



Studies in the News

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Taking the First Step: Using Behavioral Economics to Help Incarcerated Parents Apply for Child Support Order Modifications. By Mary Farrell, et al. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. Aug. 2014. 64 p.

http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Taking_the_First_Step_FR.pdf

"This report presents findings from a behavioral intervention designed to increase the number of incarcerated noncustodial parents in Texas who apply for modifications to reduce the amount of their child support orders. [These] parents have a limited ability to pay their child support orders each month, due to their incarceration, which can lead to the accumulation of significant child support debt. The debt on release poses a serious barrier to reentry into society and regular employment, which, in turn, affects the parents' ability to provide adequate financial support to their children.... The intervention ...

demonstrated the promise of applying behavioral economics principles to improve program implementation and outcomes.”

ECONOMY

An Economy Doing Half Its Job: Findings of Harvard Business School's 2013-14 Survey on U.S. Competitiveness. By Michael E. Porter, et al. Harvard Business School. Sep. 2014. 40 p.
<http://www.hbs.edu/competitiveness/pdf/an-economy-doing-half-its-job.pdf>

This survey on U.S. competitiveness finds that while mid- to large-size firms and highly skilled workers are prospering, small businesses and middle- and working-class workers are struggling. The authors argue that such a disparity is creating an economy that weakens the competitiveness of the nation. The report explores the causes for such a divergence and actions that might effectively alleviate it. The report examined three areas where public policies might impact: the K-12 education system, workplace skills, and transportation infrastructure. The authors suggest that the viability of businesses depend upon a well-trained workforce and consumers able to purchase products and services.

EDUCATION

“The 46th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools: Part II.” By William J. Bushaw, et al. *Kaplan Magazine*, vol. 96, no. 2 (Oct. 2014) pp. 48-59.
http://pdkintl.org/noindex/PDKGallupPoll_Oct2014.pdf

This report provides information on “some of the specific ways that Americans believe state governments, local districts, and schools of education can improve teacher quality and student experiences.... Six of 10 Americans said entrance requirements into teacher preparation programs should be more rigorous. 61% of Americans opposed using student standardized test scores to evaluate teachers.... More Americans agree than disagree that students should have shorter summer breaks and longer breaks at other times of year—akin to a year-round school scenario.”

ENVIRONMENT

America's Dirtiest Power Plants: Polluters on A Global Scale. By Jordan Schneider, et al. Environment America Research & Policy Center. Sep. 2014. 47 p.
<http://www.environmentcaliforniacenter.org/reports/cac/america%E2%80%99s-dirtiest-power-plants>

“America's power plants are among the leading global sources of the dangerous carbon pollution that is fueling global warming.” Much of this impact is due to a small number of power plants. “In fact, the 50 dirtiest U.S. power plants alone—representing less than 1% of U.S. power plants—produced as much pollution in 2012 as the nation of South Korea (the world's seventh leading emitter of greenhouse gases).” California has been a leader in reducing the impacts from power plants. Only 13% of the state's total emissions are due to power plants, compared to 56% for Arizona and Missouri, 61% for Kentucky, 65% for Wyoming, and 73% for West Virginia.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Improving View of the Direction of the State and the Legislature Compared to Past Years: However, Big Differences by Region and Party Registration. Field Poll. Sep. 5, 2014. 6 p.

<http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2482.pdf>

“Californians are taking a more positive view of the direction of the state than then [they] did four years ago when near record proportions (80%) felt the state was seriously off on the wrong track. Currently, slightly more voters believe the state is moving in the right direction (43%) as feel it is off on the wrong track (41%). However, views about California’s overall direction vary considerably depending on where a voter lives and his or her party registration. Voters living in the state’s coastal counties and registered Democrats hold a much more positive assessment than do voters living in the state’s interior or those registered as Republicans.”

HEALTH

Report to the President on Combating Antibiotic Resistance. President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Sep. 2014. 78 p.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/PCAST/pcast_carb_report_sept2014.pdf

“Over the course of the 20th century, deaths from infectious diseases declined markedly and contributed to a substantial increase in life expectancy. Antibiotics, in particular, have saved millions of lives. But, the United States and the world are now at dire risk of losing this progress.” This report asserts that the government can combat the rise of resistance to antibiotic drugs. Among its recommendations: improve surveillance of the rise of resistant bacteria; increase the longevity of current antibiotics; and increase the rate at which new antibiotics are discovered and developed.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Responsiveness of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program during the Great Recession. By Ron Haskins, et al. Brookings. Aug. 2014. 61 p.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/08/responsiveness-tanf-great-recessions-haskins/responsiveness_tanf_great_recession_haskins

“The purpose of this study was to examine how TANF responded to increased unemployment and hardship during the Great Recession of 2007–2009.... TANF was the least responsive of the safety net programs examined here if responsiveness is measured by the increase in the caseload during the inclusive dates of the national recession.... [However,] we believe the performance of TANF should be viewed in the context of the responsiveness of the entire safety net, not just the TANF program itself. If the poor had received relatively little help from the safety net during the Great Recession, the modest responsiveness of the TANF program would be a bigger problem. But in fact, the safety net performed remarkably well during the Great Recession.”

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

E-mail Archiving Handbook for Government. AuthorityThree. Aug. 2014. 16 p.

<http://www.govtech.com/library/papers/The-Email-Archiving-Handbook-for-Government.html>

(Free registration required)

“The Email Archiving Handbook was created as a resource for state, city and local governments to understand legal ramifications and precedent as well as the difference between archiving and storage management and disaster recovery and to provide innovative ways to use your archive that provide a greater return on your investment.”

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

California Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility. TRIP. Sep. 2014. 22 p.

http://www.tripnet.org/docs/CA_Transportation_by_the_Numbers_TRIP_Report_Sep_2014.pdf

“Roads and bridges that are deficient, congested or lack desirable safety features cost California motorists a total of \$44 billion statewide annually—as high as nearly \$2,500 per driver—due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays ... throughout California, 34% of major urban roads and highways are in poor condition. More than a quarter of California’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.... Driving on deficient roads costs each California driver as much as \$2,458 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the cost of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor.”

VETERANS

Veterans Affairs: Better Understanding Needed to Enhance Services to Veterans Readjusting to Civilian Life. By Daniel Bertoni. Government Accountability Office. GAO-14-676. Sep. 2014. 51 p.

<http://gao.gov/assets/670/665725.pdf>

“Over the next 6 years, over 1 million servicemembers are expected to leave the military. As was the case with past generations of veterans, the transition from military to civilian life can be challenging for post-9/11 veterans as well. Over the last several years, veterans’ struggles to successfully readjust to civilian life have been the subject of numerous Congressional hearings.... This report examines what is known about (1) the extent to which veterans experience difficulties during their readjustment to civilian life; and (2) how VA assists veterans in their readjustment, as well as what challenges and opportunities exist.”

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