



Studies in the News

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

***Solitary Confinement: Common Misconceptions and Emerging Safe Alternatives.* By Alison Shames, et al. Vera Institute of Justice. May 2015. 36 p.**

<http://www.vera.org/pubs/solitary-confinement-misconceptions-safe-alternatives>

“Segregated housing, commonly known as solitary confinement, is increasingly being recognized in the United States as a human rights issue.... Evidence mounts that the practice produces many unwanted and harmful outcomes—for the mental and physical health of those placed in isolation, for the public safety of the communities to which most will return, and for the corrections budget of jurisdictions that rely on it for facility safety.... This publication is the first in a series on solitary confinement, its use and misuse, and ways to safely reduce it in our nation’s correctional facilities.”

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

The National Rise in Residential Segregation. By Trevon Logan, et al. National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper No. 20934. May 2015. 66 p.

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w20934>

“Analysis of neighbor-based segregation over time establishes several new facts about segregation. First, segregation doubled nationally from 1880 to 1940. Second, contrary to previous estimates, we find that urban areas in the South were the most segregated in the country and remained so over time. Third, the dramatic increase in segregation in the twentieth century was not driven by urbanization, black migratory patterns, or white flight to suburban areas, but rather resulted from a national increase in racial sorting at the household level. The likelihood that an African American household had a non-African American neighbor declined by more than 15 percentage points (more than a 25% decrease) through the mid-twentieth century.”

EDUCATION

The Economic Value of College Majors. By Anthony P. Carnevale, et al. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. May 2015. 214 p.

<https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/valueofcollegemajors/>

This study “uses Census Data to analyze wages for 137 college majors to detail the most popular college majors, the majors that are most likely to lead to an advanced degree, and the economic benefit of earning an advanced degree by undergraduate major. In our report, we find that top-paying college majors earn \$3.4 million more than the lowest-paying majors over a lifetime.... STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), health, and business majors are the highest paying, leading to average annual wages of \$37,000 or more at the entry level and an average of \$65,000 or more annually over the course of a recipient’s career.”

Magnolia Science Academies: Although the Financial Condition of These Charter Schools Has Improved, Their Financial Controls Still Need to Be Strengthened. By Elaine M. Howle. California State Auditor. May 2015. 85 p.

<http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2014-135.pdf>

“Although the financial condition of the academies improved, the Foundation must strengthen its financial and management processes. For example, we found that the Foundation often lacked authorization and support for its expenditures and the academies’ expenditures, which led us to question whether those expenditures represented appropriate uses of public funds.... We also found that the academies did not always follow the Foundation’s policies and procedures when holding fundraisers, creating the potential for the loss or theft of fundraising proceeds. Finally, we found that academy staff grossly underreported truancy data to the California Department of Education.”

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Cyclicalities and Firm Quality. By Lisa B. Kahn, et al. National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper No. 20698. May 2015. 47 p.

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w20698>

“Who fares worse in an economic downturn, low- or high-paying firms?... High-paying firms grow more quickly in booms and shrink more quickly in busts. We show that while during recessions separations fall in both high-paying and low-paying firms, the decline is stronger among low-paying firms.... Our findings

thus suggest that downturns hinder upward progression of workers toward higher paying firms—the job ladder partially collapses. Workers at the lowest paying firms are 20% less likely to advance in firm quality (as measured by average pay in a firm) in a bust compared to a boom.”

ENVIRONMENT

***American Environmental Policy: The Failures of Compliance, Abatement and Mitigation.* By Daniel Press. Edgar Elgar Publishing. 2015. 205 p.
(Available at the California State Library)**

The modern environmental regulation approach adopted in the United States since the 1970s can be characterized as one of “compliance, abatement, and mitigation.” American environmental policy attempts to preserve the ways that “we produce and use energy, use land, manufacture goods, build structures, and move ourselves around—provided the abuses of power mitigated, reduced or contained.” This book attempts to critique this approach as falling short of the goals and purposes of such regulation. Such regulatory failure can be due to agencies losing focus on their core mandates, the use of policy instruments ill-suited to the behavior they are attempting to regulate, or simple obstruction of otherwise effective agencies. The book provides specific examples of such regulatory failure under the existing framework, and identifies principles to follow for effective reforms.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***California’s Political Reforms: A Brief History.* By Eric McGhee, et al. Public Policy Institute of California. Apr. 2015.
Report. 39 p.: http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_415EMR.pdf
Technical Appendices. 19 p.: http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/other/415EMR_appendix.pdf**

“How does political reform happen in California? This report explores the dynamics that led to recent redistricting and primary system overhauls. It finds that the keys to success or failure are the coalitions policymakers build—and the tools they can use to fight or promote reform.” The report finds that such reforms in the state are often driven by the political elite trying to tap into general voter dissatisfaction with government, with decreasing numbers of engaged voters weighing in on whether the specific reforms would make the state better. (*PPIC*, Apr. 30, 2015).

HEALTH

***Medicaid at 50.* By Julie Paradise, et al. The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. May 2015. 40 p.
<http://kff.org/medicaid/report/medicaid-at-50/>**

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Medicaid program into law. This report provides a comprehensive history of the program and its role in the American health care system. “[W]e trace Medicaid’s evolution, discussing major legislative changes and other inflection points in the program’s history, both for the record and for perspective on Medicaid’s different roles in our health care system and how they developed. In doing so, we also show how Medicaid threads through our health care system today and take the measure of its impact.”

HUMAN SERVICES

Homelessness and the City of Los Angeles. By Miguel A. Santana. City of Los Angeles, Office of the City Administrative Officer. Apr. 16, 2015. 21 p.

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1906452-losangeleshomelessnessreport.html>

“Los Angeles spends about \$100 million annually on homelessness.... [A]bout \$87 million of the \$100 million spent annually on homeless individuals is used for arrests, mental health services, and patrols.... [A] total of 104,255 individuals who were arrested by the Los Angeles Police Department in 2013 were homeless, costing the department more than \$1 million in county, food and medical costs.... [P]aramedics—along with other city crews, such as sanitation, parks and recreation and librarians—spend a significant amount of resources on homeless individuals. According to the report, such professionals lack clear guidelines and coordinated approaches for handling the homeless population.” (*California Healthline*, Apr. 17, 2015).

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Sovereign Immunity for Public Airport Operators. By Marci A. Greenberger. Transportation Research Board of the National Academies. Mar. 2015. 188 p.

http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/acrp/acrp_lrd_024.pdf

“Since local governmental entities are not recognized as sovereigns in their own right, they derive their sovereign immunity from state legislation and exercise only those sovereign powers delegated to them by the states. Most public airports are owned and operated by units of local government or regional governmental authorities. Therefore, the extent of sovereign immunity granted to airports varies from state to state. This digest provides an overview of sovereign immunity as it applies to airports and provides a state-by-state summary of each state’s statutory authority and relevant case law.”

VETERANS

Exploring the Economic & Employment Challenges Facing U.S. Veterans: A Qualitative Study of Volunteers of America Service Providers & Veteran Clients. By Sara Kintzle, et al. USC School of Social Work. May 2015.

Report. 24 p.: http://www.voa.org/pdf_files/a-study-of-volunteers-of-america-service-providers-and-veteran-clients

Executive Summary. 2 p.: http://www.voa.org/pdf_files/exploring-the-economic-employment-challenges-facing-veterans-executive-summary

“Commissioned by Volunteers of America (VOA) as part of an ongoing effort to better understand the needs of their veteran clients and continuously improve veteran services, the purpose of this study was to explore the economic and employment challenges facing U.S. veterans today and identify best practices for helping impoverished veterans find and retain stable, living-wage jobs.” The study employs a literature review, one-on-one interviews with service providers, and focus groups to create a list of recommendations, including training programs and tailored assistance to veterans who received a less-than honorable discharge.

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