

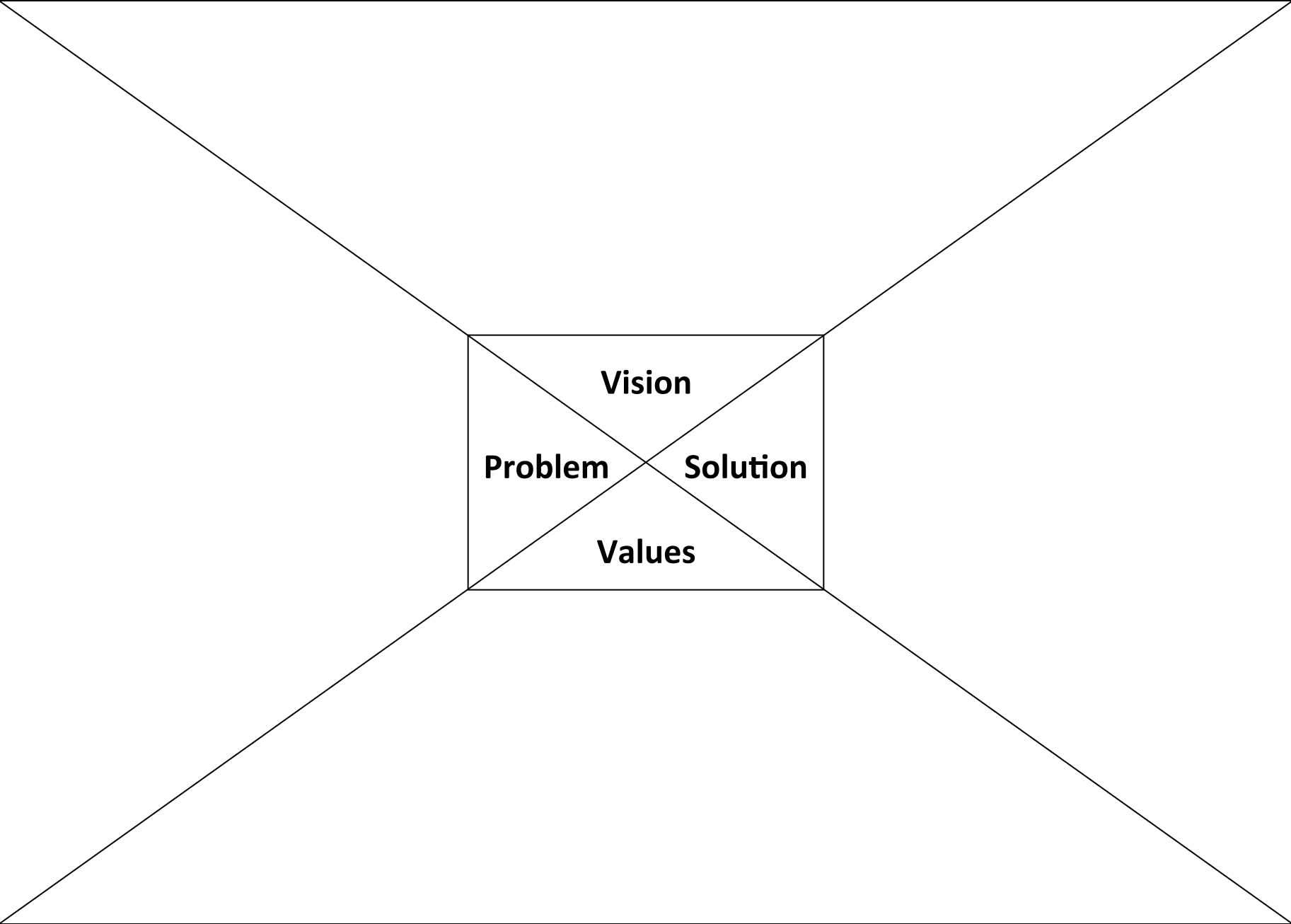
Using a Message Box to Develop Advocacy Tools

Janet Byrd

Alison McIntosh

The Message Box

- A tool to keep you “on message”
- Helps distill your key arguments to the ones you need to repeat over and over.
- Keeps you focused on Level One Values and Solutions
- Gives you the “cheat sheet” for interviews and debates.
- The place you bridge and pivot back to from hard questions and damaging frames.

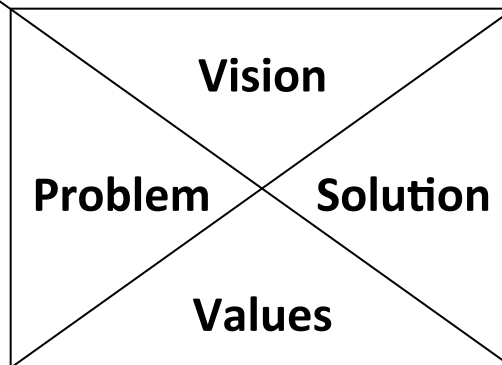


Your vision for the community, state, society. A sense of the purpose and goal that drives you to seek the change you are working for. Your aspiration and inspiration.

A clear statement of the problem you are trying to address in a way that everyone can see their stake in addressing the issue.

The solution you are proposing and the principles or outcomes it is designed to achieve.

The Level One Values that underpin the challenge and your proposed solution. The answer to the “why does it matter” question.



Developing Testimony

- Testimony should be a complete message. Lead with vision and values, end with values.
- Facts, figures, details can be attached as handouts. Use your time to reinforce the big message.
- Remember that legislators have limited time and attention – be brief.
- Coordinate with allies so that together you tell a landscape story.

Message Box: Foreclosure

We all have a stake in addressing the problems our communities and neighbors are facing as a result of the recession. Housing gives people the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Nearly one in five Oregon homeowners is underwater on their mortgage, and one in eleven is either in default or 30-days late in paying their mortgage. Foreclosure is threatening to undermine the foundations of our state and our communities.

Vision
Problem **Solution**
Values

SB 1552, passed by the Oregon State Legislature in 2012, plus the national Attorneys General settlement has given Oregon the opportunity to stem the tide of foreclosures. This important legislation offered us an opportunity to create a system that works for all homeowners. The legislation ensures homeowners in our community are able to access accurate information and to talk with their lender. The Legislature should continue the course set by this legislation to ensure that we stop the havoc and despair created by foreclosure in our communities.

- Mediation,
- Access to Counseling,
- Legal Services.

Innovation! Protection! Opportunity!

In Oregon, we've always pulled together to overcome hardship. We believe in protecting those most affected by the economic downturn. Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. We all have a stake in addressing the problems our communities and neighbors are facing as a result of the recession. Our neighbors and families deserve the opportunity that a safe, stable and affordable place to call home provides.

SB 558

Foreclosure Avoidance Improvements Testimony to Senate General Government

Members of the Committee on General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection
900 Court Street, NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Shields, Vice-Chair George, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 558, which improves Oregon's foreclosure mediation law and ensures that homeowners have access to a resolution conference with the lender prior to either judicial or non-judicial foreclosure proceedings.

The Housing Alliance is a coalition of organizations serving all parts of Oregon. We are concerned about the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing for all Oregon residents. While we are particularly focused as a coalition on advocacy on behalf of Oregonians who have limited incomes, we also know that there is a continuum of housing needs in our communities. Homeownership opportunities for households with modest incomes are an essential piece of the housing continuum. Homeownership still provides the best pathway to household financial resilience and to building a better future for families and communities.

The Housing Alliance supports SB 558 because foreclosure continues to threaten the foundations of our state and our communities. Thousands of Oregon homeowners are still at risk. The most recent numbers indicate that 1 out of 13 are a month or more behind on their mortgages, 132,000 are underwater and far too many Oregonians continue to struggle in communications with their lender.

Vision/Values

Problem

SB 558 draws on best practices to address this. State foreclosure mediation laws have a proven track record of increasing the number of mutually beneficial workouts for homeowners and lenders. This bill requires the largest lenders to participate in a resolution conference with homeowners prior to starting a judicial or non-judicial foreclosure to discuss mutually beneficial alternatives to foreclosure. The bill also contains enforcement authority, necessary because we have seen some lenders refuse to engage in the process to date.

Solution

A robust foreclosure resolution process is one of the best ways to speed up foreclosure timelines, avoid any potential backlog in the courts and create positive outcomes for both homeowners and for the investors who own the loans. SB 558 simplifies and streamlines the administrative requirements for banks and homeowners making the process more efficient and less costly.

Solution

SB 558 would build upon the hard work that has been done to create a strong network of foreclosure counselors and mediators in all Oregon communities. These counselors and mediators are poised to help homeowners understand their options and participate in finding mutually beneficial solutions.

Solution

Housing is the foundation of our communities. SB 558 helps our neighbors and families make the best possible decisions to ensure housing stability and helps ensure the best possible outcomes for all of Oregon.

Vision/Values

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony, and for your work on behalf of Oregon communities.

Asserting a Role for Government: TANF

- Unique challenge – intersection of narratives about government, poverty, dependence
- Negative stereotypes, pitfalls
- Asserting a role for government
- Citizen Thinking

Message Box: TANF

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.
We believe in an Oregon where families and neighbors are supported in times of crisis, and given opportunities to contribute.

During times of economic downturn and hardship, we all have moments of needing assistance, and families often need help to protect themselves and their children. Our basic safety net programs are a life-raft that helps kids families survive hard times, and to help them get back on their feet. Now, more than ever, we need to continue to protect the programs that help us meet the basic needs of all of our Oregon families, children, and communities.

Vision
Problem **Solution**
Values

We need to continue existing efforts and prioritize providing basic needs to help families most affected by the economic downturn throughout Oregon. TANF provides a critical safety net for families across Oregon. Current TANF benefits are already inadequate for families. Additional cuts to this important safety net will make families less secure. Temporary assistance for families can provide a pathway out of a crisis and towards stability and a better future.

We believe in an Oregon where families and individuals live in healthy communities, have opportunities to succeed in life, and those most affected by the economic downturn are protected from the worst of its' impacts. We need a strong safety net to protect families and children, and give children an opportunity to succeed in life.

We all have moments of needing assistance, and families often need help to protect themselves and their children. As a state, we should continue to provide temporary assistance to help families meet their basic needs, solve problems, and remove barriers to getting ahead.

Chair Tomei, Vice-Chair Olson, Vice-Chair Gomberg, Members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. For the record, my name is Alison McIntosh and I am the Policy and Communications Director for Neighborhood Partnerships.

I am here today to speak in support of HB 3440 and its dash 1 amendments, which would restore services and make improvements to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF program, is a program designed to protect families with children and to help them meet their basic needs. It provides a small level of cash assistance plus supportive services to help families address barriers, and return to employment.

Here in Oregon, we have basic safety net systems designed to protect families with children and to help provide essentials. Right now, families are struggling to survive – facing choices like paying rent or buying food and medicine. Our basic safety net programs are a life-raft for kids and families. We need to make sure that temporary assistance is available for families and helps them get back on their feet.

These positive changes, plus reinvestment in other areas of the program will truly help make this a program that both protects families and helps them address barriers and return to employment. We urge your support of HB 3440 with its dash 1 amendments. Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Legislative Visits

(And convincing others to use your messages)

- Legislative visits should present a complete message – Vision and values, need, solution.
- Legislators want to know what is happening in their districts – bring the issue home for them.
- Be ready to use your pivot and safety phrases to get yourself back on message, but take the opportunity to find out what legislators care about.
- The “script” makes it easy for beginners to have a real role .



Visiting Your Legislator

You will have ten to fifteen minutes with your legislator.
Use your time carefully.

Arrive at the meeting location early to meet with your team and divide up roles!

1. Introductions

Introduce each team member, note who is from his/her district, and your interest in or connection to affordable housing

2. There's still a need for affordable housing in your district

Give an example of the need in your area. If you don't have one, pull information from the county fact sheet or preservation "at risk" list in the legislator's briefing packet.

Tell a story – a personal story or one you are familiar with – about the difference that affordable housing can make to an individual or family. **Use values statements (see back).**

3. Walk through selected items on the 2013 Housing Opportunity Agenda

Team leaders have been given information about which issues we'd like you to focus on. In particular, **focus on issues** that are expected to come to committees that legislator sits on.

4. Ask if we can (continue to?) count on their support to help ensure that all Oregonians have a place to call home – leave 5 minutes for this

Ask follow up questions if they don't answer or say they won't support: ask if they have questions or specific concerns. **Don't argue!** Just re-state your main message.

5. Thank them for taking the time to discuss affordable housing. Leave on time.

Problem

Vision/Values

Solution

Message Components

An effective message has three components:

- *What is the problem?*– Give a specific example/proof of the need for affordable housing. Use the county profile sheets.
- *Why should I care?*– Use a value statement (see below)
- *What is the solution?*– Define a specific needed policy step (and action that the listener can take. Our example = the Housing Opportunity Agenda!

Effective Values Statements on Affordable Housing

1. Hardworking people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for groceries and other basic necessities
2. Children deserve an opportunity to succeed in school and life, which is tied to having a stable home
3. Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. To succeed you need a place to call home
4. It's only fair that everyone has a safe, decent place to live

Making it Easy



Foreclosure Prevention and Response

Housing gives people the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their families. We need to help people stay in their homes and prevent foreclosure.

The issue:

Since 2008, we've been in the middle of a housing crisis, and too many Oregonians have lost their homes. Today, many more Oregonians have fallen behind on their home payments or owe more than their home is worth.

In 2012, the Housing Alliance helped pass a bill to make sure homeowners could talk to a counselor or a lawyer, and that they had the opportunity to sit down with their bank before they were foreclosed on. Now, we need to make that law stronger.

Our request:

Pass SB 558 with its -11 amendments. This bill will improve the law we passed in 2012. It will give all homeowners the opportunity to sit down with their bank before they are foreclosed on. Homeowners need good information to make good decisions

Vision/Values

Problem

Solution

Making it Easy

Say this!

What to tell Legislators:

Homeowners in every Oregon community are falling behind on their mortgages, or are living with uncertainty. Foreclosure hurts our state and our communities.

Solution

We should protect Oregon homeowners by doing two things:

- **Passing SB 558 with its -11 amendments gives all homeowners the opportunity to sit down with their bank before they are foreclosed on.**
- **The State Legislature should put more money into making sure all homeowners can talk to a counselor to get help making a good decision, and into making sure Oregonians with low incomes can talk to a lawyer if necessary.**

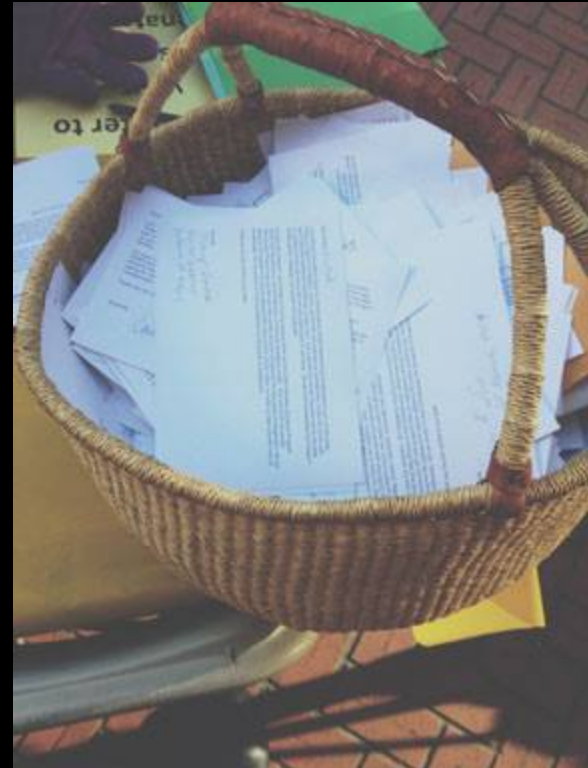
We can end the despair and disruption caused by foreclosure in our communities.

Housing provides everyone with an opportunity to succeed in life. In Oregon, we've always pulled together to overcome hardship. Let's continue to support Oregon homeowners and Oregon communities as they recover.

Vision/Values

Communicating with Legislators

- Make it easy!
- Give people the tools they need.
- Personalize it if possible.
- Make sure people include their name and address.
- Constituents are best.



Message Box: Emergency Housing Account & SHAP

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. We believe in an Oregon where families and neighbors are supported in times of crisis, and given opportunities to contribute.

The economic downturn and its effects are still being felt by too many Oregonians. Prolonged unemployment means that too many of our families and neighbors can't afford to pay their rent and may experience homelessness. We all have critical moments of needing assistance, and too many Oregon families don't have personal safety nets to protect them during these times.

Vision
Problem **Solution**
Values

We believe in an Oregon where families and individuals live in healthy communities and have opportunities to succeed in life. We believe that housing provides children with an opportunity to succeed in life. We believe in an Oregon where we pull together as a community during hard times.

Ending and preventing homelessness for families and individuals throughout Oregon should be one of our highest priorities. We have proven and effective efforts such as the Emergency Housing Account and the State Homeless Assistance Program that work across Oregon. These efficient and flexible programs are able to respond to the needs of our communities and will help end or prevent homelessness for thousands of Oregonians. The Legislature should restore funding to 2007-2009 levels, plus inflation.

Making it easy (continued)

Write a letter to your State Representative and Senator using the following template.

First: Find out who your State Representative and Senator are:

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>

Address: 900 Court St. NE, Salem, Oregon 97301.

Second: Tell them who you are.

Introduce yourself. Talk about your concern for the people experiencing homelessness in your community.

Next, in one or two sentences, briefly share the problem you see – people experiencing homelessness in your community, families needing emergency rent assistance, or a quick fact.

If you don't have your own story of need, feel free to use one of these sentences:

- Today, too many Oregon families have to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table. More than eight in 10 Oregon families with the lowest incomes pay more than half their income for housing.
- Last school year, nearly 20,000 school children in Oregon were homeless at least once during the school year, and nearly one in four Oregon children lived in poverty in 2011.
- A worker earning minimum wage in Oregon had to work more than ten hours a day, seven days a week just to afford a two bedroom apartment in Oregon.

Vision/Values

Problem

Next, use a value statement talking about the importance of having a safe, stable place to call home. Some examples are below, or you can write your own. Try to use values like opportunity, safety, protection, etc.

1. Hardworking people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for groceries and other basic necessities.



Vision/Values

-
2. Children deserve an opportunity to succeed in school and life, which is tied to having a stable home.
 3. Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. To succeed you need a place to call home.
 4. It's only fair that everyone has a safe, decent place to live.

Now, it's time to propose a solution. Below are some sentences you can use in your letter, or to help you get started.

- We have two programs - the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) that provide short term assistance to help prevent or end homelessness. EHA and SHAP also help people who are homeless or fleeing domestic violence to quickly enter safe, stable housing. We can prevent or end homelessness for thousands of Oregonians.
- The Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) help people in our communities prevent or end homelessness. We need more state funding to keep people in housing. We need to make sure that programs that help provide the basics – housing and food—are fully funded.
- EHA and SHAP are proven, effective and efficient programs that can help prevent and end homelessness for thousands of Oregonians. These flexible tools go to serve people in every corner of Oregon and meet people's basic needs.

Last, thank your Legislator for their service to our state and sign your letter!



Solution

Writing a Letter to your Elected Representatives

- Mention the reason for the letter in the first sentence
- Limit the contents to 1 or 2 key points
- Say why it matters (Values), Describe the need (problem), specify what needs to be done and ask those with the power to make it happen to act (Responsibility)
- Use framed messages, and simplifying models, avoid jargon
- Include name, address, & phone number

Media

- Stay inside the box.
- Stay inside the box.
- Stay inside the box.

Problem



Programs for addressing hunger in Oregon do work: Guest opinion

Guest Columnist By Guest Columnist

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on May 18, 2013 at 5:00 AM, updated May 18, 2013 at 5:10 AM

By Alicia Philpot, Bill Hall and Daniel Robertson

Today, too many Oregon families struggle to pay the rent and keep food in their cupboards. During times of economic downturn and hardship, we all might have moments of needing assistance. Fortunately, here in Oregon, there are safety net systems that help people meet their basic needs -- to help them put a roof over their head or put food on the table. These public systems are designed to be as efficient as possible and to be effective at helping people who need assistance. We've chosen to spend our limited resources on very basic assistance -- such as food through the SNAP program.

Periodically, these programs are audited to ensure they are being managed well and that benefits are being delivered accurately to eligible applicants (**"Audit finds Oregonians wrongly getting aid," May 9**). As you can imagine, these are large systems with complicated databases and eligibility processes. And they've been under considerable strain as many more people have needed assistance in the wake of the recession. The recent audit of the Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority by the secretary of state's office has done what it is supposed to do -- highlight areas where the system can be improved to make sure that only those who truly need help are receiving benefits. The good news is that of each \$10,000 we spent helping people meet their basic needs, only \$2 of it was found to be questionable.

Vision/Values

Solution

Problem

Unfortunately, the report does a poor job of recognizing the important policy choices that have streamlined access to basic services, such as food for our children, families and seniors. These choices have not only improved access, but also improved accuracy.

What is most important is that Oregonians have public systems that really do help people get back on their feet. As a state, we've put in place common-sense rules that direct dollars where they are most needed -- supporting Oregonians when they need help. Our systems must be as efficient and effective as possible, without losing sight of the core purpose for these critical programs -- feeding hungry children, their families, seniors and people with disabilities and providing for life's essentials.

Food stamps, or SNAP, help families put food on the table, helping them remain stable and strengthening our communities. Oregon has had a high percentage of people experiencing hunger and food insecurity, and SNAP has been an important strategy for addressing this problem. Today, as a result of the economic downturn, about one in five Oregonians relies on help to feed their families. These Oregonians -- our families, our neighbors, our grandparents -- temporarily rely on this assistance to meet their basic needs. There are many benefits that result. Kids do better in school and are healthier when they don't suffer from hunger. Parents show up in the morning ready to work. And the dollars are spent immediately at our local grocery stores to purchase the basics.

As Oregonians, we should be proud of the fact that we're helping so many hungry people across the state put food on the table for themselves and their families. The Oregon Legislature and the Department of Human Services should be commended for the work they've done to prioritize quickly feeding hungry people.

The recent audit is a reminder that we must make our programs run as efficiently as possible. At the same time, any policy changes we make must not put up unnecessary barriers for our neighbors who still need our help.

Vision/Values

Solution

Solution