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

- Explore Americans’ perceptions of the news media. (Gallup, January 17, 2018)
- Read about the legislative process in Congress. (Congressional Research Service, January 10, 2018)
- Consider which drugs are causing lethal overdoses. (FiveThirtyEight, January 17, 2018)
- Examine the costs of severe weather events. (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2018)

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

  Highlights several states’ efforts to change minimum-age marriage laws and to prohibit forced marriages.
  Reports on the decline in the number of individuals taking and passing the General Equivalency Diploma [GED] exam. Addresses the need for the state to follow students who receive a high school equivalency and track their career and educational outcomes.
  Interviews Ruth J. Simmons, former president of Brown University and current president of Prairie View A&M University, about her career and coming out of the closet to guide Prairie View.
  Discusses current research correlating low education levels in areas of economic malaise with poorer health outcomes.
  Examine how states might try to circumvent the new federal tax law.
  Examines opioid-driven hospitalizations in the United States. Finds that while the total volume has remained stable, it has shifted from diagnoses involving opioid dependence toward those centered on opioid or heroin poisoning, with patients more likely to be white, ages 50-64, Medicare beneficiaries with disabilities, and residents of low-income areas.
  Reports that only 4.6 percent of justice-referred clients received such treatment, compared to 40.9 percent of those referred by other sources.
- “Five ethical values to guide health systems reform.” By Lawrence O. Gostin. JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association), December 12, 2017, pp. 2171-2172.
  Outlines five critical values for health care reform - universal access, equitable access, affordable access (cost), quality, and choice. Explains the trade-offs and why certain values should take priority.
  Examines whether an increase in state fiscal effort for education is associated with decreased juvenile incarceration rates over the last 25 years in all 50 states.
  Examines how legal challenges against school finance lawsuits affected inequality in school funding within states from 1990 to 2011. Finds adequacy litigation helped reduce inequality during the 1990-2000 period, but in contrast, from 2001-2011 in which there were fewer lawsuits, revenue inequality increased.
  Speculates on the future of the Democratic Party in Texas and examines the revival of progressive-populist politics in the state.
  Examines the history of boom and bust in the Texas energy industry and the role the industry currently plays in the Texas economy. Discusses the industrialization of communities and environmental concerns in areas of intensive drilling.
  See: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/01/the-dark-bounty-of-texas-oil
  Explores how renewable energy, conservation, and efficiency can provide a new vision for United States water operations.
- “And industry and government partner to secure the grid.” By Nidhi Chaudhry. Public Power, November/December 2017, pp. 12-17.
  Argues that, with the increasing complexity of the electric grid, it has become more critical for coordinated efforts across the industry and with federal agencies to appropriately respond to growing threats. Mentions disaster preparedness in Houston prior to Hurricane Harvey.
  See: https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/industry-and-government-partner-secure-grid
  Reports the lack of funding from gas taxes and the growing popularity of fuel-efficient cars means more states are likely to impose tolls on “free” roads or build more toll-only lanes in 2018.
  Points out upcoming changes to Texas child support laws, enacted by SB550, 84th Legislature, R.S.
  Argues whether the United States Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriage can be applied retroactively to same-sex couples married informally through common-law before the date of enactment, June 26, 2015.
  Highlights a recent report by the State Bar of Texas which suggests that the State Counsel for Offenders suffers from a conflict of interest between its mission and its position as an office within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.