



Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 14-106

February 12, 2014

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Corrections: California's Future. Public Policy Institute of California. Jan. 2014. 6 p.

http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_114RGR.pdf

In 2006, the prison population was seven times higher than in 1980. The filing of a lawsuit in 2001 about the "grossly inadequate" prisoner healthcare program became the catalyst for dramatic changes in California corrections, eventually leading to realignment being passed into law in 2011. Much of this publication focuses on realignment's effect on corrections via bullet points, charts, survey results, and a map. It also recommends several issues that still "deserve sustained attention," including next steps for

prison population reduction being considered by the governor and legislature, funding, and evaluating county practices.

ECONOMY

California & Metro Forecast. Business Forecasting Center, University of the Pacific Eberhardt School of Business. Jan. 2014. 68 p.
(Available at the California State Library)

“California’s economic recovery, until recently a creature of the coast, will begin hitting its stride throughout much of the Central Valley this year.... Sacramento and many other Central Valley communities will enjoy growth rates exceeding the statewide average over the next four years.... The Fresno area will continue to lag the recovery, however. A big reason is the drought.... [One] factor in the Valley’s recovery: the Bay Area is starting to bump up against its usual growth constraints—geographical limits and overheated housing prices. That’s driving some residents and jobs inland.” (*Sacramento Bee*, Jan. 31, 2014).

EDUCATION

State Pre-K Funding – 2013-14 Fiscal Year. By Emily Workman, et al. Education Commission of the States. Jan. 2014. 12 p.
www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/10/34/11034.pdf

“For the second year in a row, even in the midst of continuing state budget constraints, policymakers are making significant investments in state-funded pre-K programs.... Nationwide, state funding for pre-K increased by \$363.6 million to a total of \$5.6 billion. This is a 6.9% increase in state investment in pre-K programs over fiscal year 2012-13.... Of the 40 states funding pre-K programs serving primarily 4-year-olds, 30 states and the District of Columbia increased funding for these programs. Ten states increased funding by more than 20%.... The 2013-14 increase builds on a 3.6% funding increase from the prior year.”

EMPLOYMENT

Effects of a Fifteen Dollar an Hour Minimum Wage in the City of Los Angeles. By Daniel Flaming, et al. Economic Roundtable. Nov. 2013. 39 p.
http://www.economicrt.org/pub/Effects_15Dollar_MinWage_LA_City/Effects_15Dollar_MinWage_LA_City.pdf

“Increasing the minimum wage takes money out of one set of pockets and moves it to another set of pockets.... When workers’ households receive additional income, their increased spending stimulates growth in the local economy.... A review of economic studies since 2000 on the effects of the minimum wage and the ways in which businesses adjust to wage increases found that the most important channels of adjustment are reductions in labor turnover; improvements in organizational efficiency; reductions in wages of higher earners (‘wage compression’); and small price increases.... Many economists who have concluded that increasing the minimum wage does not harm the economy add the caveat that the increases should be incremental so as not to cause economic dislocations.”

ENERGY

Just Energy Policies and Practices Compendium. By Jacqui Patterson, et al. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Environment and Climate Justice Program. Dec. 2013. 555 p.

http://naacp.3cdn.net/5502c09b47ddedffb9_wrim6j5v0.pdf

“The report assesses states on five different criteria: renewable portfolio standards, energy efficiency resource standards, net metering standards, local hire provisions, and minority business enterprise provisions. Additionally, the report lays out the potential for each state to become a leader in clean energy.” The report provides energy consumption estimates as well as lists of various types of energy incentive programs for the 50 states.

Meeting the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) Mandate for Cellulosic Biofuels: Questions and Answers. By Kelsi Bracmort. Congressional Research Service. Dec. 9, 2013. 22 p.

<http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/crs/R41106.pdf>

The Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) is part of the effort to reduce dependence on foreign oil, promote biofuel use, and stabilize transportation fuel prices. The RFS requires that 36 billion gallons of biofuels be used in transportation fuel by 2022. Cellulosic materials—grasses, trees, municipal and agricultural wastes—would increase to comprise 44% of the RFS. This report discusses some challenges facing the cellulosic biofuels community, including feedstock supply estimates, and potential legislative options to address cellulosic biofuels production uncertainty for the RFS.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Report of the State Budget Crisis Task Force: Final Report. By Richard Ravitch, et al. State Budget Crisis Task Force. Jan. 2014. 31 p.

http://www.statebudgetcrisis.org/wpcms/wp-content/images/SBCTF_FINALREPORT.pdf

California Report. 44 p.: <http://www.statebudgetcrisis.org/wpcms/wp-content/images/California-Report-Complete-Version.pdf>

In the aftermath of the Great Recession, states can no longer avoid budgetary problems with one-time fixes and gimmicks. They must move towards multi-year budgeting and create mandatory rainy day funds. California’s budget has improved, but like other states, pressures remain: paying off debt, pension and retiree health care obligations, and volatile tax revenues. The report recommends such things as modified accrual budgeting by states and localities and adequate disclosure of terms and risks of municipal finances.

HEALTH

Medicare Patients’ Access to Physicians: A Synthesis of the Evidence. By Cristina Boccuti, et al. Kaiser Family Foundation. Dec. 2013. 22 p.

<http://kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/medicare-patients-access-to-physicians-a-synthesis-of-the-evidence/>

“[L]ooming threats of significant Medicare payment cuts for physician services due to the Sustainable Growth Rates (SGR) system (a payment formula that has been in law, but repeatedly overridden by Congress) continues to generate news stories of doctors not taking Medicare patients. This issue brief examines the evidence on Medicare patients’ access to physicians to assess the extent to which these concerns are supported by findings from multiple patient surveys, physician surveys, published studies, and new physician data from Medicare.”

HUMAN SERVICES

California's Future: Social Safety Net. Public Policy Institute of California. Jan. 2014. 11 p.
<http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=1080>

This brief highlights state's most pressing long-term policy challenge—the social safety net. It discusses California's major assistance programs, which provide cash grants, tax credits, nutrition support, and housing assistance for low income families. It provides data on the number of recipients and funds that federal, state, and local governments share to cover each program.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Pocket Guide to Transportation 2014. By Mindy Liu, et al. Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Jan. 2014. 64 p.
http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov/bts/files/Pocket_Guide_2014.pdf

"The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), has published the Pocket Guide to Transportation 2014—a quick reference guide to significant transportation statistics. The 17th annual Pocket Guide covers data on moving people and goods, system use and performance, the economy, safety, infrastructure, and the environment."

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

In-Car Location-Based Services: Companies Are Taking Steps to Protect Privacy, but Some Risks May Not Be Clear to Consumers. By Lori Rectanus. Government Accountability Office. Dec. 2013. 32 p.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/659509.pdf>

"Representatives from all 10 selected companies—auto manufacturers, portable navigation device (PND) companies, and developers of map and navigation applications for mobile devices—said they collect location data to provide consumers with location-based services. For example, companies collect location data to provide turn-by-turn directions. Nine companies share location data with third-party companies, such as traffic information providers, to provide services to consumers. Representatives from two companies said they share data where personally identifiable information has been removed (de-identified data) for purposes beyond providing services (e.g., for research), although such purposes are not always disclosed to consumers. All company representatives said that they do not share personally identifiable location data with or sell such data to marketing companies or data brokers."

VETERANS

The Battle to End the VA Backlog. By Jacqueline Maffucci. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. Feb. 2014. 36 p.
http://media.iava.org/2014BattleToEndtheVABacklog_PRINT.pdf

"Over the last decade, the number of pending disability claims filed has increased, and the [Veterans Administration] has struggled to keep pace. This has resulted in a growing backlog of claims pending over 125 days.... Between March and December 2013, the backlog decreased 36.5%, yet it still represents over 50% of the claims waiting to be processed at the VA. While there has been some progress to decrease the backlog, there is nothing to support which of these initiatives are working and which are not, nor is there evidence of planning beyond FY 2015. The VA needs established mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of each of these initiatives to plan for continual improvements to the process."

About *Studies in the News*

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