

Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Time Served: The High Cost, Low Return of Longer Prison Terms. Pew Center on the States. June 2012. 65 p.

http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2012/Prison_Time_Served.pdf

Increasing prison terms in the 1980s and 1990s accounted for about one-quarter to one-third of the crime rate drop. However, we may have reached a tipping point where longer terms no longer mean increased public safety. Using empirical data from three states (FL, MA, and MI), researchers find that sentences for non-violent offenders could be shortened by three months to two years without impacting public safety. Had these shorter terms been in place in 2004, this would have saved the three states involved in the study as much as \$174 million a year.

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

Looking Forward: Immigrant Contributions to the Golden State 2012. California Immigrant Policy Center. June 2012.

<https://caimmigrant.org/contributions.html>

“According to the 2008-2010 American Community Survey, more than one quarter (27%) of California residents are immigrants, a rate higher than any other state and significantly higher than New York which has the second highest rate at 22%.” This series of short reports captures the latest demographic information on California immigrants by region, and discusses trends in education, civic participation and the labor market among the state’s immigrant population.

ECONOMY

“Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2007 to 2010: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances.” By Jesse Bricker, et al. *Federal Reserve Bulletin*, vol. 98, no. 2 (June 2012) pp. 1-80.

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/bulletin/2012/PDF/scf12.pdf>

“The recent economic crisis left the median American family in 2010 with no more wealth than in the early 1990s, erasing almost two decades of accumulated prosperity.... A hypothetical family richer than half the nation’s families and poorer than the other half had a net worth of \$77,300 in 2010, compared with \$126,400 in 2007.... The crash of housing prices directly accounted for three-quarters of the loss.... The average income of the wealthiest families fell much more sharply than the median, indicating that some of those at the very top of the ladder slipped down at least a few rungs.” *New York Times* (June 11, 2012).

EDUCATION

Higher Education: Improved Tax Information Could Help Families Pay for College. U.S. Government Accountability Office. May 2012. 97 p.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/590970.pdf>

In 2009, 18 million families claimed tax benefits for higher education expenses. Using IRS data, the GAO [Government Accountability Office] discovered that 14% of their studied group failed to claim a deduction that they were apparently entitled to, losing an average of \$466. An opportunity exists to better promote use of these tax deductions, both at the state and federal levels.

Public Education Finances: 2010. By Mark Dixon. U.S. Census Bureau. June 2012. 148 p.

<http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/10f33pub.pdf>

California ranks 35th among the states in per-pupil spending using absolute dollars. It ranks 42nd in per-student spending as a share of per-capita income. California spends \$1,200 a year less per pupil than the average state. A greater percentage of California’s school funding comes from federal and state sources in comparison to other states, reflecting the impact of Proposition 13. “The report includes all sources of income, including federal funds, whereas in state budget scoring, only state and local funds are counted and about \$4 billion in state payments on school construction bonds and teachers’ pensions are excluded.”

ENERGY

Renewable Electricity Futures Report. National Renewable Energy Laboratory. June 2012. 4 vols.
http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re_futures/

“The Renewable Electricity Futures Study is an initial investigation of the extent to which renewable energy supply can meet the electricity demands of the contiguous United States over the next several decades. This study includes geographic and electric system operation resolution that is unprecedented for long-term studies of the U.S. electric sector.” The four-volume report covers a wide range of issues on the topics of renewable electricity generation, storage and usage.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Where the Wild Things Aren't: Making the Delta a Better Place for Native Species. By Peter Moyle, et al. Public Policy Institute of California. June 2012. 55 p.
http://www.pplic.org/content/pubs/report/R_612PMR.pdf

“The ‘Reconciled Delta’ described in this report represents our collective judgment on how to approach the management of the Delta’s water and land resources in a manner that might *realistically* achieve the California legislature’s co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem protection for the Delta as an evolving place.... We focus on the most technically vexing aspect of this problem: defining and maintaining essential ecosystem functions so that populations of endangered or threatened aquatic species will recover to sustainable levels and other native species will continue to thrive.”

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

How Stockton Went Bust: A California City’s Decade of Policies and the Financial Crisis that Followed. By Sydney Evans, et al. California Common Sense. June 2012. 14 p.
<http://cacs.org/images/dynamic/articleAttachments/12.pdf>

“In February, 2012, Stockton, California voted to enter bankruptcy mediation. Stockton is one of California’s 20 largest cities, and it would be the nation’s largest city to go bankrupt in history. Its story highlights the pressures on local governments in the aftermath of the 2007 recession and the looming threat of further bankruptcies. This report strives to understand the causes behind Stockton’s present financial crisis and to explain some of the more esoteric financial details in plain language.”

HEALTH

2012 Milliman Medical Index: Healthcare Costs for American Families in 2012 Exceed \$20,000 for the First Time. Milliman. May 2012. 14 p.
<http://publications.milliman.com/periodicals/mmi/pdfs/milliman-medical-index-2012.pdf>

“The annual Milliman Medical Index (MMI) measures the total cost of healthcare for a typical family of four covered by preferred provider plan (PPO). The 2012 MMI cost is \$20,728, an increase of \$1,335, or 6.9% over 2011.” According to the authors, this is the first year the index has surpassed \$20,000.

HUMAN SERVICES

“Clean Needles and Bad Blood: Needle Exchange as Morality Policy.” By Elizabeth A. Bowen.
Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2012) pp. 121-141.

http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/newsletters_journals/jssw_institutional/institutional_subscribers/39.2.Bowen.pdf

“Analysis of needle exchange as a morality policy provides an explanation for the endurance of the 21-year-long ban on federal funding for needle exchange.... Morality policy analysis demonstrates that policy issues that can be framed in moral terms – and in particular, issues related to “sinning,” such as drug abuse ... are not ultimately driven by the quality of research evidence or the testimony of experts.”

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Economic Impact of Caltrain Modernization. Bay Area Council Economic Institute. June 2012.
39 p.

<http://documents.bayareacouncil.org/caltrainecon.pdf>

“With a new commitment of funding from the California High-Speed Rail Authority, Caltrain believes that by 2019 it can convert to electric power and install a new advanced train control system.... This report addresses the short-term and the long-term economic implications of installing the upgraded power and communications systems. Taken together, the construction benefits along with the long-term benefits would provide mid-range economic benefits in the state by an estimated \$2.0 billion. These estimates are reached by adding gross regional product, state and local taxes, increases in residential property values, increased property tax collections, and the value of time saved by Caltrain riders.”

About *Studies in the News*

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