

Unit II Ask Me Why I Care J Fred Silva, Senior Policy Advisor, California Forward Video Transcript

0:11 Most of our work deals with the structure and finance of our community governments and the

0:16 state and their relationship. We come through this difficulty period in the last 20 years or so,

0:21 where the basic structure of California's Government between the, our community government in

0: 29 the state has changed fairly radically. Our old system, the system that many of us grew up with, was

0: 35 relatively neat and simple. The state had particular roles and responsibilities and a revenue source

0:41 to match that. Our community government have roles and responsibilities and a revenue source to

0:47 match that. And over time that system has changed radically. So part of our obligation my role

0:56 at California forward is to begin to rethink both our governance and our finance structure in

1:01 a way that can bring back some basic semblance of order to how community governments are

1:08 operating and how they're financed. There is an old model and I think in public administration that

1:15 I grew up with and others that the responsibility and the financing of that responsibility ought to be

1:22 connected. If you have an obligation to provide a service, you have the obligation to finance that

1:29 service so that if the community wants a broader more active governmental role then they choose

1:34 to finance that role. But we've moved a long way away from that ,where the state provides more

1:40 resources for community governments they can't do that forever, partly because the

1:46 community government sees that, Gee this is free good, we can get an expanded service and have

1:51 the state finance it. So, I think part of our role here is to look at how we can better construct both

1:58 government's responsibilities and the financing of it in a way that's accountable so that citizens of the

2:05 community understand the nature of their governance and the responsibilities of their elected

2:14 officials and those two things are connected. As well as increasing transparency, we've lost a

2:22 significant amount of our transparency when we don't connect services and financial

2:27 responsibilities. I grew up in Southern California both a grandfather who worked for the city of Los

2:33 Angeles and a father who worked for the city of Fullerton and these are in the post war, post World

2:39 War II periods of 50s, 60s and 70s where there was a link between the citizen, those civically

2:49 engaged, and community leaders. They were basically the same thing. So you didn't run for City

2:55 Council. You were simply an active member in participating in community government. And if you

3:00 thought services need to be expanded, then you were part of a group that worked to increase

3:05 taxes if you will, resources, in order to improve those service and again as I mentioned earlier those

3:11 two things were connected. Level of service and the resources needed to provide that level of

3:16 service. My interest in state government and community government, both of those in the, in my

3:26 college years, developed. We had a class where the city manager from the city of Milpitas, Dick

3:35 Delong came to the class and talked about management practices and community governments and

3:41 all of a sudden I realized, hey, I know about this I heard this from my grandfather and my father this

3:48 is very cool. And small anecdote, that was a point in time where I felt I could get into this. This was

3:57 probably a junior or senior year and I thought I'd like to go work for some of these people. And so,

4:05 most city managers in Santa Clara county in that time didn't make a whole lot of money, but Dick

4:09 had some things he wanted done and I offered to go help do some work he wanted to help and

4:18 that got me into some of the municipal practices in the community around where I was going to

4:27 school. And that was basically the bond rail on to working in public policy. But my advice to

4:38 students who are interested in public policy whether it's at the state or local or federal

4:47 level is to first, find an issue that you care about, not a governmental entity necessarily, but an

4:56 issue whether it's health care or criminal justice or environmental policy and find a place that will

5:04 pay you very little and go there and spend a couple of years there. One of the things I recommend

5:12 to students who through internships and fellowship program at the state government level,

5:20 when they come to work for legislators, my suggestion is don't stay here. Learn from it; go back to a

5:28 community and if there's something you care about, go in and work in that field and then come

5:34 here. So as I work with people I try to get them to look inside. Don't just give me, I need a piece of

5:40 information on x go get it, thank you very much. But rather, look inside, of what's involved in it

5:47 because it is like an onion you keep peeling it back and finding more information about it,

5:52 particularly in budget. I've had probably the most fun in the budgeting process. People think

6:00 that it's, that it's a mystery. It is like rocket science it goes up it goes down, and if you understand it,

6:08 and it's all about allocating resources. Then you are allocating resources to different aspects of

6:17 public policy whether it's health or criminal justice or environmental quality and the question that I

6:24 learned long ago is that, that flexibility of the community level is important in order to meet

6:31 community goals if you will and that those goals can't be different than a state wide goal whether

6:39 it's for environmental protection or public safety then our budgeting system and the way we

6:45 allocate our resources needs to support that.