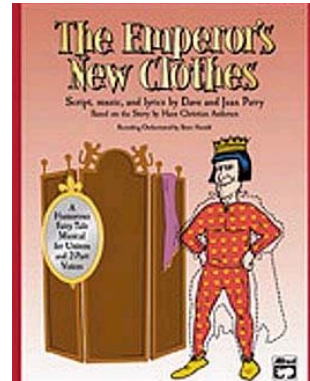


# Fairy Tales, Fraud, and Food Stamps

Once upon a time, California began spending millions to establish a finger print imaging system for food stamps. The State Auditor wrote a very critical report on the system, which should have been enough to close the book on the finger imaging experiment. But fairy tales kept interfering with the facts:



**The Story:** Finger imaging systems are designed to detect only one type of fraud, duplicate aid fraud (aka "double dipping.") In the early 90s, proponents of finger imaging cried "wolf," claiming California was rife with this type of fraud. However, the auditor found that data "do not suggest that duplicate fraud was ever serious enough to warrant a costly fingerprint system." Now a real problem has emerged, but concerns are falling on deaf ears: California's working folks face food stamps hassles that those in other states don't and our state is losing out on hundreds of millions of federal dollars.



**The Story:** When the auditor found no evidence that finger imaging was worthwhile, proponents argued that you won't see the evidence because the deterrent effect of finger imaging is *invisible*. Though almost every other state fights fraud without these added costs or hassles, proponents continued to argue that finger imaging has an *unseen* and immeasurable value over other systems. It has been difficult to get policymakers to agree to say that the "Emperor has no clothes." As a result local charities continue to report that law-abiding folks aren't getting food stamps because they can't miss work to go to the office to get finger printed. Based on USDA research, as many as 88,000 lawful, *eligible* Californians miss out on help because of this hurdle.

## Jack and the Beanstalk



**The Story:** In the 1990's companies that developed finger imaging for the military identified a new market for their product: state public assistance programs. Based on one controversial study in Los Angeles (which the auditor panned), a few states were sold on the product. But most states weren't fooled and didn't sell the cow for the "magic beans" of finger imaging. Over time, audits of the few existing finger imaging programs have shown that there is no "magic" to finger imaging and many states dropped plans before losing the cow. But unlike the fable, there hasn't been a happy ending in California: we continue to waste millions on a system we never needed.

As the Legislative Analyst's Office has said: "If we had to do it all over again, we wouldn't have finger imaging."

*And now the Governor is looking to add a new chapter to this tale.....*

Not only is the Governor fighting to keep the existing system in place, he's looking to expand it to include elderly, blind and disabled Californians receiving In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). Finger printing is a story that doesn't deserve a sequel.

*This tale can have a happy ending if...*

*You call the Governor (916-445-2841) to urge him to accept the Legislature's plan to save millions to by ending finger imaging for food stamps and to abandon his efforts to finger print blind, elderly and disabled Californians receiving IHSS.*

**The moral of this story: "Those Who Forget History Are Doomed to Repeat It."**