



## **Studies in the News**

California Research Bureau, California State Library

June 29, 2016

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## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*Justice in Review: New Trends in State Sentencing and Corrections 2014-2015.* By Rebecca Silber, et al. Vera Institute of Justice. May 2016. 72 p.

<http://www.vera.org/pubs/state-sentencing-and-corrections-trends-2014-2015>

"In 2014 and 2015, 46 states enacted at least 201 bills, executive orders, and ballot initiatives to reform at least one aspect of their sentencing and corrections systems.... Vera found that most of the policy changes focused on three areas: creating or expanding opportunities to divert people away from the criminal justice system, reducing prison populations by enacting sentencing reform ... and supporting reentry into the community from prison. By providing concise summaries of representative reforms in

each of these areas, this report serves as a practical guide for other state and federal policymakers looking to affect similar changes in criminal justice policy.”

## CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

“**Politicization of Science in the Public Sphere: A Study of Public Trust in the United States, 1974 to 2010.**” By Gordon Gauchat. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 77, no. 2 (Apr. 2012) 21 p.  
<http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/journals/docs/pdf/asr/Apr12ASRFeature.pdf>

“Science’s defenders have identified five hallmark moves of pseudoscientists. They argue that the scientific consensus emerges from a conspiracy to suppress dissenting views. They produce fake experts, who have views contrary to established knowledge but do not actually have a credible scientific track record. They cherry-pick the data and papers that challenge the dominant view as a means of discrediting an entire field. They deploy false analogies and other logical fallacies. And they set impossible expectations of research: when scientists produce one level of certainty, the pseudoscientists insist they achieve another.” (*The New Yorker*, Jun. 10, 2016).

## ECONOMY

***The State of the Nation’s Housing 2016.*** Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. June 2016.

Report. 44 p.: [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state\\_nations\\_housing](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state_nations_housing)

Interactive maps: <http://harvard->

[cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=9a24bdf3ae8c4272a58b0309890d5835](http://cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=9a24bdf3ae8c4272a58b0309890d5835)

“With household growth finally picking up, housing should help boost the economy. Although homeownership rates are still falling, the bottom may be in sight as the lingering effects of the housing crash continue to dissipate. Meanwhile, rental demand is driving the housing recovery, and tight markets have added to already pressing affordability challenges.” Harvard University’s annual report includes Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics data related to homelessness, mortgage and rental cost burdens.

## EDUCATION

***Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, et al.*** U.S. Supreme Court. No. 14-981. June 23, 2016. 75 p.  
[http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/15pdf/14-981\\_4g15.pdf](http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/15pdf/14-981_4g15.pdf)

In a 4-3 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the University of Texas at Austin’s race and ethnicity considerations in college admissions. The decision may have implications for future challenges to affirmative action in college admissions. Part of the justice’s decision supported the idea of maintaining diversity within the nation’s schools. “[I]t remains an enduring challenge to our Nation’s education system to reconcile the pursuit of diversity with the constitutional promise of equal treatment and dignity.”

## EMPLOYMENT

***The Effects of a \$15 Minimum Wage by 2019 in San Jose and Santa Clara County.*** By Michael Reich, et al. Center on Wage and employment Dynamics. Jun. 2016. 86 p.

<http://irle.berkeley.edu/cwed/briefs/2016-03.pdf>

“[I]t is possible to effect a substantial improvement in living standards for a quarter of the workforce in San Jose and nearly a third of the workforce in Santa Clara County without generating a significant net

adverse employment effect. It can do so through induced efficiencies (more automation, productivity gains, and turnover savings) and slight price increases borne by all consumers. Based on our analysis, we conclude that the proposed minimum wage will have its intended effects in improving incomes for low-wage workers. Any effects on employment and overall economic growth are likely to be small. The net impact of the policy will therefore be positive.”

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

**“Impacts of Urban Water Conservation Strategies on Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Health: Southern California as a Case Study.”** By Sharona Sokolow, et al. *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 106, no. 5 (May 2016) pp. 941-948.

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303053>

“We demonstrate that expanded use of recycled water in California, on top of being an effective water conservation strategy, would result in significant health benefits. This is primarily because expanded use of recycled water would dramatically reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions associated with urban water consumption, but also because recycled water can be used to promote green spaces for recreational uses and to mitigate urban heat island effects. Ironically, public health concerns have traditionally been a barrier toward expansion of recycled water, even though the risks associated with recycled water use do not exceed those found in traditional water supplies. Public health professionals can play an important role in promoting the health benefits of recycled water and by working with colleagues in other sectors to advance the safe and appropriate expansion of recycled water use.”

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Public Pension Funding Practices: How These Practices Can Lead to Significant Underfunding or Significant Contribution Increases When Plans Invest in Risky Assets.*** By Donald J. Boyd, et al. Pension Simulation Project. The Rockefeller Institute of Government. June 2016.

Report. 43 p.: [http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/government\\_finance/2016-06-02-Pension\\_Funding\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/government_finance/2016-06-02-Pension_Funding_Practices.pdf)

Brief. 10 p.: [http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/government\\_finance/2016-06-02-Pension\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/government_finance/2016-06-02-Pension_Policy_Brief.pdf)

“Public pension funds invest more than \$3.6 trillion in stocks, bonds, and other securities with the hope of achieving an assumed investment return. If investments do as well as the funds assume or better, state and local governments can fund pensions with much less tax money than risk-free investment would require.... This policy brief is about how the methods that public retirement systems and governments use to fund pensions interact with investment return volatility. We find that commonly used funding methods can exacerbate the risks of severe underfunding and of large increases in contributions by government employers.”

## HEALTH

***Disrupting the Pathway: A Prevention Approach to Medical High Utilization.*** By Larissa J. Estes, et al. Prevention Institute. May 2016. 21 p.

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-377/127.html>

“Half of all American healthcare expenditures—\$1.45 trillion dollars annually—goes toward the treatment of just 5% of the population. Nationwide, approximately 23% of medical expenditures are spent on the top 1% of users.... The California Medi-Cal program shows similar trends.... This paper presents an exploratory methodology for disrupting the pathway that leads to high utilization by applying a community-wide prevention lens to the challenges of high utilization.” The paper discusses ways in which communities can take a prevention approach to chronic illness and injury among its residents, “preventing

individuals from becoming high utilizers in the first place, reducing the overall risk for preventable injury and illnesses among the broader population.”

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Update on States Counting Third-Party Expenditures toward Maintenance of Effort Requirements.*** By Kay E. Brown. U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-16-315. Feb. 2016. 28 p.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/675110.pdf>

“Nearly one-third of states (16 of 51) reported counting nongovernmental third-party expenditures toward their states' required spending level under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) block grant in fiscal year 2015.... TANF requires states to maintain a significant portion of their own historic financial commitment, called maintenance of effort (MOE), to welfare-related programs. In addition to its own spending, a state may count toward its MOE requirement certain in-kind or cash expenditures by nongovernmental third parties.... The number of states counting such expenditures as MOE spending increased substantially between fiscal years 2009 and 2010, perhaps in part due to requirements necessary to obtain additional funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act).”

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

***Correlates of State Policy.*** Institute for Public Policy and Social Research.

<http://ippsr.msu.edu/public-policy/correlates-state-policy>

“The Correlates of State Policy Project aims to compile, disseminate, and encourage the use of data relevant to U.S. state policy research, tracking policy differences across and change over time in the 50 states.... The Correlates of State Policy Project includes more than seven-hundred variables, with observations across the U.S. 50 states and time (1900–2016). These variables represent policy outputs or political, social, or economic factors that may influence policy differences across the states.”

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

***A New Way Forward: Envisioning a Transportation System without Carbon Pollution.*** By Tony Dutzik, et al. Frontier Group. May 2016. 116 p.

[http://www.environmentamericacenter.org/sites/environment/files/reports/Frontier%20Group%20-%20A%20New%20Way%20Forward%20\(screen\)%20-%20May%202016.pdf](http://www.environmentamericacenter.org/sites/environment/files/reports/Frontier%20Group%20-%20A%20New%20Way%20Forward%20(screen)%20-%20May%202016.pdf)

“America’s transportation system produces more greenhouse gas pollution than any entire nation in the world other than China, India and Russia.... [E]liminating greenhouse gas emissions from our urban transportation systems is going to require more than incremental change—it will require transformation.... By employing smart strategies to repower our vehicles with electricity, reduce growth in vehicle travel, and optimize the efficiency of our transportation network, America’s urban areas can reduce energy demand for light-duty vehicles by as much as 90% below anticipated levels by 2050.”

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