Studies in the News
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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT


In 2018, there were 41 disciplinary actions taken against 1,856 California trial and appellate court judges by the Commission on Judicial Performance. The number of complaints the Commission received was 1,251, most of which (1,118), were closed after initial investigation. Of the 41 cases where a disciplinary action was needed, only seven called for public discipline and only one led to a public censure. No complaints led to a judge being removed from office, although one complaint was closed following the judge’s resignation or retirement.
ECONOMY


"[R]ising inequality is driven partially by … rise in earnings volatility…. [T]he optimal policy response to higher labor market risk is to increase social insurance markedly, so that displaced workers have to absorb (through lower consumption) just a quarter of the 30% earnings loss they suffer…. [The study authors] estimate that the cost of doing nothing … is large. The jump in job displacement risk leads to a large drop in consumption by displaced workers. This is true even though workers can adjust their behavior by increasing their work hours, savings rate, or job training effort. A further estimate shows that if the rise in labor market risk doubles earnings losses of displaced workers, the welfare costs of not adjusting the social insurance system ‘are very large indeed—about 1.5% of lifetime consumption.’ " (The Region, Mar. 4, 2018).

EDUCATION


“Recent college graduates want ‘purpose’ in their jobs, but they aren't always finding it, according to a new survey. The report … found that 95% of four-year college graduates nationally considered a sense of purpose at least moderately important in their work…. But of the graduates who strongly felt that a purpose was important, only 40% said they had found a meaningful career. Only 34% indicated they were deeply interested in their work, and 26% reported that they liked what they were doing on a daily basis.” (Inside Higher Ed, Apr. 11, 2019).


“Authors of the study used federal data from the National Center for Education Statistics to look at more than 5,600 black, Latino and white students who enrolled in college for the first time in the 2003-2004 academic year. The data included students enrolled in four-year institutions and those who began at two-year colleges and transferred to four-year schools. The researchers found that students entered the programs at relatively equal numbers: About 19% of the white students declared as STEM majors, compared with 20% of Latino students and 18% of black students. Yet black and Latino students changed majors at higher rates than their white peers. About 37% of Latino and 40% of black STEM students switched majors as undergraduates, compared with 29% of white STEM students.” (Washington Post, May 3, 2019).
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT


“[R]esearchers put supposedly eco-friendly bags made from various organic and plastic materials and sourced from U.K. stores to the test. After three years buried in garden soil, submerged in ocean water, exposed to open light and air or stashed in a laboratory, none of the bags broke down completely in all the environments. In fact, the biodegradable bags that had been left underwater in a marina could still hold a full load of groceries.” The authors discuss standardizing manufacture using only proven biodegradable plastics, which could potentially streamline waste management systems. (PBS News Hour, May 2, 2019).

GENERAL GOVERNMENT


In a market comparison of four states that legalized cannabis, California has the high average prices of cannabis by all measurements, while Washington has the lowest prices. Washington has thousands of cannabis brands and a regulated market that prohibits farms from selling directly to customers and thus gives retailers power to push back on prices. California average item prices actually increased by $5 (to $30.90) since legalization in 2018, but the high prices are not expected to last. One reason is strong black market competition: 18% of California respondents to an industry survey recently purchased cannabis from an unlicensed seller, and 84% of them said they were “highly likely” to buy from the black market again due to lower prices and no taxes. The same survey concluded that a 5% decrease in the tax rate could switch 23% of black market customers to buy from licensed businesses.

Source: Headset Cannabis Market Insights
**HEALTH**

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6817e1.htm

“As of April 26, 2019, CDC had reported 704 cases of measles in the United States since the beginning of 2019, representing the largest number of cases reported in the country in a single year since 1994, when 963 cases occurred, and since measles was declared eliminated in 2000. Measles is a highly contagious, acute viral illness characterized by fever and a maculopapular rash; complications include pneumonia, encephalitis, and death. Among the 704 cases, 503 (71%) were in unvaccinated persons and 689 (98%) occurred in U.S. residents. Overall, 66 (9%) patients were hospitalized.”

**HUMAN SERVICES**


 “[A]n annual average of 2.4 million children who were enrolled in Medi-Cal over the past five years have not received all of the preventive health services that the State has committed to provide them. Nearly half of California’s children receive medical care through Medi-Cal, a program that provides a safety net of health care services—including vital preventive services—to eligible children.... Despite the importance of these services, the use—or utilization rate —of preventive services by California’s children in Medi-Cal has been consistently below 50% and is ranked 40th in the country—nearly 10 percentage points below the national average.”

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

https://www.vermontlaw.edu/sites/default/files/2019-04/VLS_IEE_Electricity_Distribution_Grid_Cybersecurity_Phase_1%20Report%5B1%5D.pdf

California is one of several state case studies in this report, which examines the vulnerability of the nation’s electrical grid to cyberattack. “Adding millions of internet-connected home appliances to the grid management operations is creating new and unexpected points of access to a grid that was designed for a unidirectional utility-customer relationship. The pace of connections is accelerating which adds impetus to resolving obstacles now…. Balancing the benefits of protecting data, sharing information with regulators, or releasing information to the public is a tricky issue that California is grappling with and other states may eventually confront.”

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