

Current Articles and Research Resources, February 8

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In this weekly post, we feature helpful research tools and recent articles of interest to the legislative community.

- Examine the causes of [recession](#). (EveryCRSReport.com, February 2, 2018)
- Review U.S. Supreme Court cases related to [redistricting](#). (National Conference of State Legislatures, January 30, 2018)
- Read about the job market for recent [law school graduates](#). (Gallup, ©2018)
- Consider how [pets](#) can help make their humans healthier. (National Institutes of Health, February 2018)
- Explore what makes [farmers' almanacs](#) so successful even today. (Topic, January 2018)

Members of the Texas legislative community may request the articles below [here](#) or by calling 512-463-1252.

- "Gerrymandering finally gets its day in court." By Peter Coy and Greg Stohr. *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 22, 2018, p. 39.
Discusses redistricting cases going before the United States Supreme Court. Mentions previous redistricting cases, including *LULAC v. Perry*, and considers how the Court may rule on the new cases.
- "California budget proposal includes online college." By Eric Kelderman. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 19, 2018, p. A33.
Highlights a budget proposal by California Governor Jerry Brown calling for a fully online community college. Explains this online, competency-based approach is similar to systems within the University of Wisconsin and the State University of New York.
- "One organization, seven decades, ten epic battles." By Rob Boston. *Church & State*, February 2018, pp. 8-13.
Recounts Americans United's advocacy in ten pivotal church-state separation cases.
- "Higher education: all must have degrees." *Economist*, February 3rd-9th, 2018, pp. 51-52.
Reports the financial returns for a university degree are falling and even less of a financial boost for university dropouts.
- "Oklahoma's schools: five into four." *Economist*, February 3rd-9th, 2018, p. 27.
Explains the effect of deep tax cuts on state and school finances in Oklahoma and Kansas. Notes Oklahoma is losing teachers to nearby states, and many school districts have moved to a four-day week.
Related information at: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-punishing-decade-for-school-funding>
- "Picking up speed." By Craig McDaniel. *Fort Worth Business Press*, Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 2018, pp. 10-11, 28.
Highlights several passenger rail projects set to transform Fort Worth and North Texas and ease traffic congestion along I-35.
- "Rethinking infrastructure in an era of unprecedented weather events." By Thaddeus R. Miller, Mikhail Chester, and Tischa A. Muñoz-Erickson. *Issues in Science and Technology*, Winter 2018, pp. 46-58.
Considers the costs of infrastructure maintenance and improvement in the context of frequent severe weather events such as storms, floods, and fires.
- "Ambitious state tax reform proposals to watch in 2018." By Robert C. Guth. *Journal of MultiState Taxation and Incentives*, February 2018, pp. 22-27, 46.
Examines five "unconventional" state tax reform proposals to follow in 2018, including Texas' franchise tax, or "margin tax," as an example of corporate income tax reform and simplification.
- "Differences in cigarette use and the tobacco environment among youth living in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas." By Debra H. Bernat and Kelvin Choi. *Journal of Rural Health*, Winter

2018, pp. 80-87.

Reports that rural middle and high school students were more likely than urban adolescents to engage in various levels of smoking behaviors. Points out that the rural teenagers also were more likely to have seen tobacco ads when visiting stores.

- "NAFTA under the gun." By Gary Hufbauer and Euijin Jung. *Milken Institute Review*, First Quarter 2018, pp. 26-37.
Discusses the history and economic and political impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and speculates on alternative scenarios for the current negotiations.
- "Rebuilding America's infrastructure." By Robert Puentes. *Milken Institute Review*, First Quarter 2018, pp. 58-66.
Illustrates a "big picture" perspective on public infrastructure policy that goes beyond a crisis-driven approach. Redirects focus to new federal responsibilities, interstate and regional partnerships, creation of a national infrastructure commission, and financing through infrastructure banks.
- "Pricing renewables: public power puts customers first." By Peter Maloney. *Public Power*, January/February 2018, pp. 16-20.
Considers how to price renewable energy resources by providing examples, including Austin Energy's value of solar tariff model.
- "Rebates: dollars alone are not enough." By John Egan. *Public Power*, January/February 2018, pp. 22-27.
Examines factors that contribute to a successful utility rebate program. Includes an example of a utility that partnered with an Austin-based efficiency concierge service.
- "Sanctuary churches take in immigrants and take on Trump." By Shikha Dalmia. *Reason*, February 2018, pp. 18-27.
Reviews the history of the sanctuary church movement and the previous United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement policy of not pursuing undocumented aliens in churches or other "sensitive locations" such as hospitals, schools, and courts. Discusses how that policy might change under the Trump administration.
- "How tariffs could impact local solar industry." *San Antonio Business Journal*, January 26, 2018, p. 10.
Examines the possible effects of raising tariffs on solar panels and solar cells. Suggests prices could go up if solar panel companies and installers stockpile solar panels.
- "Texas sees coverage gains under health care act." By Anil Kumar. *Southwest Economy (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas)*, Fourth Quarter 2017, pp. 3-7, 20.
Analyzes the decline in Texas' medically uninsured rate after implementation of the *Affordable Care Act* [ACA] and an increase in private health insurance coverage. Contrasts Texas' Medicaid coverage and uninsured rates with Medicaid expansion states.
- "Prison by any other name." By Michael Barajas. *Texas Observer*, Feb./March 2018, pp. 22-29.
Investigates problems with the Texas Civil Commitment Center, a treatment facility for sex offenders, run by a for-profit prison contractor. Argues this facility, despite legislative reforms made in 2015 to the civil commitment program, is essentially a prison rather than a treatment facility — making it vulnerable to legal challenges. Mentions Senator John Whitmire.
- "Senfronia Thompson says #MeToo." By Sophie Novack. *Texas Observer*, Feb./March 2018, pp. 10-11.
Interviews Representative Senfronia Thompson regarding her experience with sexism and racism during her 45 years in the Texas Legislature. Addresses her views on the progress made in the 85th Legislature and her top priorities for the 2019 session.

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