In 1992, gay rights activists “were begging Bill Clinton about-- literally--about whether he was going to say the word “gay” in his convention speech. Even say it.” They had “to threaten a walkout to get it in.”1 By the time Barack Obama ran for office in 2008 he promised broader rights for gays and lesbians, and signed legislation making violence against persons based on sexuality a hate crime. But the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy that keeps gays from military recognition, along with a host of benefits that come with legally recognized marriage, were still sticking points. Much had changed in the years that passed between the two administrations. Thinking about citizenship in terms of inclusion and exclusion, we might say that gays and lesbians are better included (have greater input) in the political process but are still excluded from equal rights and recognition in institutions such as the military and marriage. In this case, citizenship is about who gets what, where citizens are measured by their ability to influence the political process and their eligibility for various government programs and aid.

Another way to understand inclusion and exclusion, however, is to re-think the place of individuals and groups in the policy process. Rather than assume citizens stand on either side of the process –on the left, where they make their voice heard like the activists who urged Clinton to say “gay,” or on the right, where they are (in)eligible for various government programs and aid like openly serving in the military--we suggest locating citizens within the process. Americans find themselves within governing when they are called on to carry out various government policies. The state or federal government might call upon citizens to temporarily