

Current Articles & Research Resources, December 19

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

- Consider how many homeowners are interested in having **solar panels** installed on their homes. (Pew Research Center, December 17, 2019)
- Review a map of recent **flu** activity. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2019)
- Read the **Natural Resources** newsletter, new from the Texas Comptroller's office. (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, December 12, 2019)
- Explore current and archived **economic indicators**. (U. S. Census Bureau, 2019)

Members of the Texas legislative community may request the articles below **here** or by calling 512-463-1252.

- "**Why it feels like everything is going haywire.**" By Jonathan Haidt and Tobias Rose-Stockwell. *Atlantic Monthly*, December 2019, pp. 57-60.
Explores the evolution of social media to explain how it has changed political discourse. Suggests reforms that would make social media more constructive and less destructive.
- "**Warning: Our schools contain vaping.**" By Sarah Gray. *ATPE News (Association of Texas Professional Educators)*, Winter 2019, pp. 22-25.
Discusses the problem of vaping in Texas schools. Provides statistics on e-cigarette usage in schools and mentions **SB21**, 86th Legislature, which raised the age for using tobacco products to 21.
- "Threat to booze startups' profits emerges in D.C." By Paul Thompson. *Austin Business Journal*, December 6, 2019, p. 16.
Reports on a federal excise tax break for craft distilleries that is set to expire on December 31, 2019. Notes that without this tax break, a significant number of "mom and pop" distilleries will go out of business. Related information at: <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr1175/BILLS-116hr1175ih.pdf>.
- "What happens after misconduct on campus?" By Emma Pettit. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 29, 2019, pp. A22, A24.
Considers what actions should be taken by the professor, department, and institution after sexual misconduct has occurred. Highlights the case of University of Texas at Austin professor Coleman Hutchison and the steps the university is taking in response to student protests.
- "Abuzz over new crop." By Ellyn Ferguson. *CQ Weekly*, December 2, 2019, pp. 32-34.
Discusses intent of recent federal hemp regulation. Addresses the challenges of encouraging the fledgling hemp industry and deterring marijuana growers. Mentions hemp production legislation in Texas and Ohio.
- "Energy storage: To have and to hold." *Economist*, November 30th-December 6th, 2019, pp. 60-61.

Reports the battery industry faces several barriers to broader energy storage deployment, as well as a patchwork of rules and regulations.

- "For many young people, H.S. diploma enough for success." By Catherine Gewertz. *Education Week*, November 27, 2019, p. 5.
Summarizes results of two **surveys conducted** on the value of a college degree. Discusses why a number of Americans believe a high school diploma is sufficient for achieving success.
- "Declines in pediatric mortality fall short for rural US children." By Janice C. Probst, Whitney Zahnd, and Charity Breneman. *Health Affairs*, December 2019, pp. 2069-2076.
Reports that rural children experienced higher mortality rates than urban children, with non-Hispanic black infants and American Indian/Alaska Native children being particularly at risk. Recommends ongoing surveillance of rural children's health, and policies targeting the leading causes of death in rural populations, unintentional injury and suicide.
- "**Rural hospitals: Here today, gone tomorrow.**" By Nick Bowman. *Internet Resource*, November 2019, pp. 1-24.
Discusses the recent struggles of rural hospitals and federal efforts to support them through loans, grants, and Medicare reimbursement. Reviews legislation by the fifteen Southern Legislative Conference member states that addresses rural health and rural hospitals.
- "**Surprise bills vary by diagnosis and type of admission.**" By Karen Pollitz, et al. *Internet Resource*, December 9, 2019, pp. 1-5.
Analyzes surprise medical bills and finds that certain groups of patients — patients with surgical and mental health admissions, heart attack patients, and women undergoing mastectomies — may have a higher risk of surprise bills.
- "**What can the United States learn from pharmaceutical spending controls in France?**" By Marc A. Rodwin. *Internet Resource*, November 2019, pp. 1-11.
Examines France's system of pharmaceutical price and spending controls as a case study. Identifies potential approaches that private and public payers in the United States could use to reduce drug spending without restricting access to new drugs.
- "**Risk sharing: How to hold colleges accountable for the education they provide.**" By Beth Akers. *Issue Brief (Manhattan Institute)*, December 10, 2019, pp. 1-7.
Analyzes how the federal government can better measure college quality in order to police access to its student aid.
- "Cannabidiol products are everywhere, but should people be using them?" By Rita Rubin. *JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)*, December 10, 2019, pp. 2156-2158.
Observes the recent explosion of the CBD [cannabidiol] market, with products ranging from seizure medication and dietary supplements to bath salts and dog biscuits. Considers the problem of determining which CBD products are legal and calls for more research studies to ensure CBD's safe usage.
- "The opioid crisis, corporate responsibility, and lessons from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement." By Cheryl Heaton, Robert Pack, and Sandro Galea. *JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)*, December 3, 2019, pp. 2071-2072.
Considers how to frame a potential opioid Master Settlement Agreement [MSA], using lessons learned from the tobacco MSA. Proposes that the opioid settlement should create funds dedicated exclusively to proven public health approaches to

directly address the opioid epidemic.

- "Medicaid use among older low-income Medicare enrollees in California and Texas: A tale of two states." By Jacqueline L. Angel, Ronald J. Angel, and Phillip Cantu. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*, December 2019, pp. 885-909. Examines Medicaid participation data among Medicare recipients 65 and older in California and Texas, with a particular focus on the older Mexican-origin population. Reports that Texans were more likely than Californians to report coverage at some point in the 17-year follow-up.
- "The public pension slow burn: When is the flash point?" By Thomas J. Healey. *Milken Institute Review*, Fourth Quarter 2019, pp. 63-66, 68-70. Explores the public pension funding gap in five states — New Jersey, Kentucky, Illinois, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania — that comprises more than a third of the total unfunded pension liabilities in all 50 states combined.
- "Renewable natural gas: What can we do to move ahead?" By Andreas Thanos, et al. *Public Utilities Fortnightly*, December 2019, pp. 28-31, 63. Discusses recent efforts by states to address renewable natural gas [RNG].
- "Tiny homes for Austin's homeless." By Chris Mbody. *Reason*, January 2020, pp. 35-40. Profiles Austin's Mobile Loaves and Fishes and its Community First! Village providing housing and community for some of Austin's homeless population.
- "The Texas attorney discipline system." By Seana Willing. *Texas Bar Journal*, December 2019, pp. 844-845. Examines the initial impact of the Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations to improve the efficiency of the attorney disciplinary system, following the State Bar's sunset review process and legislative changes enacted by SB302, 85th Legislature, R.S.
- "Q&A: Food allergies in children." By David Doolittle. *Texas Medicine*, December 2019, pp. 6-7. Interviews Austin allergist Allen Lieberman, who asserts that there is a food-allergy epidemic right now. Notes SB66, 84th Legislature, which allowed schools to have undesignated epinephrine that can be used for any child experiencing an allergic reaction.

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