



Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Improving California's Criminal Fine and Fee System. Legislative Analyst's Office. Jan. 5, 2016.

28 p.

<http://www.lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3322>

"Upon conviction of a criminal offense (including traffic violations), individuals are typically required by the court to pay various fines and fees as part of their punishment. Collection programs—operated by both courts and counties—collect payments from individuals and then distribute them to numerous funds to support various state and local government programs and services. Distribution occurs in accordance to a very complex process dictated by law." The LAO identified four major problems with this system: 1) the Legislature has difficulty controlling the use of fine and fee revenues; 2) revenue distributions are not generally based on need; 3) revenues are not distributed accurately; and 4) there is incomplete and inaccurate data on collections and distributions. LAO recommends the Legislature reevaluate the overall structure of the fine and fee system.

EDUCATION

Public School Teacher Autonomy in the Classroom Across School Years 2003-2004, 2007-2008, 2011-2012. By Dinah Sparks, et al. National Center for Education Statistics. Dec. 2015. 23 p.
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015089.pdf>

How teachers perceive their control over classroom content, textbooks, teaching techniques, evaluation of students and discipline plans can have an effect on job satisfaction and retention. This study of teacher autonomy over three academic years finds that “perceptions of autonomy shifted from high to low for teachers who taught in low-poverty schools and who taught in towns. In 2003–04, larger percentages of these teachers perceived high autonomy than perceived low autonomy. In 2007–08 and again in 2011–12, the reverse was true; larger percentages perceived low autonomy than perceived high autonomy.” Teachers who taught music or worked in schools with 100-199 students were among those with the highest perceived autonomy levels.

EMPLOYMENT

Women on Corporate Boards: Increasing in California but Still Underrepresented. By Amanda Kimball and Tonya D. Lindsey. California Research Bureau. Jan. 2016. 8 p.
http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/16/WomenonCorporateBoards_Final.pdf

In 2014, 13.2% of board directors on California’s largest companies were women, up from 8.8% in 2005. But women are still underrepresented in the board room. This research brief is an overview of what has been done internationally, nationally, statewide and locally to increase the number of women board directors, and offers options for increasing boardroom diversity. These options draw from existing strategies and include expanding outreach, increasing awareness, improving proxy access, setting tenure limits, evaluating successful practices and requiring companies to meet benchmarks.

Corporate Boards: Strategies to Address Representation of Women Include Federal Disclosure Requirements. United States Government Accountability Office. GAO-16-30. Dec. 2015. 38 p.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/674008.pdf>

“Women make up almost half of the nation's workforce, yet research shows that they continue to hold a lower percentage of corporate board seats compared to men. Research highlights advantages to gender diverse boards, and some countries have taken steps to increase board gender diversity.... Stakeholders GAO interviewed generally preferred voluntary strategies for increasing gender diversity on corporate boards, yet several large investors and most stakeholders interviewed (15 of 19) supported improving Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) disclosure requirements on board diversity.”

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Transitioning to Sustainability: Modeling Groundwater Sustainability in the Kings-Tulare Lake Region. By Ali Taghavi, et al. California Water Foundation. Nov. 2015. 29 p.
http://californiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/CWF-Transitioning-to-Sustainability-Final-Report_11_09_2015.pdf

This study analyzes the groundwater sub-basins located within Tulare, Kings, and Fresno counties. Data modeling reveals the complex and interdependent nature of water exchange between the sub-basins over an 88-year period. Using longitudinal data from the Department of Water Resources and regional water agencies, the study concludes that the sub-basins have been consistently overdrafted for decades, because the extraction of water exceeds the recharge of water back into the sub-basins. To achieve stable groundwater elevation, the study recommends a reduction in groundwater extraction by 15-20%.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Home Broadband 2015. By John B. Horrigan, et al. Pew Research Center. Dec. 21, 2015. 33 p.
<http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/12/Broadband-adoption-full.pdf>

“Three notable changes relating to digital access and digital divides are occurring in the realm of personal connectivity.... First, home broadband adoption seems to have plateaued. It now stands at 67% of Americans, down slightly from 70% in 2013.... Second, this downtick in home high-speed adoption has taken place at the same time there has been an increase in ‘smartphone-only’ adults—those who own a smartphone that they can use to access the internet, but do not have traditional broadband service at home.... Third, 15% of American adults report they have become ‘cord cutters’—meaning they have abandoned paid cable or satellite television service.”

HEALTH

America’s Health Rankings. United Health Foundation. Dec. 15, 2015. 152 p.
<http://www.americashealthrankings.org/reports/Annual>
State infographic: <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/states>

United Health Foundation’s annual report “describes the overall ranking, strengths, challenges, and highlights—including notable changes in metrics—for each state.” The report includes trends in smoking and obesity, allowing states to compare prevalence to other states and the national average. This year, California has an overall health ranking of 16, up one point from last year. In the past two years, lack of health insurance decreased from 18.8% to 14.8% of the population. Though its strengths include comparatively low prevalence of smoking and obesity, California’s population is challenged with a large disparity in health status, and high levels of air pollution.

HUMAN SERVICES

Federal EITC Kept 2 Percent of the Population Out of Poverty. By Douglas Gagnon, et al. Carsey School of Public Policy. National Issue Brief no. 91. Nov. 17, 2015. 4 p.
<https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/federal-eitc>

“This brief documents the proportion of Americans who would have been poor absent the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), all else being equal, across 2010–2014. We examine Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) rates as well as hypothetical increases in the rates of SPM poverty in the absence of federal EITC benefits.... The proportion of people who are poor ... would increase by one-eighth, from 15.9% to 17.9%, without federal EITC dollars. Children are especially at risk of becoming poor without EITC benefits.” The report finds that without federal EITC dollars, California’s poverty rate would have been two percentage points higher between 2010 and 2014.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PISCES. By Nick Santos, et al. UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences. Nov. 2015.
<http://pisc.es.ucdavis.edu/>

“PISCES is software and data describing the best-known ranges for California’s 133 native fish and numerous non-native fish. The data are compiled from multiple sources and are expert verified. It is accessible directly via the PISCES software, downloadable as geographic data layers or images from this website, or queryable from the PISCES database. PISCES was developed with initial funding from the USDA Forest Service Region 5 and additional funding from California Department of Fish and Wildlife:

Biogeographic Data Branch, in collaboration with numerous experts in fish biology and distribution in California.”

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