



Studies in the News

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Debtors' Prison for Kids? The High Cost of Fines and Fees in the Juvenile Justice System.

By Jessica Feerman, et al. Juvenile Law Center. 2016. 40 p.

<http://debtorsprison.jlc.org/documents/JLC-Debtors-Prison.pdf>

"Significant research establishes that court costs, fees, and fines exacerbate poverty for individuals in the adult criminal justice system and their families.... Juvenile Law Center reviewed statutes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to assess the legal framework for financial obligations placed on youth in the juvenile justice system and their families.... We conclude that the imposition of costs, fees, and fines is widespread and poses significant problems for youth and their families." The report recommends eliminating costs, fines, and fees on youth not old enough to work; prioritizing restitution payments to victims that go directly to the victims and that the youth can afford; and ensuring that restitution policies are developmentally appropriate.

EDUCATION

How Late is Too Late? Myths and Facts About the Consequences of Switching College Majors. By Ed Venit. Education Advisory Board. 2016. 10 p.

https://www.eab.com/-/media/EAB/Technology/Student-Success-Collaborative/Success-Pages/EAB_Major%20Switching%20Myths%20and%20Facts.pdf

“Students have far more flexibility to change their majors without hurting graduation outcomes than many have previously assumed. We see little evidence that late switches impact graduation rates. Late switches can impact time to degree, but only if they occur in the sixth term or later. Surprisingly, we found students who declare in their first term and never switch have decreased odds for graduation. Taken together, these results suggest that schools can feel comfortable with their current policies and structures that allow for and encourage exploration and switching. Policies that encourage or force students to make choices early on in their careers may not be doing much to help students. In some cases, those policies may be detrimental.”

EMPLOYMENT

Black Workers, Unions, and Inequalities. By Cherrie Bucknor. Center for Economic and Policy Research. Aug. 2016. 23 p.

<http://cepr.net/publications/reports/black-workers-unions-and-inequality>

This study uses Census data to examine the trends of unionization for black workers, focusing on the impact of wages and benefits and the effect on racial equality. “Black workers are more likely than workers of any other race to be represented by a union.... [They] on average earn 16.4% higher wages than similar non-union Black workers. Black union workers are also 17.4 percentage points more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and 18.3 percentage points more likely to have an employer-sponsored retirement plan.”

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Evolution of the Meaning of “Waters of the United States” in the Clean Water Act. By Stephen P. Mulligan. Congressional Research Service. Aug. 8, 2016. 34 p.

<http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/misc/R44585.pdf>

“While some believe EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and the Corps [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] consistently expanded the meaning of ‘waters of the United States,’ others contend that, in recent years, the agencies have construed the term in a narrower fashion than permitted under the Clean Water Act.... EPA and the Corps contend that the Clean Water Rule governs only waters that have been historically regulated under the Clean Water Act, but its opponents argue that it constitutes an unlawful expansion of authority beyond that which is allowed in the act or the Constitution. This report provides context for this debate by examining the history of major changes to the meaning of ‘waters of the United States’ as expressed in federal regulations, legislation, agency guidance, and case law.”

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Spending Through California's Tax Code.* By William Chen. California Budget & Policy Center. Aug. 2016. 19 p.**

<http://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/spending-californias-tax-code/>

“California spends a large amount of state revenues through tax breaks, also called ‘tax expenditures.’ Personal income and corporate income tax expenditures combined are projected to amount to around \$48 billion in forgone revenues in 2016-17 ... equivalent to nearly 40% of the 2016-17 General Fund budget. Unlike program spending, tax breaks generally are not up for debate every year, and instead just quietly continue from year to year.... Some of the largest tax expenditures ... help households and businesses that don't need the help ... while California significantly constrains the amount of aid given to individuals and families who do need the help.... California could improve its use of tax expenditures by setting expiration dates, requiring their periodic review, and targeting their benefits to low- and middle-income households.”

HEALTH

“Understanding the Decline in Adolescent Fertility in the United States, 2007-2012.” By Laura Lindberg, et al. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. Published ahead of print. Aug. 2016. 7 p.

[http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(16\)30172-0/pdf](http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(16)30172-0/pdf)

This report uses national data to examine how changes in adolescent sexual activity and contraceptive use influenced fertility rates in the United States between 2007 and 2012. The authors find that “teenage girls in 2012 were just as likely to be sexually active as girls in 2007. Survey research shows that 43% of girls between 15 and 19 said they'd ever had sex in 2007, compared with 45% in 2012. What changed was how teenage girls used contraceptives. The percentage of sexually active teens who used at least one type of birth control the last time they had sex rose from 78% in 2007 to 86% in 2012. More teens gravitated toward better types of birth control—like pills, IUDs, or implants—rather than relying on lower-quality birth control like condoms.” (Vox, Aug. 30, 2016).

HUMAN SERVICES

***Creating Safe and Healthy Living Environments for Low-Income Families.* By Tracey Ross, et al. Center for American Progress. July 2016. 24 p.**

<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/14065816/SafeAndHealthyHomes-report.pdf>

“[M]ore than 30 million housing units in the United States have significant physical or health hazards, such as dilapidated structures, poor heating, damaged plumbing, gas leaks, or lead.... While housing assistance programs ... provide critical support to families struggling to meet housing costs, only one in four households eligible for rental assistance actually receives it due to limited federal funding.... This report provides an overview of the conditions of the nation's housing stock, barriers to accessing housing for people with disabilities, the effects that neighborhood safety has on families, and recommendations for improving these conditions.”

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