

Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Completing the Goals of Trial Court Realignment. By Drew Soderborg. Legislative Analyst's Office. Sept. 2011. 20 p.

http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2011/crim/trial-court-realignment/Trial_Court_Realignment_092811.pdf.

In 1997, the Legislature adopted a series of statutory changes that shifted the responsibility of trial courts from the counties to the states. "In enacting these changes, the Legislature sought to create a trial court system that was more uniform in terms of standards, procedures, and performance standards. The Legislature also wanted to maintain a more efficient trial court system through the implementation of cost management and control systems." The LAO's investigation finds that realignment efforts have been incomplete in California. As a result, trial court costs have not been contained, a set of standard performance measures for California courts has not been adopted, and there is not an efficient division of work between the Administrative Office of the Courts and individual trial courts.

DEMOGRAPHY

Poverty: 2009 and 2010. American Community Survey Brief (ACSBR/10-01). By Alemayehu Bishaw. U.S. Census Bureau. Oct. 2011. 7 p.

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-01.pdf>

“According to the 2010 ACS [American Community Survey], 46.2 million people or about 15.3 percent of the U.S. population had income below their respective poverty threshold during the year. Compared with the 2009 ACS estimates, the number of people in poverty increased by 3.3 million and the poverty rate increased by 1.0 percentage point.” From 2009 to 2010, California’s poverty rate increased 1.6 percent.

How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty. U.S. Census Bureau.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>

The poverty computation is complex. The income level defining poverty is not the same across California, and not the same amount across the 50 states. The Census Bureau assembled this page to explain its methodology

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

Trends in the Distribution of Household Income Between 1979 and 2007. By Congressional Budget Office. Oct. 2011. 63 p.

<http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/124xx/doc12485/10-25-HouseholdIncome.pdf>

“Government policy has become less redistributive since the late 1970s, doing less to reduce the concentration in income, leading to: the top 1 percent of earners more than doubled their share of the nation’s income over the last three decades, climbing to 17% in 2007 from nearly 8% in 1979; and the most affluent fifth of the population exceeded the income of the other four-fifths of the population. In addition, federal benefit payments are doing less to even out the distribution of income, as a growing share of benefits, like Social Security, goes to older Americans, regardless of their income.” (New York Times, Oct. 25, 2011).

EDUCATION

Charter Management Organizations: Diverse Strategies and Diverse Student Impacts. By Joshua Ferguson, et al. Mathematica Policy Research and Center on Reinventing Public Education. Nov. 2011. 179 p.

http://www.edweek.org/media/%28cmo_final%20_report%2011%2002%2011.pdf

Charter management organizations (CMOs) en masse produce slightly higher test scores than other public schools (including other charter schools), but the difference is not statistically significant over a three-year period of measurement. Additionally, CMOs vary widely in their ability to produce better test scores. Some CMO students showed an average of three years of educational gain after two years of instruction while other CMO students showed only one year of gain in the same period. CMOs tend to educate more Black and Hispanic students than other schools in their district, but fewer English language learners and students with disabilities. Black and Hispanic students tend to show more academic gains in CMO run charters than other public schools, however, these gains vary widely between CMOs.

Refocusing California Community Colleges Toward Student Success. By California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force. Oct. 2011. 73 p.

http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/DocDownloads/PressReleases/SEP2011/PDF_%20Student_Success_Task_Force_Draft_Recommendations_Sept_2011.pdf

Key Task Force recommendations include developing common assessment tools to better measure new student skill levels, expanding use of technology to help students identify a program of study including appropriate courses and support services, enhancing professional development (faculty and staff) around needs of basic skills students, and changing resource allocation and strengthening statewide system oversight to align resources with student success goals.

ENERGY

***Business of Innovating: Bringing Low-Carbon Solutions to Market.* By Andrew Hargadon, Graduate School of Management, U.C. Davis. Pew Foundation. Oct. 2011. 142 p.**
<http://www.pewclimate.org/business-innovation/report>

"Climate change—and efforts to mitigate it—are creating an increasingly uncertain future for businesses. Today's policy environment, particularly in the United States, is creating an extraordinarily uncertain environment for business decision-making. Some companies, like those in the transportation sector, have some regulatory certainty in the form of fleet fuel economy standards, which enables them to commit to low-carbon innovations. But without such industry-wide standards in many sectors, the demand for low-carbon innovations is less clear...Opportunities for low-carbon innovations exist throughout the economy, especially anywhere that energy is used in the manufacture, delivery, and consumption of goods and services. And with world energy consumption expected to grow by 40 percent in the next two decades, these opportunities are growing. The replacement value of today's aging global energy supply infrastructure is estimated to be \$12 trillion...Between 2010 and 2020, the projected global cumulative total investment in clean energy generation alone is expected to reach \$2.3 trillion."

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

***Living with a Rising Bay.* By San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Sept. 2011. 162 p.**
<http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/BPA/LivingWithRisingBay.pdf>

"Residents, businesses and entire industries that currently thrive on the shoreline will be at risk of flooding by the middle of the century, and probably earlier, if nothing is done to protect, elevate or relocate them. A 16-inch rise (relative to sea level in 2000) would potentially expose 281 square miles of Bay shoreline to flooding...Approximately 72 percent of each of the San Francisco and Oakland Airports is at risk from a 16-inch sea level rise and about 93 percent of each is at risk from a 55-inch sea level rise, which could disrupt as many as 30 million airline passengers annually and approximately one million metric tons of cargo."

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Better Regulation: Improving California's Rulemaking Process.* By Little Hoover Commission. Oct. 2011. 81 p.**
<http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/209/Full%20Report.pdf>.

"California lack[s] statewide standards for economic analysis, and the practices of agencies [vary] widely...The Commission's recommendations, which are consistent with the direction set by SB 617 (Calderon and Pavley), now signed into law, are aimed at increasing transparency, efficiency and accountability with the goals of finding the least burdensome alternative to solving a regulatory problem and bolstering confidence in the regulatory process." (Commission press release)

“Comparing Wealth in Retirement: State-Local Versus Private Sector Workers.” By Alicia H. Munnell, et. al. *State and Local Pension Plans*, no. 21 (Oct. 2011) 16 p.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/67626957/Comparing-Wealth-in-Retirement-State-Local-Versus-Private-Sector-Workers>

Public pension sponsors have mistakenly assumed their employees' pensions have been too generous when compared to private sector pensions and have used this rationale for reducing pension costs in their revenue-strapped budgets. Pension costs are roughly comparable when wages and other benefits are added so as to compare each employee's total compensation package.

HEALTH

“Mortgage Delinquency and Changes in Access to Health Resources and Depressive Symptoms in a Nationally Representative Cohort of Americans Older Than 50 Years.” By Dawn E. Alley, et al. *American Journal of Public Health*, [electronic preprint] (Oct. 2011) 6 p.

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/AJPH.2011.300245v1?maxtoshow=&hits=10&RESULTFORM AT=&author1=Alley&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&resource type=HWCIT>.

Homeowners who fell behind on their mortgages were more likely than those who were current on their payments to develop elevated depressive symptoms, food insecurity, and cost-related prescription non-adherence, according to a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults over age 50. Respondents were initially asked about health indicators in 2006, then again in 2008. In 2008, they were also asked if they had fallen behind in their mortgage payments at any time in the previous two years. The change in health indicators from the initial survey was then compared between the two groups to find the delinquent group lacking in certain health indicators according to the researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Apples to Twinkies: Comparing Federal Subsidies of Fresh Produce and Junk Food. By Mike Russo, U.S. PIRG Education Fund. Sept. 2011. 15 p.

<http://www.uspirg.org/uploads/a0/6c/a06c37a077f3152e839e4b3fbbfc8a0a/Apples-to-Twinkies-web-vUS.pdf>

Between 1995 and 2010, American taxpayers spent over \$260 billion in agricultural subsidies. Most subsidies went to just a few commodity crops, including corn and soybeans, which food manufacturers process into additives like high fructose corn syrup and vegetable oils to provide a cheap dose of sweetness and fat to a wide variety of junk food products. Outside of commodity crops, other agricultural products receive very little in federal subsidies. Since 1995, taxpayers spent only \$262 million subsidizing apples, which is the only significant federal subsidy of fresh fruits or vegetables. Thus, Americans' tax dollars are directly subsidizing junk food ingredients. If these agricultural subsidies went directly to consumers to allow them to purchase food, each of America's 144 million taxpayers would be given \$7.36 to spend on junk food and 11 cents with which to buy apples each year – enough to buy 19 Twinkies but less than a quarter of one Red Delicious apple apiece.

HOUSING

The Suburbanization of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients. By Kenya Covington et al. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, Oct. 2011. 21 p.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/1011_housing_suburbs_covington_freeman_stoll/1011_housing_suburbs_covington_freeman_stoll.pdf

From 2000 to 2008, Housing Choice Voucher recipients (formerly known as Section 8) were increasingly becoming suburban residents, with some California cities exhibiting high increases in suburbanization. However, these recipients were not always likely to be moving into high-income areas -- considered to be

a gateway to greater job accessibility -- and, they may be bringing some urban problems with them: poverty, poor performing schools, and a lower tax base potential.

HUMAN SERVICES

***The Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard for California.* By Insight Center for Community Economic Development. Oct. 2011.**

<http://www.insightcced.org/index.php?page=ca-sss>

A county-by-county analysis: "In every county in California, the federal poverty level falls short of meeting basic needs: housing, food, child care, health care, transportation and other essential household expenses. The pre-tax income needed to make ends meet for a family of two working, married adults; a preschooler; and a primary school-aged child ranged from \$53,775 in Tulare County to \$86,629 in Marin County...For a family of four, the 2011 federal poverty level, which is based on the cost of food alone and does not take into account regional cost-of-living differences in the contiguous United States, is \$22,350." (California Watch, Oct. 4, 2011)

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