

Greetings:

Below is the Policy News Update for the month of September 2015. We hope you find the articles informative and help support your work going forward. Please continue to share your thoughts on how we can improve this policy scan to make it more useful for your office.

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Check out the City of Philadelphia's Best Practices Website that promotes research-informed policy developments.

<http://www.phila.gov/bestpractices/Pages/default.aspx>

Fall 2015 Public Policy Case Competition

The City of Philadelphia is pleased to announce the Fall 2015 Public Policy Case Competition. This competition, which is open to all undergraduate and graduate students, will allow students to engage directly with public policy at the municipal level by creating a proposal to address the following prompt:

"What is your vision for Philadelphia in 2020 and what one thing can the City of Philadelphia do to accomplish that vision?"

Since the competition was created by Mayor Nutter in 2014, we have been fortunate to hear many thoughtful and creative proposals from local students. Once again, we are looking forward to considering the proposals that will be submitted. We appreciate your assistance in distributing this information.

Key Article Highlights:

Understanding the Historic Divergence Between Productivity and a Typical Worker's Pay: Why It Matters and Why it's Real | Economic Policy Institute | By Josh Bivens and Lawrence Mishel | September 2, 2015

Wage stagnation experienced by the vast majority of American workers has emerged as a central issue in economic policy debates, with candidates and leaders of both parties noting its importance. This is a welcome development because it means that economic inequality has become a focus of attention and that policymakers are seeing the connection between wage stagnation and inequality.

<http://www.epi.org/publication/understanding-the-historic-divergence-between-productivity-and-a-typical-workers-pay-why-it-matters-and-why-its-real/>

Does School Choice Affect Gentrification? Posing the Question and Assessing the Evidence| Urban Institute| By Jordan Reed and Megan Gallagher| September 10, 2015

This brief raises awareness of how education policies may relate to neighborhood change in urban districts by examining the relationship between school choice and gentrification.

<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/does-school-choice-affect-gentrification>

L.A. to declare ‘state of emergency’ on homelessness, commit \$100 million| Los Angeles Times| By Peter Jamison, David Zahniser and Matt Hamilton| September 22, 2015

Los Angeles’ elected leaders on Tuesday said they would declare a “state of emergency” and devote up to \$100 million to the problem. But they offered few details about where the money would come from or how it would be spent, leaving some to question the effort’s chances of success.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-homeless-funding-proposals-los-angeles-20150921-story.html>

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Economic Development and Job Creation

SBA helps cities put entrepreneurs on the fast track| GCN| By Amanda Ziadeh| September 1, 2015

The Small Business Administration hopes to help local governments around the nation make the permitting and licensing process for entrepreneurs easier and less time consuming through \$1.6 million in funding for competition winners. The “Startup in a Day” initiative, led by the SBA and the White House, awarded 25 cities and two Native American communities with \$50,000 each as winners in the Start Small category.

http://gcn.com/articles/2015/09/01/sba-startup-in-a-day.aspx?admgarea=TC_STATELOCAL

Fed: Economy expanded moderately in July and August | USA Today | By Paul Davidson | September 2, 2015

The U.S. economy grew a bit more slowly from early July to mid August as consumer spending accelerated but a strong dollar continued to weigh on manufacturers. While manufacturing activity generally advanced, the strong dollar bolstered imports and hurt exports, and low oil prices continue to crimp energy investment. Consumer spending picked up on brisk auto sales, but at a slower pace than previously reported.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2015/09/02/beige-book-august/71583486/>

Low-wage workers are about to get some of the biggest raises they've ever seen | Washington Post | By Lydia DePhillis | September 3, 2015

To date, there isn't much evidence that the modest wage increases that have taken effect in recent decades have significantly reduced business' willingness to hire. An economic analysis by the Urban Institute last summer projected that raising the minimum wage in Washington to \$11.50 by 2016 would have a minimal negative impact on employment, and raise wages for 41,000 people, one in five of whom fall under the federal poverty line.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/09/03/minimum-wage-workers-are-about-to-get-some-of-the-biggest-raises-theyve-ever-seen/>

What cities tell us about the economy | FT Magazine | By Tim Hartford | September 18, 2015

The economic indicators that surround us are familiar, as are the criticisms they attract. The consumer prices index doesn't fully capture the boon of new products; unemployment figures do not count workers who have given up the job hunt in despair; gross domestic product (GDP) includes bad things if they have a market price, and excludes good things if they don't.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4f1ccb30-5cb4-11e5-a28b-50226830d644.html>

Education

More Homework Won't Make American Students Smarter | New Republic | By Geraldine K. LeTendre | September 1, 2015

There are many parents who feel that from early on, children need to do homework if they are to succeed in an increasingly competitive academic culture. School administrators and policy makers have also weighed in, proposing various policies on homework. So, does homework help or hinder kids?

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/122685/more-homework-wont-make-american-students-smarter>

Back to school a mixed picture for U.S. young adults | Brookings Institute | By Martha Ross | September 1, 2015

It's back-to-school time, the annual ritual marking the end of summer and one of this country's most widely shared rites of passage. Even so, the flood of youth and young adults into schools and classrooms every fall does not include everyone. One in five high school students does not graduate, not every high school graduate goes to college, and not every college student completes his or her degree. The effects of education on employment and earnings are stark.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2015/09/01-back-to-school-young-adults-ross>

Assessing the Nation's Most Ambitious Education Reforms in Memphis, Tennessee |
Governing | By John Buntin | September 2015

Throughout the 2014-2015 school year, Governing has tracked efforts to turn around one Memphis, Tenn., high school. As states around the country embrace Tennessee's turnaround model, the experience of this Memphis high school shows policymakers about its potential and perils.

<http://www.governing.com/topics/education/gov-memphis-education-reform-part-four.html>

SAT scores at lowest level in 10 years, fueling worries about high schools | Washington Post |
By Nick Anderson | September 3, 2015

Scores on the SAT have sunk to the lowest level since the college admission test was overhauled in 2005, adding to worries about student performance in the nation's high schools. The average score for the Class of 2015 was 1490 out of a maximum 2400, the College Board reported. The steady decline in SAT scores and generally stagnant results from high schools on federal tests and other measures reflect a troubling shortcoming of education-reform efforts.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/sat-scores-at-lowest-level-in-10-years-fueling-worries-about-high-schools/2015/09/02/6b73ec66-5190-11e5-9812-92d5948a40f8_story.html

Politicians Love 'Universal' Preschool. If Only They Could Decide What It Means. |
Stateline | September 4, 2015

Policymakers in Minnesota, like many across the country, have been impressed by studies that show early education can improve a child's life and save taxpayers money over the long term. But while there's a growing consensus on the value of preschool, states disagree on where the programs should be based, who should run them, or how the government should support them.

http://www.governing.com/topics/education/states-agree-on-need-for-preschool-differ-on-definition.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_content=email&utm_campaign=Paid%20Family%20Leave%20Gets%20New%20Momentum%20in%20States&utm_term=Politicians%20Love%20%27Universal%27%20Preschool.%20If%20Only%20They%20Could%20Decide%20What%20It%20Means

10 Years In, Tulsa's Pre-K Investment is Paying Off | nprEd | By Claudio Sanchez | September 8, 2015

Researchers have been tracking Jose Arriaga since he was 4 years old, waiting for the day he would start ninth grade. This fall, Jose is a freshman at Booker T. Washington High School, a selective public school in north Tulsa, Okla. Researchers who've been studying preschoolers in Tulsa say the same is true for most of the children who entered the city's pre-K program in 2005.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/09/08/438354999/10-years-in-tulsas-pre-k-investment-is-paying-off>

Colleges to offer new joint application website | Los Angeles Time | By Larry Gordon | September 28, 2015

Starting next year, high school students will have a new online alternative to the much-used and sometimes criticized Common Application if they seek admission to a group of colleges with high graduation rates and healthy financial aid, officials announced Monday. Eighty-three colleges and universities have formed a coalition to create a joint application portal that they said would make the process more engaging and less intimidating.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-ln-college-applications-20150928-story.html>

Environment and Sustainability

To comply with the Clean Power Plan, states should tax carbon | Brookings Institute | By Adele Morris Evan Weber | September 2, 2015

Two years ago, President Obama instructed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to begin regulating emissions from our nation's largest source: electric power plants. Under its Clean Air Act authority, the EPA recently released a final rule that sets state-specific emissions limits for 2030 and outlines ways states can achieve their targets. A carbon tax could be the most easily administrable and cost-effective compliance approach.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/02-comply-clean-power-plan-states-should-tax-carbon-morris-weber>

Energy Department Announces \$70 Million for Innovation Institute on Smart Manufacturing | Energy.Gov | September 16, 2015

The Department of Energy is announcing up to \$70 million in funding for the next Clean Energy Manufacturing Innovation Institute, which will be focused on smart manufacturing. With this investment, the Department aims to support research and development advancements that can reduce the cost of deployment for technologies such as advanced sensors, controls, platforms, and modeling for manufacturing by as much as 50 percent.

<http://energy.gov/articles/energy-department-announces-70-million-innovation-institute-smart-manufacturing>

Global Leaders Launch Women In Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER) Initiative At New York City Event| Business Wire| By Samantha Doherty| September 28, 2015

Founded by Masdar, Abu Dhabi's renewable energy company, and the Zayed Future Energy Prize, WiSER aims to empower and inspire women to be catalysts of innovation and the drivers of commercial solutions that will address climate change and the secure access of food, energy and water.

<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150929006846/en/Global-Leaders-Launch-Women-Sustainability-Environment-Renewable#.VhP09-xVhBc>

Lennar Demonstrates Sustainability Can Be Affordable as Innovative Solar Energy Programs Expands to Texas| PR Newswire| September 30, 2015

Lennar, one of the nation's largest homebuilders, joined leaders from the City of Austin and Austin Energy, as well as Texas policymakers, to open the city's first solar-standard community made possible by recent changes in utility regulations – demonstrating that environmental sustainability and new-home affordability can go hand-in-hand.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/lennar-demonstrates-sustainability-can-be-affordable-as-innovative-solar-energy-program-expands-to-texas-300151545.html>

Finance

Twin Cities, U of M partner to drive growth through tech| Finance & Commerce| By Karlee Weinmann| September 15, 2015

Officials from Minneapolis and St. Paul signed onto a \$160 million federal initiative using technology to help cities nationwide boost economic growth, sustainability and competitiveness. The Smart Cities program, a product of the Obama administration launched Monday afternoon, urges collaboration between proven innovators and cities to tackle barriers.

<http://finance-commerce.com/2015/09/twin-cities-u-of-m-partner-to-drive-growth-through-tech/#ixzz3no6cgWNQ>

Global Review: a look at the WEF's Human Capital Report 2015 | World Finance | September 15, 2015

Higher-ranked countries better develop and deploy their human capital in terms of skill, education and employment, across all age groups.

<http://www.worldfinance.com/infrastructure-investment/government-policy/global-review-a-look-at-the-wefs-human-capital-report-2015>

Bill de Blasio Begins to Divest New York City Coal Investments | Newsweek | By Zoe Schlanger | September 29, 2015

De Blasio launched a campaign to remove the city's five pension funds from coal industry investments on Tuesday. The funds' total assets exceed \$160 million—at least \$33 million of which is tied to coal, according to a statement from the mayor's office. Each of the five funds control pensions for city workers like firefighters, teachers and other government employees.

<http://www.newsweek.com/coal-divestment-new-york-city-pension-funds-de-blasio-377915>

Louisiana Election 2015: Should Governments Pay Taxes to Other States? | Governing | By Liz Farmer | September 29, 2015

Louisiana is letting voters decide whether local governments should be allowed to tax property in their borders that's owned by other governments. Louisiana's constitution doesn't clarify that the public-use exemption only applies to property owned by a *Louisiana* government, so outside state and local governments don't have to pay a tax either.

<http://www.governing.com/topics/finance/gov-louisiana-property-tax-out-of-state-governments-2015-election-ballot.html>

Health, Housing, and Opportunity

After Playing Down a Homeless Crisis, de Blasio Changes Course | NY Times | By Matt Flegenheimer et al | September 1, 2015

The mayor and his team have seized on the issue in public and in private, discussing a series of changes intended to stem the crisis. The issue of homelessness has proved particularly bedeviling for the mayor — a municipal minefield of muddled messaging, decades-long policy struggles and the political peril that can visit any elected leader if residents sense heightened disorder on the streets.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/nyregion/de-blasio-tackling-the-perception-and-reality-of-a-homeless-crisis.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&r=0>

Without Government Safety Net Programs, Millions Would Be in Poverty| Economic Policy Institute| By David Cooper| September 22, 2015

Social Security was by far the most powerful anti-poverty program in the United States last year, keeping 25.9 million people out of poverty. Refundable tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit, kept 9.8 million people out of poverty. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), kept 4.7 million people out of poverty, while other targeted programs made it possible for millions more to keep their heads above water.

<http://www.epi.org/publication/without-government-safety-net-programs-millions-more-would-be-in-poverty/>

Two Anti-Poverty Strategies | Brookings Institute| By Richard V. Reeves | September 2, 2015

There are two strategic approaches to tackling poverty. Strategy 1: raise the incomes of those with low incomes. Strategy 2: reduce the knock-on effects of having a low income on housing, schooling, safety, health or health care.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/02-two-anti-poverty-strategies-reeves>

Mayor Introduces Legislation to Build New Affordable Housing| Sustainable City Network| By City of Seattle| September 7, 2015

Mayor Ed Murray and Councilmember Mike O'Brien introduced legislation that will create 6,000 units of affordable housing throughout Seattle. The proposal comes from the Mayor and City Council's 28-member Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda advisory committee, and has been hailed as a "Grand Bargain" between affordable housing advocates and real estate developers.

http://www.sustainablecitynetwork.com/topic_channels/development/article_5448b17e-55a1-11e5-8742-5b557f83b353.html

U.S. to Give Almost \$700 million in Grants to Improve Patient Care| The Wall Street Journal| By Stephanie Armour| September 29, 2015

Dozens of doctors' offices, hospitals and other health groups will get almost \$700 million to improve patient care as part of the Obama administration's initiative to overhaul payment models for medical providers.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-give-almost-700-million-in-grants-to-improve-patient-care-1443538838>

Public Safety

Murder Rates Rising Sharply in Many U.S. Cities| The New York Times| By Monica Davey and Mitch Smith| August 31, 2015

Cities across the nation are seeing a startling rise in murders after years of declines, and few places have witnessed a shift as precipitous as this city. With the summer not yet over, 104 people have been killed this year. More than 30 other cities have also reported increases in violence from a year ago. Law enforcement experts say disparate factors are at play in different cities, though no one is claiming to know for sure why murder rates are climbing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/01/us/murder-rates-rising-sharply-in-many-us-cities.html>

How Libraries Have Embraced Their Role in the Public Safety Net| Pacific Standard| September 23, 2015

Librarians have long acknowledged that their places of employment act as de facto daytime homeless shelters in many cities. Libraries are, after all, public places where folks can get free access to the Internet, read, entertain themselves, learn how to get services like housing vouchers, and simply stay warm. Employees in city libraries estimate they get 680 to 780 homeless patrons a day, according to the Times.

<http://www.psmag.com/politics-and-law/homeless-library-patrons>

CMPD considers no-go areas for criminals| The Charlotte Observer| By Steve Harrison| September 29, 2015

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and Charlotte City Council are discussing whether to create “public safety zones,” city areas where people with past arrests would be prohibited from entering. Under the controversial proposal, Chief Kerr Putney could designate a high-crime area as a safety zone in response to crimes such as drug sales or discharging guns that were committed on public property.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article36967686.html#storylink=cpy>

Cities and States Prepare to Host Syrian Refugees| Governing| By Sophie Quinton| September 29, 2015

The U.S. plans to increase the number of refugees it takes from 70,000 to 100,000 over the next two years. New York, Los Angeles and 16 other cities have urged President Barack Obama to accept even more refugees from Syria. The increase could strain America’s sprawling refugee admissions program, a partnership between the federal government, international organizations like the United Nations, nine national nonprofits and their hundreds of local affiliates.

<http://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/are-cities-and-states-prepared-to-host-more-refugees.html>

What the FBI Can't Tell Us About Crime| The Atlantic| By Matt Ford| September 29, 2015

The FBI says violent crime fell again across the nation last year, continuing a two-decade-long downward trend. The 2014 edition of the Uniform Crime Report released Monday said violent crime dropped nationwide by 0.2 percent. The UCR is the most well-known measure of crime in the United States, but it's not flawless.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/09/what-the-fbi-cant-tell-us-about-crime/407908/>

Transportation, Infrastructure, and Utilities

Houston's infrastructure problem could choke city's growth| Business Journal| By Roxanna Asgarian| September 10, 2015

Houston's infrastructure — including water and sewer lines, roads and bridges, and stormwater systems — is crumbling, and the problem needs a multibillion-dollar solution, said Jim Thompson, a civil engineer who is regional chief executive at Los Angeles-based AECOM Technology Corp. "Houston's seen solid and steady growth which has put continued stress on our infrastructure," Thompson said.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/breaking-ground/2015/09/houstons-infrastructure-problem-could-choke-citys.html>

What does it take to make a city smart?| World Finance| By Elizabeth Matsangou| September 17, 2015

Despite covering just two percent of the globe's surface, more than half of the world's population now lives in cities, consuming approximately 75 percent of mankind's resources. Rapid urbanization has pressured leaders to rethink the ways in which cities are run – Elizabeth Matsangou explores what it takes for a metropolis to become sustainable amid a range of complex challenges.

<http://www.worldfinance.com/infrastructure-investment/government-policy/what-does-it-take-to-make-a-city-smart>

Governor signs local infrastructure financing bill in win for Summit| California Economy| By Justin Ewers| September 23, 2015

As part of a high-profile effort to provide local governments with more local economic development tools, the governor signed a package of bills yesterday that includes a major new expansion of local infrastructure financing authority supported by the California Economic Summit.

<http://www.caeconomy.org/reporting/entry/governor-signs-local-infrastructure-financing-bill-in-win-for-summit>

17 Metros Get Grants for Transit-Oriented Development Planning| Next City| By Josh Cohen| September 28, 2015

In a nod to the importance of comprehensive land use planning around transit lines, the Federal Transportation Administration recently granted \$19.5 million to transportation agencies, cities and regional governments around the U.S. The pilot program is meant to encourage residential and commercial transit-oriented development in order to maximize investments and bolster ridership for new lines.

<https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/transit-oriented-development-planning-federal-agency-fta>