



## Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 15-117

April 29, 2015

Contents this week:

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Lessons from Florida's increased prison costs

### **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

Smartphones put teens online more

### **ECONOMY**

Economic impacts of prevailing wage policy in CA

### **EDUCATION**

Creating and revising charter school laws—key questions

### **EMPLOYMENT**

UI benefits availability and awareness for family caregivers

### **ENERGY**

Federal agency energy infrastructure review

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Tsunami risk assessments in the Pacific Northwest

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

CA issues on voter participation and elections

### **HEALTH**

CA health survey: more than 1/2 adults have delayed care due to costs

### **HUMAN SERVICES**

How WIC works, program trends & impact on nonparticipants

### **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

CA cities continue to rank among those with highest income inequality

### **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Work injuries, illnesses on the decline for bus drivers

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*The High Cost of Incarceration in Florida: Recommendations for Reform.* By Lauren Galik. Reason Foundation. Policy Study No. 444. Apr. 2015. 40 p.

<http://reason.org/news/show/florida-prison-reform>

“Over the past few decades, Florida has passed a number of laws that have dramatically increased criminal sentences, and enacted others that have limited the amount of gain-time credits—or credits for good behavior or participation in rehabilitative programming—inmates may earn toward a reduction of

their sentences. These laws have mandated that all prisoners, even nonviolent offenders, serve not only longer sentences, but a larger percentage of their sentences as well. Taken together, these laws have contributed to Florida's burgeoning prison population, which has become increasingly expensive for taxpayers." This report could prove useful in comparing California's policies towards incarcerating prisoners with those of Florida, especially regarding the effect on nonviolent offenders and on the cost to taxpayers.

## CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015: Smartphones Facilitate Shifts in Communication Landscape for Teens.*** By Amanda Lenhart, et al. Pew Research Center. Apr. 9, 2015. 48 p.

[http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/04/PI\\_TeensandTech\\_Update2015\\_0409151.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/04/PI_TeensandTech_Update2015_0409151.pdf)

Much has changed in recent years when it comes to teenagers and their use of technology. With the increased use of smartphones, Pew Research Center finds that "92% of teens report going online daily—including 24% who say they go online 'almost constantly'.... Facebook is the most popular and frequently used social media platform among teens.... 71% of teens use more than one social network site.... Middle and upper income teens lean toward Instagram and Snapchat.... Girls dominate social media; boys are more likely to play video games."

## ECONOMY

***Building the Golden State: The Economic Impacts of California's Prevailing Wage Policy.*** By Kevin Duncan, et al. Smart Cities Prevail. Mar. 2015. 19 p.

<http://www.smartcitiesprevail.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/SCP-Building-the-Golden-State.pdf>

"While past research has already concluded that prevailing wage promotes workforce development, safer job sites, less dependence on public assistance, and has only negligible impacts on project cost, these new findings show the value of these standards both to the construction industry and our economy as a whole," said Dr. Kevin Duncan. "From creating jobs to increasing efficiency, it is clear that prevailing wage policies provide taxpayers with a far better return on investment than the less beneficial alternative." (*California Newswire*, Apr. 14, 2015).

## EDUCATION

***Questions to Consider When Creating or Modifying Charter School Laws.*** By Stephanie Aragon. Education Commission of the States. Apr. 2015. 7 p.

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/06/11806.pdf>

The ECS has developed a list of key questions to consider when creating or revising charter school laws. These questions fall into the following categories: (1) Authorizers—Is there a statewide authorizer? Is there a procedure for authorizer accountability? (2) Accountability—what are the plans for assessing performance? (3) Autonomy—How much fiscal and legal autonomy do charter schools have? (4) Funding—How are charter schools funded? (5) Teachers—What requirements and benefits have been established for charter school teachers? (6) Students—What are procedures for enrollment? What are the transportation plans? "Twenty-four years after the first charter school law passed, states continue to seek out answers on how to create or improve policies."

## EMPLOYMENT

***Access to Unemployment Insurance Benefits for Family Caregivers: An Analysis of State Rules and Practices.*** By Liz Ben-Ishai, et al. AARP Public Policy Institute. Apr. 2015. 29 p.

<http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/unemployment-insurance.pdf>

“A rapidly growing number of older people and adults with chronic illness and disabling conditions receive care from unpaid family members.” There are some unemployment insurance (UI) rules that apply to family caregivers. “Under the federal UI Modernization program, 19 states expanded UI eligibility to allow benefits for separations from work due to ‘compelling family circumstances’.... Almost half of states have UI rules that accommodate workers who leave their jobs voluntarily to act as family caregivers.... Awareness of UI rules that accommodate family caregivers is very low.... Even where UI rules that accommodate family caregivers exist, implementation is sometimes lacking.... This paper presents detailed information on the policies and practices ... in state UI programs that provide potential temporary financial assistance to family caregivers.”

## ENERGY

***The Quadrennial Energy Review: Energy Transmission, Storage, and Distribution Infrastructure.*** U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Policy and Systems Analysis. Apr. 2015. 348 p.

[http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/04/f22/QER-ALL%20FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/04/f22/QER-ALL%20FINAL_0.pdf)

This report reviews the threats, risks, and opportunities for U.S. energy and climate security, focusing on energy infrastructure. Among the key recommendations: the Department of Energy should establish competitive programs to support accelerated pipeline replacement and to promote innovative solutions to enhance energy infrastructure resilience, reliability and security. Further, the Department of Energy should provide states with financial assistance to promote and integrate transmission, storage and distribution infrastructure investment plans.

## ENVIRONMENT

***Community Clusters of Tsunami Vulnerability in the U.S. Pacific Northwest.*** By Nathan J. Wood, et al. *PNAS*. Apr. 13, 2015. 6 p.

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2015/04/09/1420309112>

“Tens of thousands of people along the U.S. Pacific Northwest coastline may not have enough time to evacuate low-lying areas before tsunami waves arrive.... [The study] examined the 49 cities, seven tribal reservations, and 17 counties from northern California through northern Washington that are directly threatened by tsunami waves that could be generated by a future Cascadia subduction zone earthquake. The scientists evaluated the number of people or businesses exposed to tsunami hazards, as well as demographics and evacuation time by foot for each of these communities.” (*USGS News Release*, Apr. 13, 2015).

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Special Report: California Issues on Voter Participation and Elections.*** The California Institute for Federal Policy Research. Mar. 2015. 3 p.

<http://www.calinst.org/pubs/VoterParticipation.pdf>

The brief provides an overview of the 2014 General Election in California, including voter participation and voter ballot preference. It notes issues impacting voter eligibility requirements, and legal actions underway, in the courts and state executive actions that may further impact the process.

## HEALTH

***Survey Says: Californians' Perspectives on Health Care.*** California HealthCare Foundation. Mar. 2015. 35 p.

<http://www.chcf.org/~media/MEDIA%20LIBRARY%20Files/PDF/S/PDF%20SurveySaysPerspectives.pdf>

CHCF sponsored a survey of over 1,500 California adults in order to learn how Californians feel about their health insurance and what they expect from it. Among its findings: "More than half of the adults with the greatest need—those reporting fair or poor health—delayed care in the past 12 months due to cost. Finding health care providers who accept Medi-Cal was challenging. One in five enrollees (21%) reported difficulty finding a primary care physician who accepted Medi-Cal.... In 2014, 40% of adults delayed care in the previous 12 months due to costs."

## HUMAN SERVICES

***The WIC Program: Background, Trends, and Economic Issues, 2015 Edition.*** By Victor Oliveira, et al. United States Department of Agriculture. Jan. 2015. 88 p.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1760725/eib134.pdf>

"The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), which authorized funds for WIC [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children], is set to expire on September 30, 2015.... This report explains how WIC works, examines program trends, and discusses some of the major economic issues facing the program." This study also addresses the impacts on "some of the often overlooked impacts of the WIC program, focusing primarily on indirect (spillover) effects—that is, WIC's effects on individuals, food manufacturers, and retail food vendors that are not directly involved in the program."

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

***Some Cities are Still More Unequal than Others—An Update.*** By Alan Berube, et al. Brookings Institution. Mar. 17, 2015.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports2/2015/03/city-inequality-berube-holmes>

"From 2012 to 2013, the inequality ratio widened in both cities and the nation overall, as incomes at the top grew somewhat faster than incomes at the bottom.... [T]he most unequal cities in 2013 changed little from the previous year.... San Francisco still ranked second, with a 95/20 ratio of roughly 17.... Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles all remained in the top 10, while Dallas and Minneapolis moved in as Oakland and Baltimore moved out."

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

***When the Wheels on the Bus Stop Going Round and Round: Occupational Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities in Public Transportation.*** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Feb. 2015. 15 p.

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2015/article/pdf/when-the-wheels-on-the-bus-stop-going-round-and-round.pdf>

“According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, an estimated 5,780 state and local government transit and intercity bus drivers were injured on the job in 2013 and required at least 1 day away from work because of the injury. While bus ridership and public transportation use in general are on the rise across the country, employees in our nation’s urban transit systems industry (also later referred to as ‘urban transit’ or ‘urban transit industry’) face occupational hazards because of weather, traffic, aging infrastructure, and violence. This article explores trends in occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities to bus drivers and urban transit workers ... as well as examines how individual transit systems are collecting and analyzing their own employee safety data.”

### **About *Studies in the News***

*Studies in the News* (SITN) is a service provided by the California Research Bureau (CRB), a division of the California State Library. CRB provides independent, nonpartisan research and analysis for the Governor, Legislature and State Constitutional Officers.

SITN lists of current studies related to public policy issues are e-mailed weekly. Archived issues are available at <http://www.library.ca.gov/sitn/crb/>.

To add or remove your name from the SITN distribution list, or to update your e-mail address, please contact us at [crb@library.ca.gov](mailto:crb@library.ca.gov), or (916) 319-2691.

SITN is available as an RSS feed at <http://www.library.ca.gov/sitn/crb/>.