



## Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 15-148

December 9, 2015

Contents this week:

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

CRS report explores police use of force, congressional remedies & reforms

### **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

Partisan voters in CA agree inequality exists, disagree on solutions

### **ECONOMY**

GAO recommends VA improve outreach programs, measure outcomes

### **EDUCATION**

School discipline gap in CA: suspension rates decline, more work needed

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Retirees' security depends on savings, spending habits

### **ENVIRONMENT**

CA water reform: focus on rights, environmental budgets, and regional sharing

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Digital voter registration increases rates, accuracy and saves money

### **HEALTH**

Life expectancy gap between U.S. blacks and whites has decreased since 1999

ACA is reducing health disparities among blacks, Hispanics

### **HUMAN SERVICES**

Survey data understates the effects of anti-poverty programs

### **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

Infographic on how the U.S. screens refugees

### **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

CA receives top marks for disaster preparedness

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*Police Use of Force: Rules, Remedies, and Reforms.* By Richard M. Thompson II. Congressional Research Service. R44256. Oct. 30, 2015. 29 p.

<https://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/misc/R44256.pdf>

“Several high-profile police shootings and other law enforcement-related deaths in the United States have sparked intense protests throughout the country and a fierce debate in Congress concerning the appropriate level of force police officers should wield in a society that equally values public safety and the lives of each of its citizens under the law. These incidents have been the subject of several congressional

hearings, have prompted the introduction of various legislative measures, and have catalyzed a new civil rights movement in the United States aimed at reforming the criminal justice system.... [T]his report will address three overarching questions: (1) what are the constitutional rules governing an officer's use of force; (2) what role has Congress played in providing a remedy for a violation of these rules; and (3) what are the potential reforms to these rules and remedies?"

## CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

**"Californians' Beliefs about Income Inequality." By Douglas J. Ahler, et al. *California Journal of Politics and Policy*, vol. 7, no. 4 (2015) pp. 1-12.**

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/44p8n8q4>

"[T]here appears to be some consensus in Californians' attitudes regarding income inequality. A majority of both major parties and of Independent voters agrees that inequality has increased. Furthermore, majorities agree that significant contributors to growing inequality include the shift of manufacturing jobs to other countries, the failure of public schools to equip children for success in the modern economy, and the need for a college degree to land a well-paid job. There is some cross-partisan agreement as to potential policy responses, especially the idea of changing immigration policies to favor potential immigrants with education and skills. However... Democrats are far more likely to believe that inequality is caused by a failure to sufficiently tax the wealthy, while Republicans are far more likely to believe that a root cause of inequality is an increase in immigration."

## ECONOMY

***VA Benefits: Increasing Outreach and Measuring Outcomes Would Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs.* By Andrew Sherrill, et al. Government Accounting Office. GAO-16-51. Nov. 2015. 61 p.**

<http://gao.gov/assets/680/673606.pdf>

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs under the Post-9/11 GI Bill to help veterans, in addition to the college and university education it offers. Unfortunately, these benefits are underused, and VA has not done a very good job of documenting them. In this report, the GAO recommends that the VA increase awareness about the availability of these benefits and include outcome measures as needed to improve these programs.

## EDUCATION

***Closing the School Discipline Gap in California: Signs of Progress.* By Daniel J. Losen, et al. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies. Nov. 2015. 55 p.**

[http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/summary-reports/ccrr-school-to-prison-pipeline-2015/ClosingtheGapCA15\\_UCLA6.pdf](http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/summary-reports/ccrr-school-to-prison-pipeline-2015/ClosingtheGapCA15_UCLA6.pdf)

With more effort placed on alternative actions in school discipline, the number of suspensions in California declined from 709,580 in 2011-2013 to 503,101 in 2013-2014. Researchers found that each racial/ethnic group experienced a decline in suspension rates, with the largest decline among Black students—from 33 to 25.6 per 100 students enrolled. Though progress is being made, there are still some schools with very high suspension rates. The authors make the following recommendations: (1) provide more support and training for teachers to promote restorative justice practices and improve student engagement; (2) monitor "disaggregated discipline data by race, gender and disability status;" (3) "eliminate suspensions for minor offenses such as disruption/defiance;" and (4) "include goals for reducing disciplinary exclusion in state and local standards for accountability plans." The report includes a district level analysis of the most current discipline rates and three-year trends.

## EMPLOYMENT

### ***Change in Household Spending After Retirement: Results from a Longitudinal Sample.***

**By Sudipto Banerjee. Employee Benefit Research Institute. Nov. 2015. 20 p.**

[http://www.ebri.org/pdf/briefspdf/EBRI\\_IB\\_420.Nov15.HH-Exp.pdf](http://www.ebri.org/pdf/briefspdf/EBRI_IB_420.Nov15.HH-Exp.pdf)

“A person’s financial success of retirement depends on two key components—savings accumulated during working years, and spending during retirement years.... Although average spending in retirement fell, a large percentage of households experienced higher spending following retirement. In the first two years of retirement, 45.9% of households spent more than what they had spent just before retirement.... Households that spent more in the first two years of retirement were not exclusively high-income households, but were distributed similarly across income groups.... A very small percentage of the average household budget was spent on durable goods; the median household spent nothing on durables in retirement.... Transportation accounted for the largest drop in spending during the first two years of retirement.”

## ENVIRONMENT

### ***Allocating California’s Water: Directions for Reform.*** By Brian Gray, et al. Public Policy Institute of California. Nov. 2015. 21 p.

[http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_1115BGR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1115BGR.pdf)

The ongoing drought has exposed the limitations of California’s water allocation system. This report finds that the system is “fragmented, inconsistent, and lacking in transparency and clear lines of authority,” and the authors offer suggestions for reform. “We propose an interlinked set of legal and policy reforms that would significantly strengthen California’s ability to address future droughts, climate variability, and shifting economic demands for water. Our proposals focus on three areas where the water allocation system is especially weak: water rights administration, allocation of water for the environment, and water trading. The common thread in these reforms is to increase coherence, transparency, and flexibility, while protecting water right-holders and public values.”

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

### ***Voter Registration in a Digital Age: 2015 Update.*** By Holly Maluk, et al. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. Oct. 23, 2015. 52 p.

[https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Voter\\_Registration\\_Digital\\_Age\\_2015.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Voter_Registration_Digital_Age_2015.pdf)

“In 2008, nearly 3 million registered voters could not vote because of problems related to their voter registration record. A study only of in-person voters from the 2012 election similarly found that millions of voters experienced registration problems at the polls.... The Brennan Center spent the last two years questioning over 70 election officials who oversee modernized voter registration systems in states across the country.... This report highlights experiences from states using electronic registration and online registration.” The authors found: 38 states have electronic and/or online registration. They conclude that modernization increases registration rates and voter roll accuracy, and it saves money.

## HEALTH

**“Leading Causes of Death Contributing to Decrease in Life Expectancy Gap Between Black and White Populations: United States, 1999-2013.”** By Kenneth D. Kochanek, et al. **National Center for Health Statistics. *NCHS Data Brief*, no. 218. (Nov. 2015). 8 p.**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db218.htm>

“The trend in U.S. life expectancy since 1900 has been one of gradual improvement. Nevertheless, differences in life expectancy by race have persisted at least since official estimates were recorded. Measuring health disparities, including those in life expectancy, is part of the Healthy People 2020 recommendations. In 1999, the difference in life expectancy between the white and black populations was 5.9 years. The gap decreased to 3.6 years in 2013. Black and white population differences in causes of death are explored to determine how they contribute to the decrease in the gap in life expectancy from 1999 through 2013.... Between 1999 and 2013, the gap in life expectancy between the black and white populations decreased by 2.3 years. For black and white males, the decrease in the gap was 2.4 years, and for black and white females, the decrease in the gap was 2.3 years.”

**“Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care Access and Utilization Under the Affordable Care Act.”** By Jie Chen, et al. ***Medical Care*. Published ahead of print. Nov. 2015. 7 p.**  
[http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Abstract/publishahead/Racial\\_and\\_Ethnic\\_Disparities\\_in\\_Health\\_Care.98981.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Abstract/publishahead/Racial_and_Ethnic_Disparities_in_Health_Care.98981.aspx)

“[R]esearchers analyzed data from the 2011-2014 National Health Interview Survey, which asked questions about health care access and utilization among various groups of US adults (18-64 years of age), including non-Latino whites, Latinos, African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups. The data suggest that the Affordable Care Act is playing an important role in reducing racial and ethnic health disparities. While all groups benefitted from the health insurance options made available under the ACA, racial and ethnic minorities have historically encountered greater disparities in coverage and access, and therefore have seen greater gains since the ACA went into effect. African Americans have likely improved more on these measures under the ACA compared with whites because they are more likely to gain insurance coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace and Medicaid expansion that has occurred under the ACA.” (*Univ. of Maryland School of Public Health*, Dec. 2, 2015).

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Using Linked Survey and Administrative Data to Better Measure Income: Implications for Poverty, Program Effectiveness and Holes in the Safety Net.*** By Bruce D. Meyer, et al. **National Bureau of Economic Research. Oct. 2015. 47 p.**  
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w21676> (Available at the California State Library)

“We examine the consequences of underreporting of transfer programs for prototypical analyses of low-income populations using the Current Population Survey (CPS), the source of official poverty and inequality statistics.... We find that the survey data sharply understate the income of poor households. Underreporting in the survey data also greatly understates the effects of anti-poverty programs and changes our understanding of program targeting. Using the combined data rather than survey data alone, the poverty reducing effect of all programs together is nearly doubled while the effect of housing assistance is tripled.”

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

**Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States.**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states>

People seeking to enter the United States as refugees are subject to a more rigorous screening process than any other group seeking admittance to the country. The multi-step screening process includes recurrent vetting, where applicants are continuously checked against various databases throughout the process. This ensures if new information can come to light anytime during the screening period, and the flagged individual will be prevented from entering. The entire process is outlined in this infographic, which describes and visualizes each step, from application to arrival in the United States.

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

**States at Risk: America's Preparedness Report Card: California.** Climate Central and ICF International. Nov. 18, 2015. 11 p.

<http://statesatrisk.org/report-card/california>

"California faces some of the most severe climate threats of any state, both now and in the future, but its A grade reflects the state's exceptional level of preparedness." Although California is rated as one of the most at-risk states from severe weather, it also receives top marks as having gone the furthest of all states in protecting its infrastructure against extreme heat, drought, wildfire, and inland and coastal flooding.

### **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/>.