a reliable communications grids, and a sound judicial system. Private enterprise would not succeed without these essential public functions. America’s past investments in public systems enabled us to build today’s economy, create jobs and pave the way for innovation..”

**“Our economy isn't metaphorically like an ecosystem, it is a literally an ecosystem.** And to argue that we would be better off by limiting government, because if we do it will promote business, is precisely like arguing that we will have more animals if we limit plants. It is exactly like it. In every ecosystem that you will find on Earth, you will find that the more plants there are the more animals there are, and vice versa. They are inextricably intertwined. And **in every economy on Earth where you find a robust, prosperous, growing economy, you will find an equally robust, growing public economy because these things are in symbiosis, and you can't have one without the other.”**

- [Nick Hanauer](#),

as reported in “The economic theories behind Nick Hanauer's support of I-1098”

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# A New View - A New Role



**Citizen Managers:  
we shape the  
economy we need**



# Elements of A New Story

- A good economy is one in which opportunity and prosperity are broadly shared.
- A strong middle class is the result of deliberate and proactive policy choices.
- Public structures are the foundation of our economy and the tools for creating opportunity, prosperity and a strong middle class.
- The economic well-being of average Americans matters to us all.

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

*- Richard Rorty*



# Public Works

*Building Public Will for the Common Good*