



Studies in the News

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Contents this week:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Poll: support for the death penalty in CA has fallen

ECONOMY

CA construction industry undervalued in an informal economy

Economic growth widespread across MSAs in 2013

EDUCATION

CA's elementary school truancy problem

EMPLOYMENT

55% of U.S. workers derive a sense of identity from their jobs

ENVIRONMENT

A unified approach suggested to weather climate change in CA

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Community Reinvestment Act: questions about effectiveness

HEALTH

9 in 10 U.S. children eat more sodium than recommended

HOUSING

Audit: CA housing bond program not adequately monitored

HUMAN SERVICES

An overview of poverty in CA

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Report suggests the use of rapid buses for urban areas

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Voter Support for the Death Penalty Declines in California. Field Poll. Sep. 12, 2014. 5 p.

<http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2486.pdf>

"Support for the death penalty as a punishment for serious crimes in California is now at its lowest point in nearly fifty years. The latest *Field Poll* finds 56% of voters in favor of keeping the death penalty and 34% opposed." This is a 13% decrease in support from the previous 69% support of the death penalty in 2011. The poll also noted that during the 1980s and 1990s, eight in ten California voters supported the death penalty.

ECONOMY

Sinking Underground: The Growing Informal Economy in California Construction. By Yvonne Yen Liu, et al. Economic Roundtable. Aug. 2014. 50 p.

http://www.economicrt.org/pub/Sinking_Underground_2014/SinkingUnderground_Report_Sept2014.pdf

“[A] growing number of workers in construction are not reported by their employers or are misclassified as independent contractors—characteristics of the informal economy. In 2011, more than 143,900 construction jobs fill into the informal sector, which is one of six construction jobs in the Golden State.” This report reviewed labor force statistics from 1972 to 2012, to chart the effect of informal employment in construction. Findings include: construction workers in the informal economy tend to earn about half of their counterparts in the formal sector; state and federal government revenues suffer from reduced employer and employee contributions; and, contractors are able to win lowest-bid government contracts through the utilization of such workers.

Economic Growth Widespread Across Metropolitan Areas in 2013; Advance 2013, and Revised 2001-2012 GDP-by-Metropolitan-Area Statistics. BEA 14-44. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Sep. 16, 2014. 21 p.

http://bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_metro/gdp_metro_newsrelease.htm

“Real GDP [Gross Domestic Product] increased in 292 of the nation's 381 metropolitan areas in 2013, led by widespread growth in finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing, nondurable-goods manufacturing, and professional and business services.... Natural resources and mining also spurred strong growth in several metropolitan areas. Collectively, real GDP for U.S. metropolitan areas increased 1.7% in 2013 after increasing 2.6% in 2012.” This report includes a table ranking current dollar gross domestic product (GDP) for each metropolitan area from 2008 to 2013, the real GDP for each metropolitan area, and advance statistics by sector.

EDUCATION

In School and On Track 2014: Attorney General's 2014 Report on California's Elementary School Truancy and Absenteeism Crisis. Office of the Attorney General. Sep. 2014. 158 p.

https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/tr/truancy_2013.pdf

“California's elementary school truancy crisis is a persistent problem that limits the potential of California's children and costs school districts and the state billions of dollars each year.... In the 2012-2013 school year, the school year immediately preceding last year's report, 1 in 5 elementary school students were truant, or 744,085 students. This marks an increase of 1.2% from 2011-2012.... According to estimates based on a sample of California school districts, over 250,000 elementary school students were chronically absent in 2013-2014.... Thirty-seven percent of African American elementary students sampled were truant, the highest of any subgroup (including homeless students) and 15 percentage points higher than the rate for all students.”

EMPLOYMENT

In U.S., 55% of Workers Get Sense of Identity from Their Job. By Rebecca Riffkin. Gallup. Aug. 22, 2014. 1 p.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/175400/workers-sense-identity-job.aspx>

“U.S. workers continue to be more likely to say they get a sense of identity from their job, 55%, as opposed to having their job just be something they do for a living, 42%. These results have been consistent throughout multiple Gallup polls since 1989.” While “[e]ducation is one of the most significant predictors of how workers approach their job, with 70% of college graduates saying they get a sense of

identity from their job, compared with the 45% of Americans who don't hold a college degree who say the same," to a lesser extent income, age, and gender also predict whether or not a U.S. worker derives a sense of identity from their job.

ENVIRONMENT

***Governing California Through Climate Change.* Little Hoover Commission. July 2014. 120 p.**
<http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/221/report221.html>

"The roadblocks to effectively governing California through climate change are well identified and formidable. There are no guidebooks and little precedent for this new phenomenon. What works today for locating infrastructure and permanent buildings will not work tomorrow when a rising ocean is eroding not just shorelines, but the entire notion of permanent landscapes." This report explores scenarios relating to the potential impact of climate change on the state. California's climate change strategies are spread among many agencies and levels of government, which has the potential to limit progress. The report "is calling for a more unified approach to adaptation on the part of state government."

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***The Effectiveness of the Community Reinvestment Act.* By Darryl E. Getter. Congressional Research Service. July 2014. 25 p.**
<http://fas.org/sqp/crs/misc/R43661.pdf>

"The CRA's [Community Reinvestment Act] impact on lending activity has been publicly debated. There is concern that the CRA may induce banks to forgo more profitable lending opportunities in non-targeted neighborhoods by encouraging a disproportionate amount of lending in LMI [Low-Moderate Income] communities. Furthermore, some argue that CRA compels banks to make loans to higher-risk borrowers more likely to have repayment problems, which may subsequently compromise the financial stability of the banking system.... Almost all banks receive *Satisfactory* or better performance ratings on their CRA examinations, which may be considered by some as being indicative of weak enforcement." The report provides a discussion of impact of CRA credits on the banking industry.

HEALTH

***Reducing Sodium in Children's Diets.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sep. 2014. 4 p.**
<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/children-sodium/index.html>

"About 9 in 10 US children eat more sodium than recommended. Most sodium is in the form of salt, as a part of processed foods. A high sodium diet can lead to high blood pressure. About 1 in 6 children ages 8-17 years has raised blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Lowering sodium in children's diets today can help prevent heart disease tomorrow, especially for those who are overweight. The taste for salt is established through diet at a young age." The report recommends changes in the way foods are produced, sold and packaged.

HOUSING

California Department of Housing and Community Development: Inconsistent Oversight Has Resulted in the Questionable Use of Some Housing Bond Funds. Bureau of State Audits, California State Auditor. Sep. 2014. 45 p.
<http://www.bsa.ca.gov/reports/summary/2014-037>

The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) administers nearly \$5 billion in housing bonds for financing affordable housing for low- to moderate-income Californians. This audit finds that HCD's "weaknesses in awarding funds for some of the programs it administers have resulted in the questionable use of funds." The report identified instances where HCD did not perform due diligence on bids with costs above average for the geographic area, and did not adequately monitor four of the seven housing bond programs reviewed. The audit concludes with recommendations to improve the program's funding model.

HUMAN SERVICES

Five Facts Everyone Should Know About Poverty. California Budget Project. Aug. 5, 2014. 11 p.
http://cbp.org/pdfs/2014/140805_Five_Facts_About_Poverty.pdf

This report explains five facts about poverty: 1) Poverty is a problem that can be addressed; 2) Most families living in poverty are employed; 3) Poverty is a common experience for working-age adults; 4) Some public supports have become less effective at lifting families out of poverty; and 5) Poverty limits children's access to opportunities for a better future. To expand opportunity for low-income families, the report suggests California policymakers boost workers' earnings, reinvest in core public systems and services, and increase the affordability of housing.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Rapid Bus: A Low-Cost, High-Capacity Transit System for Major Urban Areas. By Randal O'Toole. CATO Institute. July 2014. 16 p.
http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa752_1_1.pdf

This report presents an argument for an alternative to rail transit. "Rapid bus systems... are easily scalable for any size urban area that has more than about 40,000 downtown jobs... By comparison, rail systems are costly to start up, expand, and maintain. Rapid buses could not substitute for subways and commuter trains that serve New York City. But they could replace rail lines in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington as those lines wear out. Smaller regions with 40,000 to 200,000 downtown jobs should scrap plans for new rail transit lines and rely on rapid buses instead. Regions with fewer than 40,000 downtown jobs probably do not need any form of high-capacity rapid transit."

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