



# REBUILDING THE SAFETY NET FOR THE BLIND, AGED AND DISABLED

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful  
committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it  
is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead**

# MARY JOHNSON, AGE 74

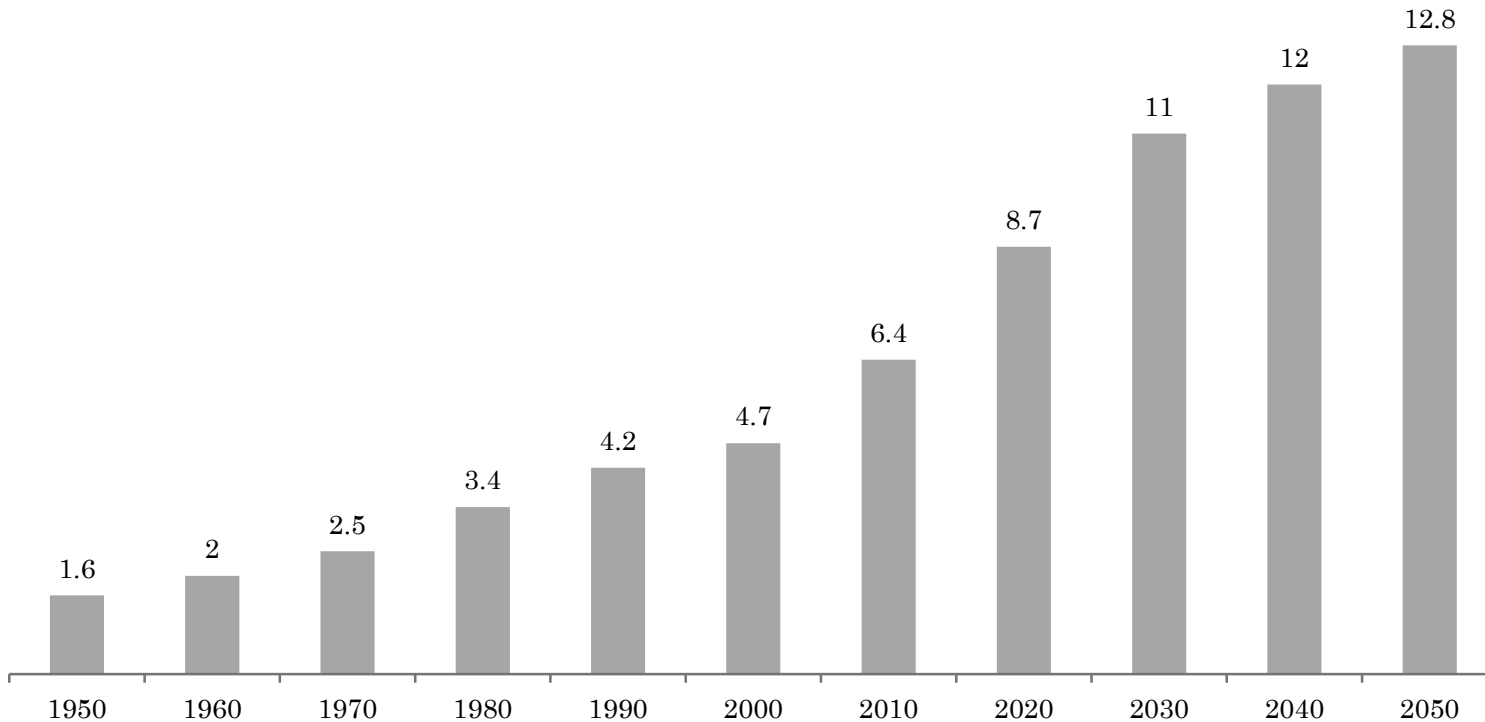


# HUNGER AND POVERTY AMONG SENIORS IN CALIFORNIA

- **California has the highest poverty in the nation** when adjusted for cost of living - **23.8%**
- California also has the **highest poverty rate among seniors** using this measure
  - **1 in 5 California seniors is living in poverty**
  - **56% live on less than 200% SPM!**
- **Food Banks have seen significant increases in seniors** who need help with food
  - In 2009, Alameda County served 47,500 seniors
  - In 2013, we served **111,960**



# CALIFORNIA POPULATION GROWTH AGE 60 AND OVER (IN MILLIONS, ROUNDED)



# WHY IS POVERTY SO HIGH?

“without some sort of policy fix soon, California will be the golden state for only a few” – *The Economist*

- The economic downturn has been long and difficult; recovery has been slow
- At the same time, **\$15 billion has been cut** from our state safety net



# WHAT IS THE SSI/SSP PROGRAM?

- **SSI is federally funded income support** for the blind, aged and disabled, including blind and disabled children.
- **The SSP program is state funded** and supplements SSI benefits
- **Eligibility requirements include:**
  - Age 65 or older, and/or blind, disabled at any age
  - Income/resource limits
  - US citizen or LPR and US resident
- SSI is for individuals who were either ineligible for Social Security or whose benefits could not provide a basic level of income.

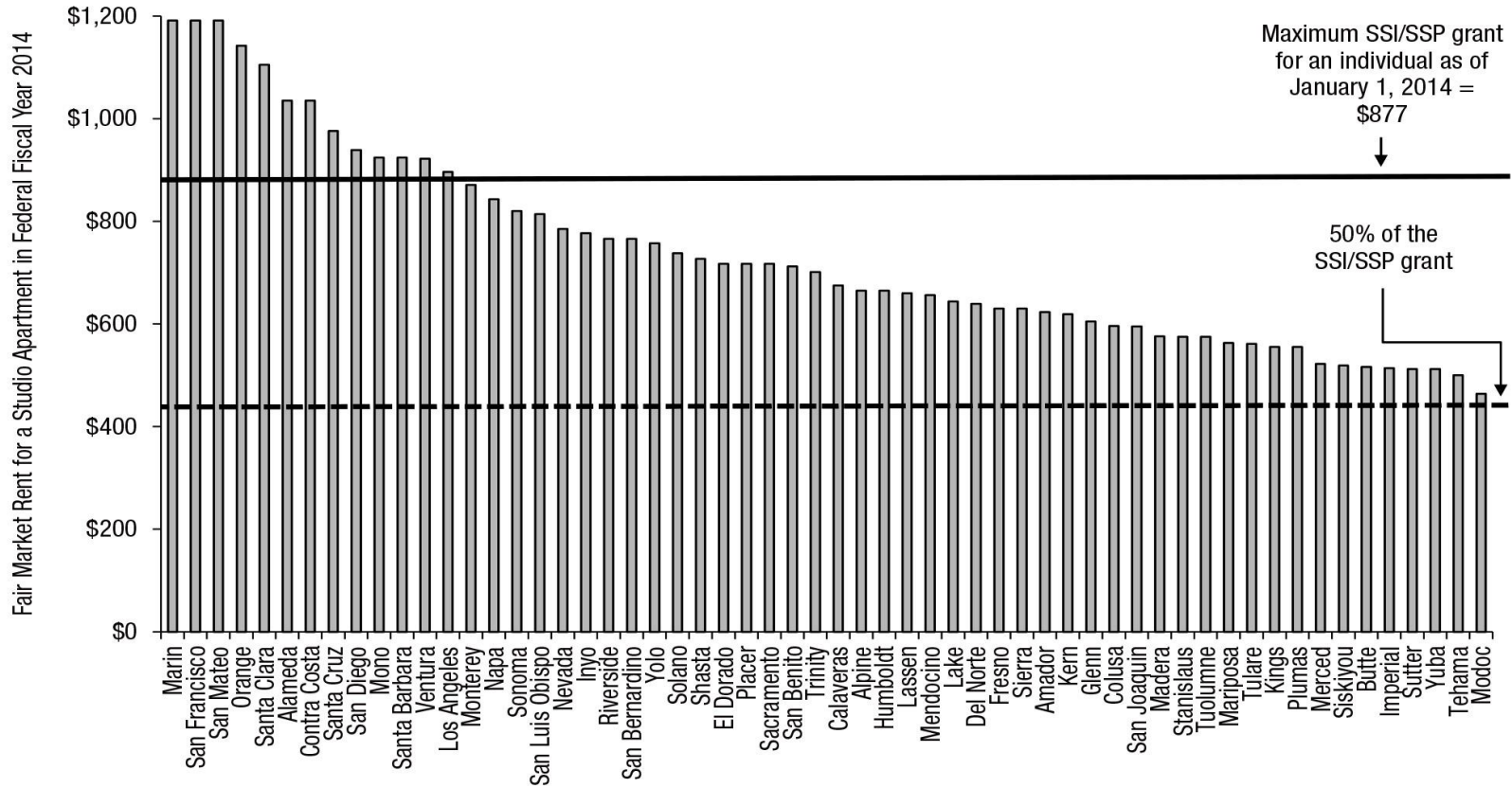


# CURRENT BENEFITS AMOUNTS

- Single people, living alone - \$877.40/month
- Aged and/or disabled couples - \$1,478.20/month
- For a single adult, **SSI/SSP benefits provide** an annual income of **90% federal poverty level**



**Figure 1: Studio Apartment Rent Exceeds One-Half of the SSI/SSP Grant in All 58 Counties and Is Higher Than the Entire Grant in 13 Counties**



Source: Department of Social Services and US Department of Housing and Urban Development



# WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PROGRAM?

- Between **2008 and 2012 \$4.6 billion** was cut from SSI/SSP
  - The state reduced grant amounts by \$77/month
    - SSP grants = \$156/month; at Federal minimum level allowed
  - Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) suspended by the state
    - Federal COLA not passed through
  - Equivalent to a **loss of \$3,600 for 1.3 million recipients**



# LOCAL IMPACT

## Estimated loss of funds 2008-2012

	SSI/SSP recipients	Total funds lost
Alameda County	53,060	\$192,001,000
Contra Costa County	25,180	\$91,105,000
Fresno County	41,550	\$150,355,000
Los Angeles County	414,130	\$1,498,440,000
Orange County	70,750	\$256,007,000
Riverside County	55,950	\$202,454,000
Sacramento County	62,980	\$227,865,000
San Bernardino	67,940	\$245,829,000
San Francisco County	46,590	\$168,570,000
Santa Barbara County	9,680	\$35,022,000
Santa Clara County	47,940	\$173,475,000
Sonoma County	9,790	\$35,423,000
Tulare County	18,960	\$68,613,000
Tuolumne County	1,690	\$6,131,000
Ventura County	16,570	\$59,948,000



# SSI AS AN ANTI-HUNGER PRIORITY

- People who receive SSI in California are not eligible for CalFresh
  - “Cash out”
- Very few resources to meet nutrition needs of seniors
- We can't meet the needs of hungry seniors alone; government must do its part.



# WHAT CAN WE DO?

\$1 billion to lift 1.3 million people  
out of poverty

- Restore grant amounts and reinstate the COLA
  - \$77/month \* 1.3 million recipients + COLA = \$1.2 billion
  - Via the budget/legislative process in Sacramento
- Seek an equitable end to cash out
- All of the above



# THE STATE HAS THE MONEY.. IT'S A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

- California is poised to direct an estimated \$1.8 billion over the next four years to new and expanded business tax breaks, including:
- \$420 million for Lockheed Martin or Northrop Grumman
- \$400 million film and TV production, *annually*
- \$500 million to lure Tesla Motors' "gigafactory"



# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Join our campaign
  - Regional convenings are happening on October 14<sup>th</sup> at California Endowment conference facilities statewide.
- Double your efforts
  - Tell the story
  - Talk with elected officials
- Don't give up!

For more information:

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# QUESTIONS?

**Let us never forget that government is ourselves** and not an alien power over us. **The ultimate rulers of our democracy are** not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but **the voters of this country.**

**- FDR**

