

Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

***Performance Incentive Funding: Aligning Fiscal and Operational Responsibility to Produce More Safety at Less Cost.* Vera Institute of Justice. Nov. 2012. 24 p.**

<http://www.vera.org/files/performance-incentive-funding-report.pdf>

Often (as is the case in California), the entity responsible for committing someone to prison is different from the entity bearing the costs of incarceration. Performance Incentive Funding (PIF) programs are “premised on the idea that if the supervision agency or locality sends fewer low-level offenders to prison – thereby causing the state to incur fewer costs – some portion of the state savings should be shared with the agency or locality. With PIF, agencies or localities receive a financial reward for delivering fewer prison commitments through reduced recidivism and revocations that, in turn, must be reinvested into evidence-based programs in the community.... The report suggests that including multiple measures to evaluate performance and determine eligibility for incentive funding, rather than focusing on just the single outcome of reduced prison commitments, will ensure that public safety is protected while positive outcomes are still achieved.”

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

Social Media and Voting: 22% of Registered Voters Have Announced Their Vote For President on Social Media Like Facebook or Twitter. By Lee Rainie. Pew Internet Project. Nov. 6, 2012. 6 p.
http://www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP_TheSocialVote_PDF.pdf

“Social media is a significant part of the process by which voters are talking about their ballot selections, especially younger voters: 22% of registered voters have let others know how they voted on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter.... Some 29% of those under age 50 have announced to their networks through social media how they voted or planned to vote, compared with 17% of those 50 and older who have revealed their vote by social media.”

ECONOMY

How Can Trade Policy Help America Compete? By Robert Z. Lawrence. Peterson Institute for International Economics. Number PB12-21. Oct. 2012. 7 p.
<http://www.piie.com/publications/pb/pb12-21.pdf>

“America deserves credit for not having succumbed to the global financial crisis by repeating the protectionist mistakes of the 1930s. Nonetheless, since 2007, although lip service has been paid to boosting US exports, its trade policy accomplishments have been modest. This is unfortunate because active trade policies [can] facilitate America’s return to full employment and sustained growth.... This policy brief argues that the United States needs new initiatives to ... improve the administrative and regulatory environment for trade, and assist workers and communities adversely affected by change.” (PIIE Update Newsletter, Nov. 6, 2012).

EDUCATION

How Strong are U.S. Teacher Unions? A State-by-State Comparison. By Amber M. Winkler, et al. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Oct. 2012.
<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/how-strong-are-us-teacher-unions.html>

“The study analyzed factors ranging from union membership and revenue to state bargaining laws to campaign contributions, and included such measures such as the alignment between specific state policies and traditional union interests and a unique stakeholder survey. The report sorts the fifty-one jurisdictions into five tiers, ranking their teacher unions from strongest to weakest and providing in-depth profiles of each.” Overall, California ranks 6th out of 50 for teacher union strength.

EMPLOYMENT

A Dime a Day: The Impact of the Miller/Harkin Minimum Wage Proposal on the Price of Food. By Chris Benner, et al. The Food and Labor Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley and The Food Chain Workers Alliance & The Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC-United). Oct. 24, 2012. 16 p.
http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/foodlaborresearch/price_food12.pdf

“In our analysis, we take a conservative approach, making a number of assumptions that likely overstate the ultimate impact on consumer prices. Nonetheless, we find that while the Miller/Harkin bill would provide a 33% wage increase for regular minimum wage workers and would more than double the wages

of tipped workers over the same period, retail grocery store food prices would only increase by an average of less than half a percent over the three-year phase-in of the new minimum wage, and restaurant food prices would increase by less than 1% per year.”

***The Problem with Structural Unemployment in the U.S.* By Dean Baker. Center for Economic and Policy Research. Oct. 2012. 6 p.**

<http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/structural-unemployment-2012-10.pdf>

Current unemployment figures may be due to a lack of regional demand rather than a lack of skilled workers. “Some analysts contend that the workers who are unemployed suffer from being in the wrong locations. While there may be few jobs in places like Nevada or central California, which were hard hit by the collapse of the housing bubble, there are labor shortages in other areas of the country.” However, while there are areas of the country that are short in the supply of certain types of labor, “[e]ven if workers could be quickly transferred from the areas of high unemployment to the areas of low unemployment it would have little overall impact on the national unemployment rate.” Decision makers should craft policy aimed at increasing demand such as Federal Reserve Action or lowering the value of the dollar rather than focusing resources on improving workers’ skills.

ENERGY

***Evaluating the Energy Consumed for Water Use in the United States.* By Kelly T. Sanders, et al. Environmental Research Letters. Sep. 20, 2012. 11 p.**

http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/7/3/034034/pdf/1748-9326_7_3_034034.pdf

A recent report on energy use in the U.S. finds that as much as 12.6% of the nation’s total annual energy consumption is devoted to delivering water. “The study focused on each aspect of water delivery, including pumping from natural sources, building and maintaining reservoirs, treating the water for safety and then pumping it to individual residences and businesses, including those in the industrial sector.... At its end, the study found that water treatment and delivery is one of the most expensive public endeavors in the United States, requiring an amount of annual energy equivalent to the annual consumption of 40 million Americans.” (*Consumer Energy Report*, 10/31/12).

ENVIRONMENT

***Environmental Exposures in Early Childhood Education Environments.* By Asa Bradman, et al. California Air Resources Board and Cal EPA. Oct. 2012. 423 p.**

http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/single-project.php?row_id=64830

In a study of 40 Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers, 35 of them (87.5%) detected levels of chemical pollutants above California guidelines. In most of the facilities the levels of formaldehyde was identified as a particular concern. Other identified pollutants were acetaldehyde, benzene, chloroform, and ethylbenzene, all of which exceeded Proposition 65’s Safe Harbor Levels in a significant number of facilities. Less often, phthalates, flame retardants, pesticides, perfluorinated compounds, and lead were detected either in the dust and/or the air. The authors conducted a risk screening, but did not consider mixed exposure to multiple contaminants. Finally, the authors note that the findings were similar to other indoor chemical exposure levels observed in homes and schools.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Sequestration: What Is It? And How Could It Impact California? By Erin Riches, et al. California Senate Office of Research. Oct. 2012. 8 p.

http://sor.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B3BDD1595-792B-4D20-8D44-626EF05648C7%7D/uploads/October_2012_Federal_Update--Sequestration.pdf

“In August 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act of 2011. Unless Congress elects to reverse the act, it will impose automatic spending cuts – known as sequestration – on many federal programs starting in January 2013. The automatic cuts are intended to ensure a \$1.2 trillion deficit reduction through 2021, and in general are divided equally between defense and non-defense spending.... At the time this report was published, little information was available on exactly how sequestration would impact specific states. However, California receives large amounts of funding from the federal government: about \$83 billion in federal funds will be funneled through the state budget in 2012-13.”

HOUSING

FHFA's Oversight of the Enterprises' Efforts to Recover Losses from Foreclosure Sales. Federal Housing Finance Agency, Office of Inspector General. Oct. 17, 2012. 24 p.

<http://fhfa.ig.gov/Content/Files/AUD-2013-001.pdf>

Deficiency management is the process of recovering losses from a foreclosure sale in which the proceeds of the sale do not equal the balance of the mortgage. Some oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's (The Enterprises) deficiency management programs is necessary – since they recover only a small amount of their losses. Better coordination of their actions at the state level, combined with more data gathering and a focus on strategic defaulters would improve The Enterprises deficiency management activities and save taxpayer money.

HUMAN SERVICES

Grandparents Living With Children: State-Level Data From the American Community Survey. By David Murphey, et al. Child Trends. Oct. 2012. 4 p.

http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2012_10_01_RB_Grandparents.pdf

Children Living With and Cared For by Grandparents: State-Level Data From the American Community Survey. By David Murphey, et al. Child Trends. Oct. 2012. 3 p.

http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2012_10_01_RB_Grandchildren.pdf

“In recent years, increasing numbers of grandparents in the U.S. are living with their grandchildren, and many grandparents are responsible for their care. These trends can be attributed to a number of factors, including increasing numbers of single-parent families, continued high rates of marriage dissolution, parents' incarceration, parental substance abuse, and difficult economic circumstances.” These two briefs examine national and state-level trends associated with grandparents and the children who reside in their households, based on data from the American Community Survey.

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