

April 2011

CONGRESS

AFRICAN AMERICAN MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS: 1870-2011

Congressional Research Service, April 8, 2011

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/161333.pdf>

There are 44 African Americans serving in the 112th Congress, all in the House of Representatives. There have been 132 African American members of Congress: 126 have been elected to the House; five have been elected to the Senate; and one has been appointed to the Senate. There have been 103 Democrats, 100 in the House and 3 in the Senate; and 29 Republicans, 26 in the House and 3 in the Senate.

The number of African Americans has steadily increased since the first African Americans entered Congress in 1870. There were fewer than 10 members until the 91st Congress (1969-1971). In the 98th Congress (1983-1985), the number surpassed 20 for the first time and then jumped to 40 in the 103rd Congress (1993-1995). Since the 106th Congress (1999-2001), the number has remained between 39 and 44 serving at any one time.

DIVERSITY

AMERICA'S DIVERSE FUTURE: INITIAL GLIMPSES AT THE U.S. CHILD POPULATION FROM THE 2010 CENSUS

Brookings Institution, April 6, 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/0406_census_diversity_frey/0406_census_diversity_frey.pdf

For some time, Americans have been aware that “new minorities”—particularly Hispanics, Asians, and people of more than one race—are becoming a more important part of the nation’s social fabric.

Initial results from the 2010 Census now make clear why the contributions of these groups are so important. With a rapidly aging white population, the United States depends increasingly on these new minorities to infuse its youth population—and eventually its labor force—with needed demographic heft and vitality.

THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE UNITED STATES

Congressional Research Service, March 31st, 2011

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/161342.pdf>

The United States, the third most populous country globally, accounts for about 4.5% of the world's population. The U.S. population—currently estimated at 308.7 million persons—has more than doubled since its 1950 level of 152.3 million. More than just being double in size, the population has become qualitatively different from what it was in 1950. As noted by the Population Reference Bureau, “The U.S. is getting bigger, older, and more diverse.” The objective of this report is to highlight some of the demographic changes that have already occurred since 1950 and to illustrate how these and future trends will reshape the nation in the decades to come (through 2050).

INDIAN ISSUES: OBSERVATIONS ON SOME UNIQUE FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ON TRIBAL LANDS

U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 7, 2011

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11543t.pdf>

Indian tribes are among the most economically distressed groups in the U.S. In 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the poverty rate among American Indian and Alaska Natives was almost twice as high as the population as a whole, 27 percent compared with 15 percent. Residents of tribal lands often lack basic infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems, and sufficient technology infrastructure. Without such infrastructure, tribal communities often find it difficult to compete successfully in the economic mainstream. The testimony statement summarizes GAO's observations on (1) five broad categories of unique issues that may create uncertainty and therefore affect economic activity in Indian country and (2) tribes' use of special gaming and small business contracting provisions.

EDUCATION

A MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MIDWEST: A ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE OF THE NATION'S HEARTLAND

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, April 2011

http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/Userfiles/File/Globalmidwest/A_Master_Plan_for_Higher_Education

One of the most urgent issues facing the U.S. and the Midwest is developing the human capital needed to compete and thrive in the global economy. The Midwest is home to a vast array of higher education institutions, but their structures and methods were designed for a very different time and economy. In the report, Duderstadt argues the American Midwest, a region that once powered the industrial economy, created the middle class, and defended democracy, is floundering in a 21st century global economy driven by knowledge and innovation. The report recommends streamlining curricula from K-12 through post-secondary education, exploring alternative higher education funding mechanisms, redefining the role of community colleges, and promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

ELECTIONS

AMERICA GOES TO THE POLL 2010

Nonprofit VOTE, April 2011

<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/Download-document/265-America-Goes-to-the-Polls-2010.html>

America Goes to the Polls is the only publication that ranks the voter turnout of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. It also ranks turnout growth for each state compared to the previous midterm election. To do so, it uses the certified voter turnout for the 2010 midterm election—as reported by state election offices—and estimates of voting eligible population from the U.S. Elections Project. Beyond the rankings, America Goes to the Polls reports on key voting trends such as the wide gap in youth turnout between presidential elections and midterm elections, the rise in early voting, and the continued growth of the Latino electorate. The report concludes with a discussion of issues related to voter registration and early voting, and their potential to improve—or hinder—future voter participation.

HEALTH CARE

THE NEW HEALTH CARE LAW'S EFFECT ON STATE MEDICAID SPENDING: A STUDY OF THE FIVE MOST POPULOUS STATES

Cato Institute, April 6, 2011

<http://www.cato.org/pubs/wtpapers/StateMedicaidSpendingWP.pdf>

Unless it is repealed, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 promises to increase state government obligations for Medicaid by expanding Medicaid eligibility and introducing an individual health insurance mandate for all U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents. Once PPACA becomes fully effective in 2014, the Medicaid benefits of those who become newly eligible and enroll into Medicaid will be almost fully covered by the federal government through 2019, with federal financial support expected to be extended thereafter. But PPACA provides states with no additional federal financial support for new enrollees among those eligible for Medicaid under the old laws. The study estimates and compares potential increases in Medicaid expenditures from PPACA by the five most populous states: California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas.

IMMIGRATION

APPEALS COURT RULES AGAINST ARIZONA LAW AS IMMIGRATION MEASURES LOSE STEAM IN STATE LEGISLATURES

Migration Policy Institute, April 14, 2011

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=835>

In a ruling that marks a significant victory for immigrant advocates and the Obama administration, a three-judge panel of the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed this week a lower court's decision enjoining implementation of many of the key provisions of Arizona's controversial immigration law, SB 1070.

Arizona's SB 1070, which the state legislature enacted nearly one year ago, includes a series of measures intended to strengthen immigration enforcement and reduce the size of the unauthorized immigrant population in the state.

ASYLUM AND “CREDIBLE FEAR” ISSUES IN U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

Congressional Research Service, April 6, 2011

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/161335.pdf>

Asylum claims ebbed and flowed in the 1980s and peaked in FY1996. Since FY1997, affirmative asylum cases decreased by 79% and defensive asylum claims dropped by 53% by FY2009.

Asylum seekers from the People's Republic of China (PRC) dominated both the affirmative and defensive asylum caseload in FY2009. Five of the top 10 source countries of asylum seekers were Western Hemisphere nations in FY2009: Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Colombia. Ethiopia was the only African nation that was a top source country for asylum seekers in FY2009.

Despite the general decrease in asylum cases since the enactment of the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996, data analysis of six selected countries (the PRC, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Mexico) suggests that conditions in the source countries are likely the driving force behind asylum seekers.

“BORDER SECURITY FIRST” ADVOCATES BLOCK REAL IMMIGRATION REFORM

Center for American Progress, April 1st, 2011

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/04/border_first.html

This singular focus on border security is shortsighted. Border security is a concern shared on both sides of the aisle and by all Americans. But the current statutory definition of operational control—prevention of “all unlawful entries into the United States”—is unattainable.

DIVERSITY IMMIGRANT VISA LOTTERY ISSUES

Congressional Research Service, April 1st, 2011

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/161334.pdf>

The purpose of the diversity immigrant visa lottery is, as the name suggests, to encourage legal immigration from countries other than the major sending countries of current immigrants to the United States. Current law weights the allocation of immigrant visas heavily toward aliens with close family in the United States and, to a lesser extent, toward aliens who meet particular employment needs. The diversity immigrant category was added to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) by the Immigration Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-649) to stimulate “new seed” immigration (i.e., to foster new, more varied migration from other parts of the world).

THE FUTURE OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

Princeton University and Brookings Institution, Spring 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/0420_immigrant_children_haskins/0420_immigrant_children_haskins.pdf

Nearly a quarter of schoolchildren in the U.S. are immigrants or the children of immigrants. A substantial percentage of these children, especially those from Latin America, are falling behind in school. More than 5 million, for example, struggle with their academic subjects because they are still learning English. Evidence shows that three policy reforms -- increased attendance in quality preschool, improved instruction in English, and increased attendance in postsecondary education -- would improve their school achievement, lift their economic well-being as adults, and increase their economic and social contributions to American society, says the brief.

SOUTHWEST BORDER: BORDER PATROL OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL LANDS

U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 15, 2011

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11573t.pdf>

To stem the flow of illegal traffic from Mexico into the United States over the last 5 years along the U.S. southwestern border, the Border Patrol has nearly doubled the number of agents on patrol, constructed hundreds of miles of border fences, and installed a variety of surveillance equipment. About 40 percent of these border lands are managed by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, and coordination and cooperation between Border Patrol and land management agencies is critical to ensure national security. The statement summarizes GAO's findings from two reports issued on southwest border issues in the fall of 2010.

LABOR

ENDING SEX AND RACE DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Institute for Women's Policy Research, April 2011

http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/ending-sex-and-race-discrimination-in-the-workplace-legal-interventions-that-push-the-envelope-1/at_download/file

Race and sex discrimination in employment, covering recruitment, pay and compensation, training and promotion, was made illegal by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Successful employment discrimination lawsuits may result in individual relief, such as monetary compensation for individual victims of discrimination, and injunctive relief, such as changes to the employer's human resource management policies and practices aimed at creating a workplace free of discrimination for all workers.

A HEALTHIER JOB MARKET AT LAST: COMMENTS ON "THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION - MARCH 2011"

Brookings Institution, April 1st, 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0401_jobs_burtless.aspx

For the second month in a row both the household survey and employer survey showed robust gains in employment. The household survey continues to give a rosier picture of job gains, but both surveys agree in showing much faster employment growth than in

2010. Employment gains in December 2010 through March 2011 have averaged 239,000 a month according to the household survey and almost 158,000 per month according to the survey of employers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIONS FOR WORKERS OF COLOR

Center for American Progress, April 4, 2011

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/04/importance_unions.html

Unions bolster opportunities for all workers. They encourage political participation and offer access to the middle class, as a recent report from the Center for American Progress Action Fund explains. But unions and their benefits are especially important for communities of color, for whom unionization has long been a critical component of their economic mobility.

UNIONS MAKE THE MIDDLE CLASS

Center for American Progress, April 4, 2011

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/04/unions_middle_class.html

Critics of unions claim they are unimportant today or even harmful to the economy, but unions are essential for building a strong middle class. And rebuilding the middle class after decades of decline and stagnation is essential for restoring the economy.

MEDIA

THE NEW DIGITAL AMERICAN FAMILY: UNDERSTANDING FAMILY DYNAMICS, MEDIA AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOR TRENDS

Nielsen, April 2011

<http://www.ad-tech.com/sf/images/adtechSF-USReportFINAL.PDF>

The average media-consuming household in the U.S. is getting smaller, growing more slowly and becoming more ethnically diverse than at any point in history. Diversity in all its dimensions defines the emerging American Family archetype, with no single cultural, social, demographic, economic or political point of view dominating the landscape. The report looks at ethnic shifts, financial and educational divides, marital status and other factors influencing the state of the New Digital American Family.

PHILANTHROPY

FOUNDATION GROWTH AND GIVING ESTIMATES: CURRENT OUTLOOK

Foundation Center, April 2011

<http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/fgge11.pdf>

The country's more than 76,000 grantmaking foundations gave an estimated \$45.7 billion in 2010, virtually unchanged from 2009. According to Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates (2011 Edition), 2010 giving remained just 2.1 percent below the record high of \$46.8 billion awarded by foundations in 2008, despite the fact that foundation assets were still close to 10 percent below their 2007 peak.

KEY FACTS ON COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Foundation Center, April 2011

http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/keyfacts_comm2011.pdf

Giving by community foundations declined an estimated 2.1 percent in 2010 following a 7.1 percent reduction in 2009. Looking ahead, community foundations appear optimistic with half that responded to the Foundation Center's annual forecasting survey anticipating increases in giving in 2011, while another 16 percent expect it to remain steady.

KEY FACTS ON CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Foundation Center, April 2011

http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/keyfacts_corp2011.pdf

Despite the severity of the economic downturn, corporate foundation giving remains at its highest level on record. Looking ahead, just over half (52 percent) of corporate foundations responding to the Foundation Center's annual forecasting survey expect to increase their giving in 2011.

POVERTY

THE LANDSCAPE OF RECESSION: UNEMPLOYMENT AND SAFETY NET SERVICES ACROSS URBAN AND SUBURBAN AMERICA

Brookings Institution, March 31st, 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0331_recession_garr.aspx

Three years after the Great Recession began in December 2007, 6.6 million people have been added to the ranks of the unemployed, and demand for assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) is at a record high. Although the U.S. economy officially entered its recovery nearly twenty months ago, in July of 2009, job growth continues to be slow and uneven. The unemployment rate remains high at nearly 9 percent—though this rate varies considerably across the country.

THE NEW DEMOGRAPHY OF POVERTY: THE WISCONSIN POVERTY MEASURE AND EFFECTS OF FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES IN WISCONSIN

Brookings Institution, March 31st, 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/0331_wisconsin_poverty_isaacs/0331_wisconsin_poverty_isaacs.pdf

This paper describes efforts to develop a more comprehensive and up-to-date measure of poverty in Wisconsin as a model for other states to follow. The Wisconsin model uses American Community Survey data to measure the level, depth, and trends in poverty and the effects on poverty of such programs as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and refundable tax credits, as well as out-of-pocket health care costs and work-related expenses including child care. In many ways, the Wisconsin measure, which was unveiled in September 2010, is a preview of the forthcoming federal Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM).

RELIGION

CHURCHES IN COURT: THE LEGAL STATUS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN CIVIL LAWSUITS

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, March 31st, 2011

http://pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Issues/Church-State_Law/Pillar_Autonomy.pdf

In an ongoing series of occasional reports, "Religion and the Courts: The Pillars of Church-State Law," the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life explores the complex, fluid relationship between government and religion. Among the issues to be examined are religion in public schools, displays of religious symbols on public property, conflicts concerning the free exercise of religion, and government funding of faith-based organizations.

WOMEN

THE GENDER WAGE GAP 2010

Institute for Women's Policy Research, April 2011

http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-by-occupation-updated-april-2011/at_download/file

During 2010 the weekly gender wage gap narrowed slightly. Median weekly earnings of female full-time workers were \$669, compared with male median weekly earnings of \$824. Based on these data, the ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings was 81.2, slightly higher than in 2009 (80.3) and above the historical high of 81.0 in 2005. During recessions the gender wage gap typically narrows because bonus and overtime payments, which on average account for a larger share of male than female earnings, are cut back. In real terms, women's median weekly earnings did not increase during 2010; men's median weekly earnings decreased by just under one percent.

All previous web alerts can be found at:
<http://france.usembassy.gov/web-alert.html>