



Studies in the News

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Contents this week:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Alternative sentencing interventions to maximize cost-effectiveness

ECONOMY

Suggested state policies to reverse \$16 trillion racial wealth gap

EDUCATION

Guns on college campuses—a 50-state review

EMPLOYMENT

Surveys reveal more Americans seeking informal job opportunities

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Increasing CA's use of biofuels: barriers and solutions

Impacts of bioenergy on land, fossil fuel use

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Designing a better CA state government through a customer-centric focus

HEALTH

Driving cessation can lead to health decline for older adults

HUMAN SERVICES

46% of CA children live in poverty—higher than nat'l average

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Interactive tool identifies likely areas for groundwater recharge

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Sentencing in California: Moving Toward a Smarter, More Cost-Effective Approach. By Selena Teji, et al. California Budget & Policy Center. Dec. 2015. 18 p.

<http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/sentencing-in-california-moving-toward-a-smarter-more-cost-effective-approach/>

"In recent decades, [California's] one-size-fits-all sentencing laws contributed to the creation of a bloated and costly correctional system that generally fails to serve the interests of Californians. California has adopted significant criminal justice reforms over the past several years (e.g., Prop. 47 [2014] and Realignment [2011]) Despite these positive steps, California's sentencing laws continue to overly rely on incarceration as the consequence for committing a felony or misdemeanor, rather than promoting community-based interventions that could provide better avenues for rehabilitation.... Given the high social and financial costs of incarceration, California could revise its sentencing laws to more fully embrace alternative interventions intended to hold accountable people who commit a crime, correct problematic behaviors, and help communities and survivors of crimes heal."

ECONOMY

***Investing in Tomorrow: Helping Families Build Savings and Assets.* The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Jan. 2016. 5 p.**

<http://cms.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-investingintomorrow-2016.pdf>

“The Great Recession was devastating for U.S. families, causing a collective \$16 trillion loss in net worth. This loss disproportionately affected low-income families of color, perpetuating a racial wealth gap even as the racial income gap has narrowed.... Smart policies can help reverse these trends and close the racial wealth gap by allowing more families to steadily build savings.... While changes in federal policies can provide equal access to savings and credit on a broad scale, states are important in making those policies work. States should: cap interest rates on products such as payday loans, lines of credit, refund anticipation checks and short term mortgages.... [o]pen 529 savings accounts [and] ... authorize prize-linked savings products to encourage savings with a chance to win a large prize.”

EDUCATION

***Guns on Campus: The Architecture and Momentum of State Policy Action.* By Andrew Morse, et al. Education Commission of the States. Jan. 2016. 18 p.**

http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/01252016_ECS_NASPA_report.pdf

This report looks at how states are handling the presence of guns on college campuses—whether they are prohibited and how this policy is established—through legislation or education policy. There has been a shift towards allowing guns on campus. The authors conclude that “[e]xpanding the presence of guns in the spaces where members of the higher education community live, learn, and work is not without implications for institutional policy and practice. And statutory bans of firearms on campus may create other challenges or complexities for institutional leaders who, for example, serve colleges or universities that share space with non-institutional venues or entities. Developments that define or refine the contours of campus gun laws prompt thoughtful deliberation for leaders in higher education and state policy.”

EMPLOYMENT

***Changing Patterns in Informal Work Participation in the United States 2013–2015.* By Anat Bracha, et al. Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Oct. 2015. 46 p.**

<http://www.bostonfed.org/economic/current-policy-perspectives/2015/cpp1510.pdf>

“Based on two successive, nationally representative surveys, we find that participation in paid informal work activities increased significantly in the United States between late 2013 and early 2015.... [I]nformal work opportunities are being used by Americans with increasingly diverse skill levels, formal incomes, and degrees of attachment to the formal labor market. This change likely reflects the increasingly diverse and accessible set of informal work opportunities that have become available in recent years.... [T]he improving economy may have spurred demand for goods and services produced in informal markets as well as formal markets.” The authors discuss the challenge of categorizing informal jobs in terms of their full-time and part-time labor equivalents.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Planting Fuels: How California Can Boost Local, Low-Carbon Biofuel Production. By Ethan N. Elkind, et al. UC Berkeley School of Law Center for Law, Energy & the Environment, et al. Dec. 2015. 36 p.

<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Planting-Fuels.pdf>

This report looks at biofuels as a way to decrease California's dependence on petroleum. Biofuels come largely from agricultural, algae, food waste and forest residues. The report identifies policy uncertainty, restricted market access, policy misalignment, and lack of feedstock access as important barriers to increasing the use of biofuels. Possible solutions include greater state support, financial incentives for automakers and gas stations, a state-launched study to consider optimal attainment of nitrogen oxides, greenhouse gas and petroleum reduction goals, as well as improved access to financial support for in-state feedstock production.

“Impacts of a 32-Billion-Gallon Bioenergy Landscape on Land and Fossil Fuel Use in the U.S.” By Tara W. Hudiburg, et al. *NatureEnergy*, vol. 1 (Jan. 11, 2016) pp. 1-7.

<http://www.nature.com/articles/nenergy20155>

Combining economic and ecosystem models, this study analyzes the greenhouse gas implications of a massive bioenergy landscape (32-billion-gallon) in policy scenarios that include “domestic and global indirect land-use change and domestic and global gasoline market rebound effects due to the changes in food and fuel prices induced by biofuel production.” The study suggests that in 2022, emissions could be decreased by approximately 7%, the projected result of “gasoline displacement and soil carbon storage by perennial grasses.” More reduction could be achieved, to approximately 12%, by combining the existing renewable fuel standard with a new biofuel tax credit.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

A Customer-Centric Upgrade for California Government. Little Hoover Commission. Report No. 229. Oct. 2015. 68 p.

<http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/229/Report229.pdf>

“California state government has fallen behind, embarrassingly behind, on providing its customers—Californians—excellent experiences in their interactions with government. Cities and other states have taken a lead in making it a priority to provide services that are more user-friendly, easy to find, understand and get.” The Commission reached out to individuals, governments and businesses, and identified two key components to user-friendly services: technology and a customer-centric focus that drives how things get done. The report makes a number of recommendations to accomplish the goal of providing more user-friendly services, including a blueprint for cultivating a customer-centric culture across state government.

HEALTH

“Driving Cessation and Health Outcomes in Older Adults.” By Stanford Chihuri, et al. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. Published ahead of print Jan. 19, 2016. 10 p.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.13931/pdf>

(Available at the California State Library)

Most adults continue driving well into old age, but eventually many adults reduce or stop driving for health or safety reasons. This report is a literature review that looks at the consequences to older adults who have stopped driving. “Pooled data from five studies indicate that driving cessation nearly doubles the risk

of greater depressive symptoms in older adults.” Other studies reported declines in cognitive abilities, diminished social functioning and greater risk of having to enter long-term care. The authors suggest senior intervention programs to ensure and prolong mobility for older adults.

HUMAN SERVICES

2014 Data Indicate That Four in Ten Children Live in Low-Income Families. By Jessica A. Carson, et al. Carsey Research. Dec. 15, 2015. 8 p.

<http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1262&context=carsey>

“In 2014, more than four in ten children (44.1%) lived in low-income families, defined as families with income below 200% of the official poverty line. More than one-fifth of children (21.7%) were poor, that is, lived below the poverty line, and nearly one-tenth (9.6%) lived in deep poverty, defined as having incomes below 50% of the poverty line. The share of children living in deeply poor, poor, and low-income homes declined between 2013 and 2014.... While child poverty declined overall, rates still vary tremendously across states, regions, and place types.” In California, 22.7% of children lived in poverty and 46% lived in low-income families. These figures are slightly higher than the national average of 21.7% for children in poverty and 44.1% for children in low-income families.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Soil Agricultural Groundwater Banking Index. California Soil Resource Lab, University of California, Davis. Oct. 2015.

<http://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/sagbi/>

This new interactive tool gauges farmland in California according to its capacity for recharging vital groundwater supplies. “The Soil Agricultural Groundwater Banking Index (SAGBI) is a suitability index for groundwater recharge on agricultural land. The SAGBI is based on five major factors that are critical to successful agricultural groundwater banking: deep percolation, root zone residence time, topography, chemical limitations, and soil surface condition.”

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