



## Studies in the News

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## **ECONOMY**

***Level the Playing Field: Put California's Underground Economy Out of Business.* Little Hoover Commission. Mar. 2015. 140 p.**

<http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/226/Report226.pdf>

"In this review, the Commission found that the tentacles of the underground economy reach deep in California and that it plagues both businesses and workers. The underground economy also robs the state of an estimated \$8.5 billion to \$10 billion in uncollected tax revenue, money that could fund education, law enforcement or long overdue infrastructure investments or reduce taxes for the majority of Californians who play by the rules."

## EDUCATION

***A Look at Funding for Students with Disabilities.* By Michael Griffith. Education Commission of the States. Mar. 2015. 6 p.**

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/17/72/11772.pdf>

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed 40 years ago—guaranteeing all students with disabilities will receive an education under the least restrictive environment possible. This brief highlights the current state of this law and how it is implemented in the states. Two important facts are that the federal government “only provides about one-third of the funds for special education that it has committed to in the original legislation” and that while the “population of students with disabilities is decreasing, the types of disabilities are changing,” such as an increase in students with autism or limited chronic health conditions.

## EMPLOYMENT

***The Status of Women in the States: 2015 Employment and Earnings.* By Cynthia Hess, et al. Institute for Women’s Policy Research. Mar. 2015. 52 p.**

<http://statusofwomendata.org/publications/2015-national-report/>

“Women who work full-time, year-round still earn only 78 cents on the dollar compared with men, and during the last decade little improvement has been made in closing the gender wage gap.... The glass ceiling persists, and occupational segregation—the concentration of women in some jobs and men in others—remains a stubborn feature of the U.S. labor market.... These national trends show up in states across the nation. This report examines women’s earnings and the gender wage gap, women’s labor force participation, and the occupations and industries in which women work. It also considers areas where women have experienced progress toward gender equity in the workforce and places where progress has slowed or stalled.”

## ENERGY

***Regulation of Physical Security for the Electric Distribution System.* By Ben Brinkman, et al. California Public Utilities Commission. Feb. 2015. 57 p.**

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/NR/rdonlyres/930FCC00-BE2F-4BCF-9B68-2CA2CDC38186/0/PhysicalSecurityfortheUtilityIndustry20150210.pdf>

Senate Bill 699 (Hill, Chapter 550, Statutes of 2014) required the California Public Utilities Commission to develop rules for physical security of the electric distribution system. This CPUC staff whitepaper discusses “the current and potential regulatory framework around electric distribution system physical security.” Among the key recommendations is that “[t]he Commission should consider protection of critical security information as part of its regulatory standard development process” and that the Commission rules “should require a risk based approach to physical security planning” in which utilities would report annually on compliance.

## ENVIRONMENT

***Policy Priorities for Managing Drought.*** By Jeffrey Mount, et al. Public Policy Institute of California. Mar. 2015. 10 p.

[http://www.ppic.org/main/publication\\_quick.asp?i=1141](http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1141)

“State, federal, and local water managers have worked diligently to reduce the economic, social, and environmental harm from the current drought. But as the drought continues, the challenges will grow more acute. California can learn from experiences to date—and from Australia’s response to its Millennium Drought—to better prepare both for the year ahead and for future droughts. State leaders should address weaknesses in four areas of drought preparation and response, by: 1) improving water use information, 2) setting clear goals and priorities for public health and the environment, 3) promoting water conservation and more resilient water supplies, and 4) strengthening environmental management.”

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Competing for Jobs: Local Taxes and Incentives.*** By Daniel J. Wilson. FRBSF Economic Letter. Feb. 23, 2015. 4 p.

<http://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2015/february/jobs-state-tax-incentives-economic-growth/el2015-06.pdf>

“State and local governments frequently offer tax incentives to attract businesses to locate in their area. Proponents view these incentives as a valuable tool to encourage economic development. Critics, on the other hand, argue either that incentives have little effect on business location decisions—and hence are wasteful giveaways—or that their benefits come at the expense of reduced economic activity in other areas. A key element in this debate is distinguishing what is best from a local versus a national perspective.” The author suggests that failure to do so can often cloud the real issues and hinder the policy debate.

## HEALTH

***Improving the Health of Agricultural Workers and Their Families in California.*** By Mark B. Schenker, et al. UC Global Health Institute. Feb. 24, 2015. 32 p.

<http://www.ucghi.universityofcalifornia.edu/docs/ucghi-ag-work-paper-2015.pdf>

“Farm workers are subject to the same range of illnesses and chronic diseases as is the general population, however, there is evidence that they are at increased risk for occupational acute injury, certain chronic diseases, and pesticide illness.... The major underlying factor affecting chronic disease risk is low socio-economic status. This may be further influenced by low educational levels, poor housing conditions, and reduced public health services.” This paper recommends ways to improve health outcomes for California farm workers, such as establishing dedicated state funding for access to healthcare, and enhancing preventive and primary care services.

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Receipt for Households: 2000–2013.*** By Tracy A. Loveless. U.S. Census Bureau. Mar. 2015. 8 p.

<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/acs/acsbr13-08.pdf>

“This report presents data on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) receipt at the national and state levels based on the annual American Community Survey (ACS) from 2000 to 2013....

[T]he number and percentage of American households receiving SNAP benefits in 2013 decreased significantly from the previous year.... The states with the highest SNAP participation rate in 2013 were Oregon (19.8%) and Mississippi (19.4%).... California, Illinois, and South Dakota were the only states to have significant increases in SNAP receipt between 2012 and 2013.” However, California still had a lower SNAP participation rate (9.4%) than the national average (13.5%) in the 2013 ACS.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

***The Shrinking Middle Class, Mapped State by State.* By Tim Henderson. Pew Charitable Trusts. Mar. 19, 2015.**

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2015/3/19/the-shrinking-middle-class-mapped-state-by-state>

“The struggles of middle-class American families and growing income inequality have risen to the top of the national agenda. A new Stateline analysis shows that in all 50 states, the percentage of ‘middle-class’ households—those making between 67% and 200% of the state’s median income—shrank between 2000 and 2013. The change occurred even as the median income in most states declined, when adjusted for inflation.” This interactive web tool from Pew illustrates the change in middle class standing from 2000 to 2013, by state. Hover over an individual state to get statistics on median income trends, size of the middle class, and the percentage of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

***Tracking & Hacking: Security & Privacy Gaps Put American Drivers at Risk.* Staff of Senator Edward J. Markey. Feb. 2015. 14 p.**

[http://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2015-02-06\\_MarkeyReport-Tracking\\_Hacking\\_CarSecurity%202.pdf](http://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2015-02-06_MarkeyReport-Tracking_Hacking_CarSecurity%202.pdf)

This report analyzes security measures needed to protect drivers against hackers who may be able to seize information stored in a vehicle in violation of a driver’s privacy. “In order to better understand the ability of automobile companies to protect the safety and privacy of drivers, letters were sent to 20 major automobile manufacturers with questions regarding technology, security precautions, and privacy policies. The questions posed were identical for each manufacturer.... The diversity of responses ... shows that each manufacturer is handling the introduction of new technology in very different ways, and for the most part these actions are insufficient to ensure security and privacy for vehicle consumers.”

## VETERANS

***The State of the American Veteran: The Orange County Veterans Study.* By Carl Andrew Castro, et al. USC School of Social Work. Feb. 2015. 54 p.**

[http://cir.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OC-Veterans-Study\\_USC-CIR\\_Feb-2015.pdf](http://cir.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OC-Veterans-Study_USC-CIR_Feb-2015.pdf)

“Many service members leaving the military and relocating to Orange County are not prepared for the transition. Many leave the service without a job, without permanent housing being identified, and with significant unmet physical and psychological health issues.... Presently, there is not a single veteran support agency that can adequately meet such a wide range of veteran needs.” This report outlines ways to bring awareness of separating service members to local communities, as well as improve outreach to friends, family members, and potential employers.

### **About *Studies in the News***

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