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**Modernizing Benefit Systems:  
Opportunities and Challenges**

**NLADA Litigation and Advocacy Leaders Conference**

**July 9, 2016**

# Overview

- WSS and ASAP
- Benefits and challenges of modernization
- What lawyers and advocates can do to promote the benefits and avoid the challenges



# Work Support Strategies

Colorado

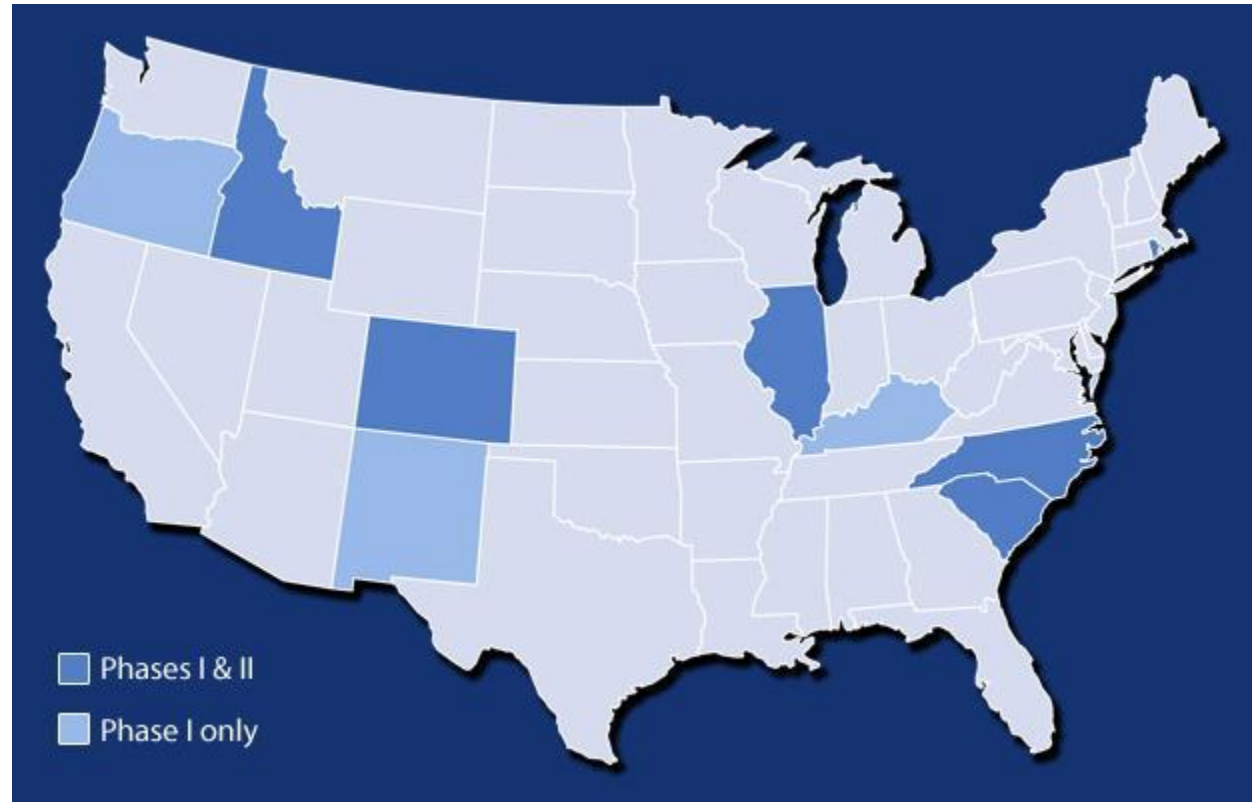
Idaho

Illinois

North Carolina

South Carolina

Rhode Island



# WSS Goals



Improve families' wellbeing by increasing enrollment in the full package of work supports.



Help states deliver benefits more effectively and efficiently



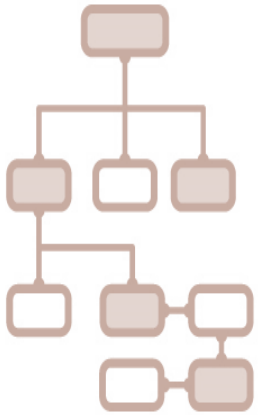
Share lessons learned to inform state and federal policies.

# Advancing Strategies to Align Programs



- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
- Community Legal Services (PA)
- Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (IL)
- Hunger Free Colorado
- New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

# Modernization



Business processes



Policy



Technology & information systems

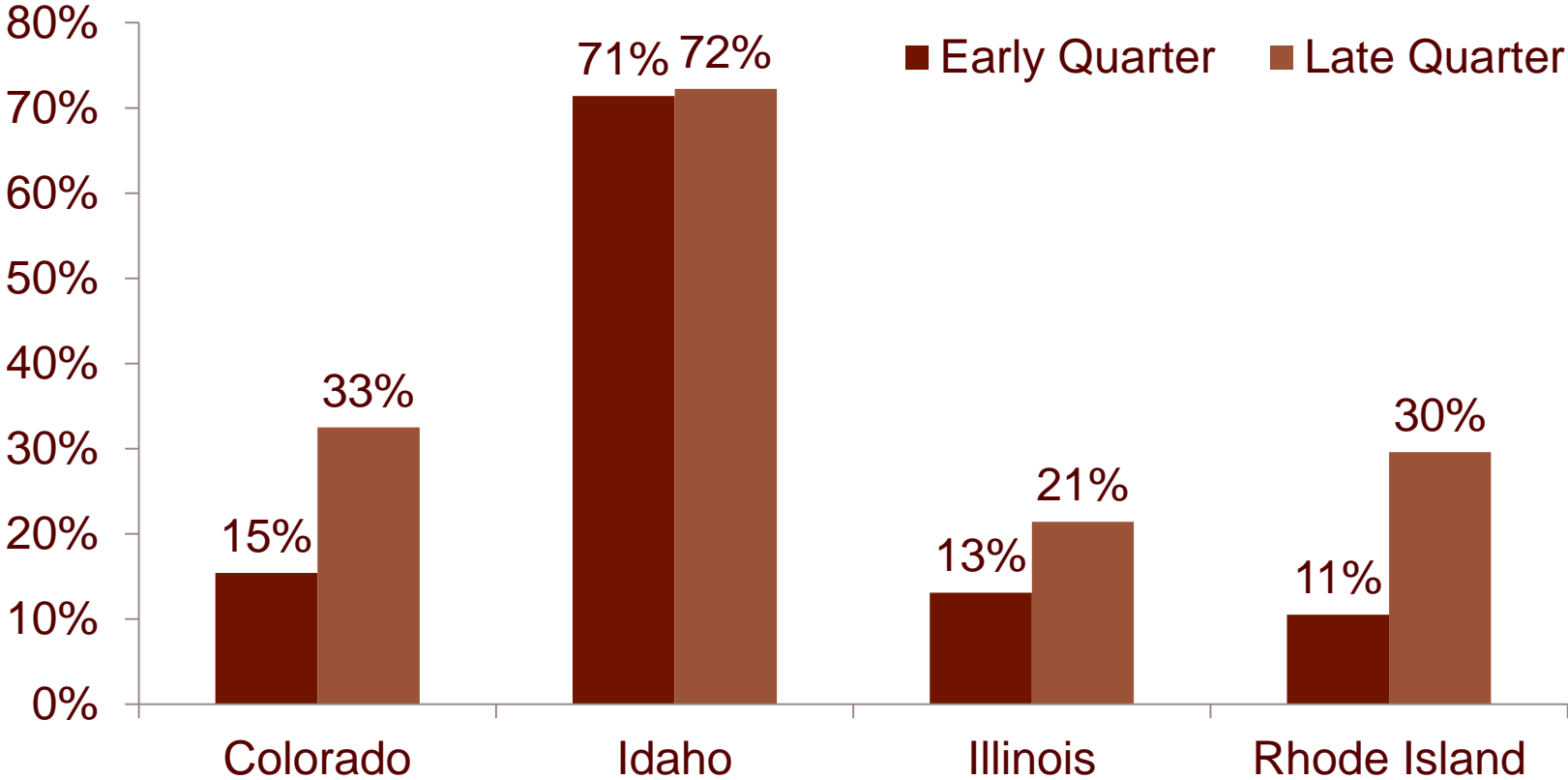


Data analysis and use



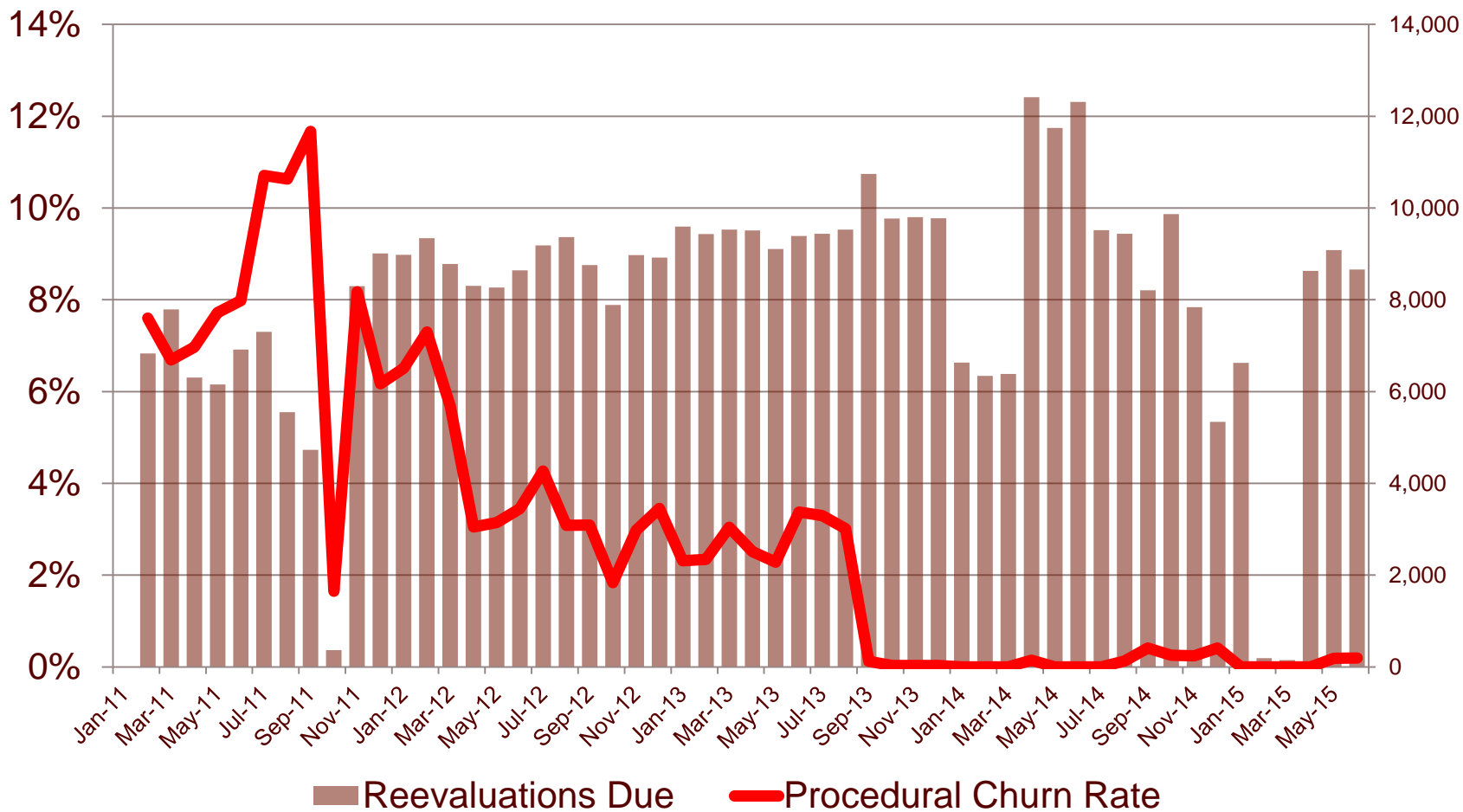
Management & Communication

# Increased Same Day Service



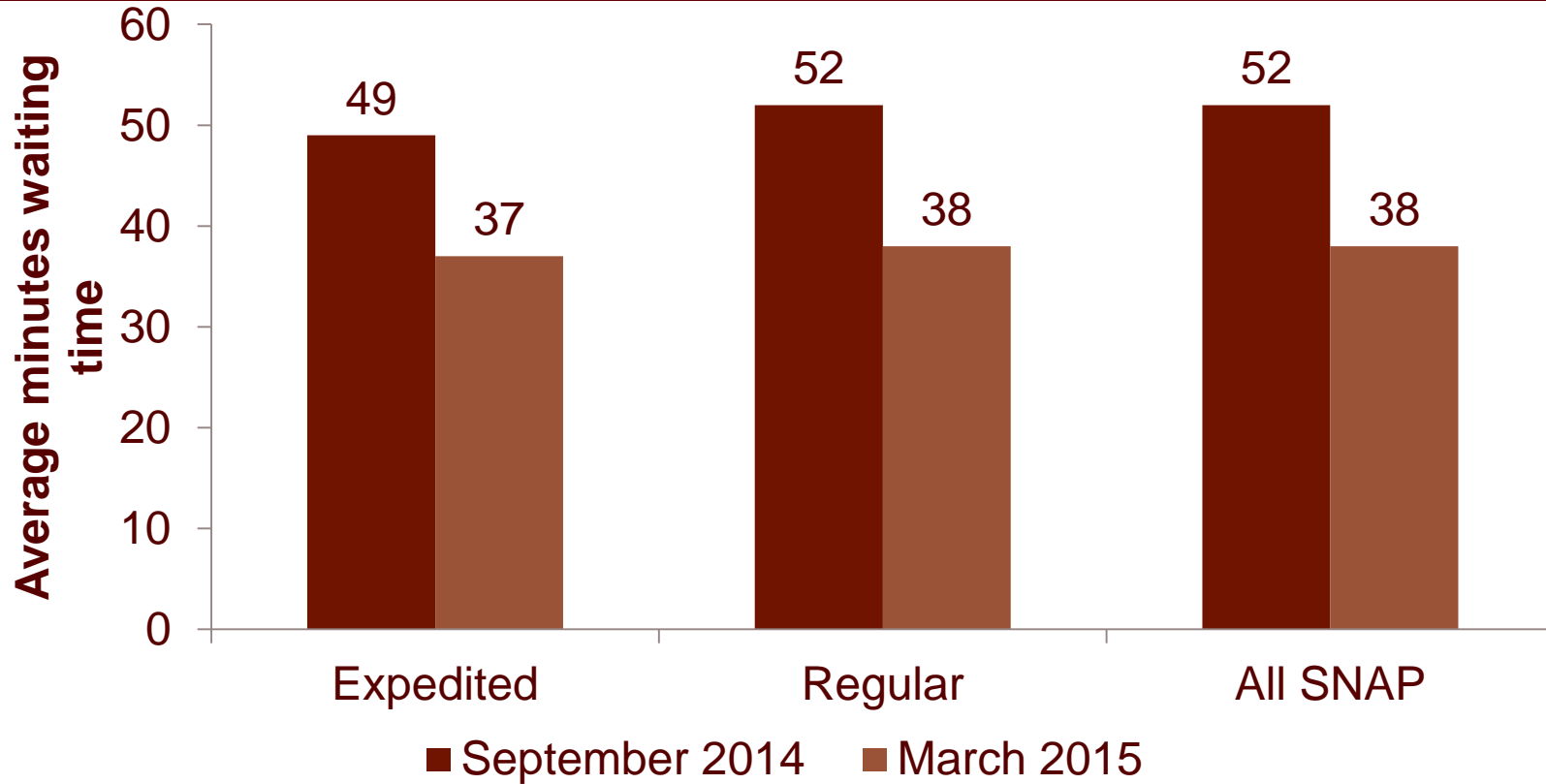
Data not available for SC, NC

# Dramatic reduction of Medicaid churn (Idaho)





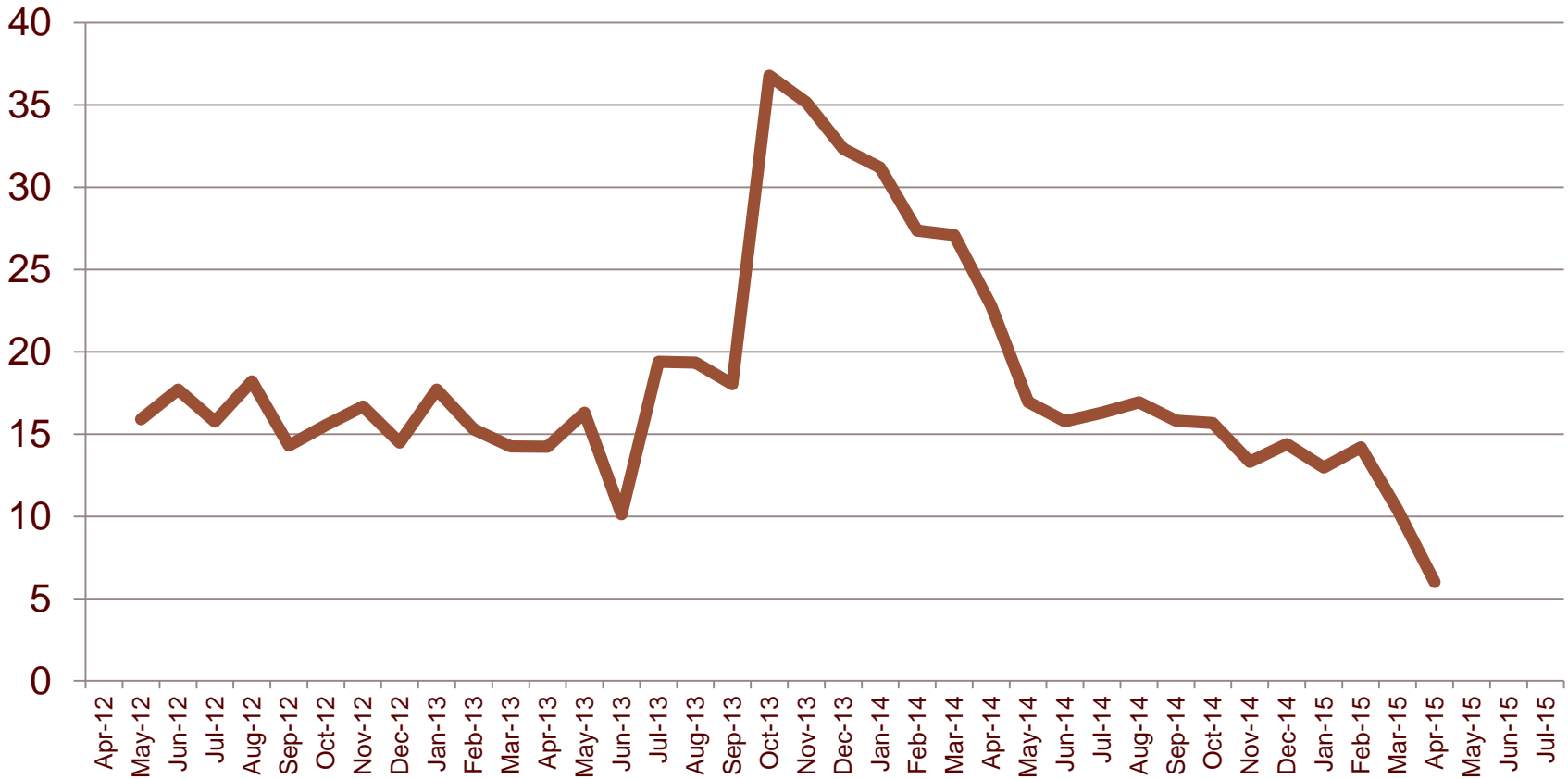
# Reduction in client wait time, SNAP applicants in Illinois



Source: Client experience survey. N= 412 expedited and 223 regular. Responses weighted to adjust for disproportionate sampling of applicants for expedited service.

# Not always smooth rollout

Average days to determine SNAP benefits -- Illinois



TECHNOLOGY

# How A Government Computer Glitch Forced Thousands Of Families To Go Hungry

03/27/2014 07:45 am ET | Updated Mar 27, 2014

4.5k      

 Gerry Smith   
Technology reporter, The Huffington Post



## Despite USDA threat, NC food stamps backlog got worse

Tags: Department of Health and Human Services, Public Assistance

Posted January 10, 2014

 303   Share  

 Reactions



**RALEIGH, N.C.** — The state Department of Health and Human Services acknowledged Friday afternoon that its problematic food stamps system is not improving, despite assurances to federal officials that it was taking steps to fix the massive backlog of overdue cases.

# What Can Advocates Do?

- Public attention
- Bring the client experience to the state
- Push for cross-program planning
- Bring examples of what has worked elsewhere
- Advocate for accountability in vendor contracts
  - E.g. Hold times, dropped calls for phone systems
  - Build review, testing, and improvement cycles into initial contract
- Review and pre-test online applications
  - Readability and ease of client use
  - Compliance with rules re non-applicants
- Collect data on what's working (and what's not)
- Litigate

# Examples from ASAP

- Client surveys
- Public messaging on “SNAP Gap”
- County-level scorecards
- Meeting with agency to discuss RFP on data matching and identity proofing
- Adding SNAP questions to Medicaid application
- Threat of litigation to get attention of state to discuss problems with E&T call-ins
- Litigation

# Challenges

- States may be unwilling to share info
- Requires working across program silos
- Advocates are comfortable working on policy, but often not as familiar with IT, BPR, state-county relationships.
- Balancing inside and outside strategies
- Tolerating transitional problems in order to achieve long-term improvements

# Why bother?

- Opportunity to head off problems “upstream”
- Policies aren’t real unless correctly implemented
- System change takes time
  - “If you wait until a big IT project goes south, it’s too late” – South Carolina
- Clients’ lives don’t fit into silos
- Can lead to deeper change than just complying with federal statutes
  - “People would come into lobbies because they were hungry now... not 30 days from now” -- Idaho

# Advocacy tips

- Have a full wish list, but prioritize
- Think long-term – there will be opportunity for modification
- Establish mechanism for receiving updates
- Applaud the state for things that go well
- Provide cover to the state when needed, if they are trying to do the right thing
- Engage diverse stakeholders who can add to your voice



# Thank you

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