

Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

Voters Across the Political Spectrum Concerned About Tech Companies Invading Their Privacy.

USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times Poll. Mar. 31, 2012.

<http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-lat-poll-privacy-march-2012/>

“82% of Californians said they are “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about internet and smartphone companies collecting their personal information, compared to 17% of voters who said they are not concerned.... 56% of voters said websites that provide movies and music without permission were stealing property, costing the entertainment industry billions of dollars and threatening jobs, while 32% of voters said preventing this content from being available is censorship, would slow innovation and could shut down sites like Wikipedia, Facebook and YouTube.”

ECONOMY

Affording Health Care and Education on the Minimum Wage. By John Schmitt, et al. Center for Economic and Policy Research. Mar. 2012. 5 p.

<http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage2-2012-03.pdf>

The authors “find that the current minimum wage looks even worse when compared with two kinds of purchases strongly associated with a middle-class standard of living or the ability to move up to the middle class: a college degree and health insurance. In 1979, a minimum-wage worker had to work 254 hours in a year to pay the cost of tuition at a public four-year college, but 923 hours in 2010. Similarly, in 1979, a minimum-wage worker had to work 329 hours in order to pay for a family health insurance policy, but 2,079 hours in 2011.”

MoneyTree Report: Q4 2011/Full-year 2011. PricewaterhouseCoopers. [Apr.] 2012. 16 p.

<https://www.pwcmoneytree.com/MTPublic/ns/moneytree/filesource/exhibits/MoneyTree%20Full-Year%20Summary%20Report.pdf>

“California last year attracted more venture capital than any other state, pulling in almost five times as much money as No. 2 ranked Massachusetts.... California received more than half of the country’s \$28 billion in 2011 venture capital investments.... California ventures got \$14.5 billion, up 24% from the previous year. The bulk of the money went to Silicon Valley firms. The infusion of funds was led by software companies, \$6.7 billion in 2011. Biotech companies received \$4.7 billion in the same period.” *Los Angeles Times* (Apr. 5, 2012).

EDUCATION

“Increasing Choice in the Market for Schools: Recent Reforms and Their Effects on Student Achievement.” By Susanna Loeb. *National Tax Journal*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Mar. 2011) pp. 141-164.

<http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/A06-Loeb.pdf>

“Increased parental school choice has become a popular education reform strategy, but evidence of its effectiveness in improving student achievement is mixed. In this paper, we examine the rationale for school choice, obstacles to fulfilling its theoretical promise, and results observed to date. We supplement our discussion with data from a survey of Milwaukee principals. Survey findings suggest that school leaders feel competitive pressures from certain types of schools but tend to respond by improving their marketing efforts rather than their educational programs.”

ENERGY

Hydraulic Fracturing and Safe Drinking Water Act Issues. By Mary Tiemann, et al. Congressional Research Service. Apr. 10, 2012. 38 p.

<https://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/misc/R41760.pdf>

“EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] currently lacks authority under the SDWA [Safe Drinking Water Act] to regulate hydraulic fracturing, except where diesel fuel is used. However, as the use of this process has grown, some in Congress would like to revisit this statutory exclusion.... This report reviews past and proposed treatment of hydraulic fracturing under the SDWA, the principal federal statute for regulating the underground injection of fluids to protect groundwater sources of drinking water. It reviews current SDWA provisions for regulating underground injection activities, and discusses some possible implications of, and issues associated with, enactment of legislation authorizing EPA to regulate hydraulic fracturing under this statute.”

Hydraulic Fracturing: Chemical Disclosure Requirements. By Brandon J. Murrill, et al.
Congressional Research Service. Apr. 4, 2012. 21 p.
<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42461.pdf>

“Chemical disclosure laws or proposals at the state level vary widely. Of the 11 current laws and three proposals examined in this report, only a few require direct public disclosure of chemical information by mandating that parties post the information on the FracFocus chemical disclosure website.... This report provides an overview of current and proposed laws at the state and federal levels that require the disclosure of the chemicals added to the fluid used in hydraulic fracturing.”

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Ready or Not: An Evaluation of State Climate and Water Preparedness Planning. By Ben Chou.
Natural Resources Defense Council. Apr. 2012. 321 p.
<http://www.nrdc.org/water/readiness/files/Water-Readiness-full-report.pdf>

In California, “more than \$3.2 trillion of assets are at risk from the impacts of climate change, and ... annual damages of \$7.3 billion to \$46.6 billion could result. Because of the significant risks to the state from increasing temperatures, changes in precipitation, sea level rise, and ocean acidification, California has been one of the leading states in the U.S. on climate change action.... To enable effective implementation of adaptation measures, the state should focus on promoting effective coordination across state agencies and on providing adequate guidance and technical support at the local and regional levels.”

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The Assets Report 2012: An Assessment of the Federal “Asset-Building” Budget. By Reid Cramer, et al. New America Foundation. Apr. 11, 2012. 28 p.
<http://assets.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/AssetsReport2012.pdf>

“Every year the federal government allocates hundreds of billions of dollars of resources to support a range of activities to help families move up the economic ladder and increase their economic security. Yet most of these benefits are delivered through tax subsidies that favor higher-income households. Families with lower incomes and fewer resources, who would benefit the most, receive a fraction of the support. This survey provides an overview of federal asset-building programs that provide the opportunities for individuals and families to climb the economic ladder.”

Evidence Counts: Evaluating State Tax Incentives for Jobs and Growth. The Pew Center on the States. Apr. 2012. 54 p.
http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/015_12_RI%20Tax%20Incentives%20Report_web.pdf

“Policy makers spend billions of dollars annually on tax incentives for economic development, but no state ensures that policy makers rely on good evidence about whether these investments deliver a strong return.... A report by the Pew Center on the States concludes that 13 states are leading the way in generating much-needed answers about tax incentives’ effectiveness. Twelve states have mixed results. Half the states have not taken the basic steps needed to know whether their incentives are effective.”

HEALTH

Unhealthy Eating, Lack of Physical Activity Seen as Greatest Health Risk Facing California Kids. Voters Believe Obesity Prevention Efforts Should Involve the Community As Well As Kids and Their Families. By Mark DiCamillo, et al. *The Field Poll*. Apr. 4, 2012. 26 p.

<http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2408.pdf>

“Almost half (48%) of California’s voters consider unhealthy eating habits or a lack of physical activity to be the greatest health risk facing California kids today, up from 35% who said this in 2003.... The survey also finds that large majorities believe public investments aimed at keeping people healthy pay for themselves in the long run by preventing disease and reducing health care costs (73%) and think that a comprehensive program to prevent childhood obesity would be worth it even if it increased government spending by billions of dollars (68%).”

HUMAN SERVICES

SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Apr. 9, 2012. 14 p.

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3744>

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps families with children, the elderly, and people with disabilities afford an adequate diet. Since the recession began in 2007, the number of people receiving SNAP increased by 70%. The assistance helps stimulate the economy by maintaining demand for food. SNAP also reduces extreme poverty, helps working families make ends meet, and is one of the few resources available to those who have exhausted their unemployment. The 2009 Recovery Act temporarily raised SNAP benefits, but additional legislation will terminate the raise in benefits in 2013.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Public policy resources are highlighted in this new section of Studies in the News. We’ll periodically feature California State Library resources as well as public websites that are useful to the daily work of California’s legislators and policy makers.

Pensions and Retirement State Legislation Database provides information on pensions and retirement bills in 2012, searchable by state, topic, primary author, bill number, status or keyword. The Pew Center on the States has partnered with the National Council of State Government’s Fiscal Affairs Program to create this useful tool of the trade. For details, visit <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/labor/pension-legislation-database.aspx>.

About *Studies in the News*

Studies in the News (SITN) is a service provided to the Legislature, the Governor’s Office, and State Constitutional Officers by the California Research Bureau, a section of the California State Library.

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