

Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

***Do Race and Ethnicity Matter in Prosecution? A Review of Empirical Studies.* By Besiki Kutateladze, et al. Vera Institute of Justice. June 2012. 24 p.**

<http://www.vera.org/files/race-and-ethnicity-in-prosecution-first-edition.pdf>

A review of 34 peer-reviewed studies suggests that race and ethnicity impact the decision-making process of prosecutors. "However, the effect of race and ethnicity on prosecutorial decision-making is inconsistent; furthermore, it is not always blacks or Latinos and Latinas who receive more punitive treatment. While a greater number of studies found that minority defendants are more likely to be prosecuted, held in pretrial detention, and receive other harsh treatment, researchers also found proof of prosecutors treating white defendants more harshly for certain offenses and at certain discretion points. In other words, the research findings vary noticeably by the type of data and analyses used."

Summary of Discipline Statistics – California Trial Court Judges, 1990-2009. By Russell Ganzi, et al. State of California Commission on Judicial Performance. June 2012. 42 p.
http://cjp.ca.gov/res/docs/miscellaneous/Statistical_Report_1990-2009.pdf

The number of disciplinary actions taken against California trial court judges by the Commission on Judicial Performance during 2000-09 was 40% lower than the preceding decade. The main source of decline lies in a major reduction in the number of confidential “advisory letters,” which admonish a judge for minor misconduct under the Code of Judicial Ethics. Complaints filed against judges were essentially unchanged (0.7-0.8 complaints per judge per year in each decade). The study notes that the decline may be due to a 1999 California Supreme Court decision that advisory letters constituted formal disciplinary actions rather than informal or advisory actions.

ECONOMY

California Economic Summit: Action Plan. California Forward and California Stewardship Network. July 2, 2012. 46 p.
<https://cafwd.box.com/shared/static/636540f3e0ca1b37b154.pdf>

The 2012 *Summit Action Plan* provides a roadmap to promote California jobs and competitiveness. Prepared by leaders from across California, it identifies specific actions that can be taken at the state and local level to promote job growth and competitiveness by “streamlining regulation, modernizing the California Environmental Quality Act, preparing a qualified workforce, etc.” (*Capitol Morning Report*, July 3, 2012).

EDUCATION

Deregulating School Aid in California: Revenues and Expenditures in the Second Year of Categorical Flexibility. By Jennifer Imazeki. RAND. June 2012. 70 p.
http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1229z1.html

“A large share of state [education] funding is allocated through categorical programs; that is, programs whose funding is contingent on districts using the money in a particular way or for a particular purpose. In 2008-09, the strings were taken off 40 of those [Tier 3] programs ... as part of a budget deal that also reduced funding for those programs.” Data show that districts with relatively more Tier 3 funding were not disproportionately affected by the state’s budget crisis. On average, districts do not appear to be making large-scale changes in how they spend their money.

Student Achievement. By Josh Cunningham. National Conference of State Legislatures. June 2012. 6 p.
<http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/CharterSchoolStudentAchievement.pdf>

It remains unclear if students in charter schools systematically outperform their peers in traditional public schools. This brief reviews key studies of charter school academic performance and finds mixed results. Early reviews of charter schools suggested they outperformed public schools, but when socioeconomic factors were controlled for, some of these performance differences disappeared. Other studies showed that early in their development, charter schools underperformed compared to traditional schools. Overall, “[t]he state’s most significant role in improving charter school student achievement is to create strong mechanisms that both promote replication of high-performing charter schools and ensure that low-performing charter schools are identified and held accountable.”

ENERGY

California Solar Initiative Annual Program Assessment. California Public Utilities Commission. June 2012. 68 p.

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/NR/rdonlyres/0C43123F-5924-4DBE-9AD2-8F07710E3850/0/CASolarInitiativeCSIAnnualProgAssessmtJune2012FINAL.pdf>

“In 2011, California became the first state in the U.S. to surpass the gigawatt (1,000 megawatts) mark for installed customer-generated solar capacity. Today, 115,000 sites across the state host solar systems to serve on-site load. A record 311 megawatts were installed statewide in 2011 alone. The California Solar Initiative program maintained record growth in 2011 and into 2012, despite cooling market effects of declining incentives.”

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Mid-Century Warming in the Los Angeles Region. By Alex Hall, et al. UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. June 2012. 47 p.

<http://c-change.la/pdf/LARC-web.pdf>

“Climate change will cause temperatures in the Los Angeles region to rise by an average of 4 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit by the middle of this century, tripling the number of extremely hot days in the downtown area and quadrupling the number in the valleys and at high elevations.” This study provides “specific climate-change predictions for the greater Los Angeles area, with unique predictions down to the neighborhood level.... The data covers all of Los Angeles County and 30 to 60 miles beyond, including all of Orange County and parts of Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside counties, and reaching as far as Palm Springs, Bakersfield and Santa Barbara.” (UCLA News Release, June 21, 2012).

Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future. By Committee on Sea Level Rise in California, Oregon, and Washington, et al. National Research Council. June 2012. 250 p.

Free prepublication download at: http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13389

Commissioned by California, Oregon, Washington and several federal agencies, this report is the closest look yet at how global warming – which causes ocean water to expand and ice to melt – will raise sea levels along the West Coast. “Sea levels along the California coast are expected to rise up to 1 foot in 20 years, 2 feet by 2050 and as much as 5 1/2 feet by the end of the century, climbing slightly more than the global average and increasing the risk of flooding and storm damage.... That’s because much of California is sinking, extending the reach of a sea that is warming and expanding because of climate change.” (*Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2012).

HOUSING

California Foreclosures: New Data Support Policy Reforms to Encourage Effective Loan Modifications and Prevent Avoidable Foreclosures. Center for Responsible Lending. June 2012. 7 p.

<http://www.responsiblelending.org/california/ca-mortgage/policy-legislation/June-2012-California-Foreclosure-Brief-6-25.pdf>

The need for legislation to create a fairer, more transparent foreclosure process is emphasized in this policy brief. Key findings include: 1) loan modifications work – 80% of California borrowers receiving a permanent loan modification in 2010 remain current on their loans and have avoided foreclosure; 2) large numbers of borrowers are still at risk, including nearly 700,000 homeowners or 11% of all loans in

California; and 3) people of color are most likely to be at risk, with the delinquency rate for both Latinos and African-Americans exceeding 10%. Southern California regions continue to lead the state in both foreclosure rates and foreclosure volume.

HUMAN SERVICES

Physical Therapy Board of California: Although It Can Make Improvements, It Generally Processes Complaints and Monitors Conflict-of-Interest Requirements Appropriately. California State Auditor. June 2012. 47 p.

<http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2011-119.pdf>

Though the Physical Therapy Board does comply with the evaluated standards, there are some areas where costs could be reduced and compliance improved. Recommendations include exploring the feasibility of replacing consultants with State positions to reduce costs; formally evaluating consultants for effectiveness using performance measures and benchmarks; and establishing procedures to ensure that all board members receive orientation training, and all employees, board members, and other relevant individuals receive ethics training. Ethics training needs to be documented, and ethics training certificates should be retained for the mandated five years.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations: Federal Coordination Efforts Could Be Further Strengthened. Government Accountability Office. GAO-12-647. June 2012. 56 p.

<http://gao.gov/assets/600/591707.pdf>

Eighty federal programs fund transportation services for transportation-disadvantaged individuals, including those who are elderly, have disabilities or have low incomes. The Department of Transportation administers seven programs, while the remaining 73 are administered by seven other federal agencies. Total federal spending for these programs is unknown. To promote and enhance federal, state, and local coordination activities, the GAO recommends that the Secretary of Transportation and the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility meet to complete and publish a strategic plan, report on progress on recommendations made by the Council in 2005 and develop plans to address outstanding recommendations.

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