



New documents on political and social issues

January 2011

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN STATE OF UNION ADDRESS

The White House, January 25, 2011

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>

FACT SHEET: THE STATE OF THE UNION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S PLAN TO WIN THE FUTURE

The White House, January 25, 2011

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/fact-sheet-state-union-president-obamas-plan-win-future>

REPUBLICAN ADDRESS TO THE NATION

U.S. Congressman Paul Ryan, January 25, 2011

<http://paulryan.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=221303>

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS DEEPLY ROOTED IN AMERICAN HISTORY

International Information Programs, January 21, 2011

<http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2011/January/20100127224929abretnuh0.0626446.html#>

The U.S. Constitution requires that the president report to Congress “from time to time” on the “State of the Union.” This constitutional requirement has evolved into the president’s annual State of the Union address, which now serves several purposes. The speech reports on the condition of the United States both domestically and internationally, recommends a legislative agenda for the coming year and gives the president the opportunity to personally convey his vision for the nation.

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CONGRESS

THE 112TH CONGRESS FACES DAUNTING CHALLENGES

Brookings Institution, January 4, 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0104_congress_galston.aspx

The 112th Congress convenes amidst daunting economic challenges. Not only is the pace of growth and job generation much too slow, but also the long-term budget deficit threatens our economic stability and global standing. It will be no easy matter to craft policies that strike the right balance between these key policy imperatives.

DIVERSITY

THE STATE OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

Center for American Progress, January 21, 2011

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/comm_of_color.pdf

The Great Recession of 2007–2009 produced widespread employment losses for communities of color and white families alike—losses that have yet to be overcome amid the still tentative economic recovery. All U.S. households were severely hurt by the recession but communities of color experienced larger losses than whites. This also means that, as the economic recovery deepens and the labor market recovers, communities of color will have to climb out of a deeper hole to regain the same level of economic security as they had before the crisis.

EDUCATION

RETURN ON EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENT

Center for American Progress, January 19, 2011

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/dwwroi.pdf>

This report is the culmination of a yearlong effort to study the efficiency of the nation's public education system and includes the first-ever attempt to evaluate the productivity of almost every major school district in the country.

HEALTH CARE

HEALTH CARE BRAWL: ALL OR NOTHING DOESN'T WORK

Urban Institute, January 21, 2011

<http://www.urban.org/publications/901401.html>

The ongoing debate over health reform at times almost appears like a sporting event, with Democrats and Republicans trying to name winners and losers in passing or repealing legislation. But in my Fiscal Times op-ed this week, I explain why, when it comes to health reform, this winner-take-all mentality misses a major point: government programs, whether well designed or poorly designed, need to work within budget constraints

IMMIGRATION

BECOMING AMERICAN: BEYOND THE MELTING POT

International Information Programs, December 2010

http://www.america.gov/media/pdf/ejs/en_0111_immigration.pdf#popup

The United States is often referred to as the “Great Melting Pot,” a metaphor that connotes the blending of many cultures, languages and religions to form a single national identity. But this metaphor fails to capture the slow, complex and frequently turbulent process by which immigrants of diverse backgrounds and beliefs join U.S. society, even as they transform it.

CREATING A "BRAIN GAIN" FOR U.S. EMPLOYERS: THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION

Brookings Institution, January 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/01_immigration_west/01_immigration_west.pdf

One of the strongest narratives in U.S. history has been the contribution made by talented, hard-working and entrepreneurial immigrants whose skills and knowledge created a prosperous new country. Yet today, the nation’s immigration priorities and outmoded visa system discourage skilled immigrants and hobble the technology-intensive employers who would hire them.

IMMIGRATION POLICY AND LESS-SKILLED WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Urban Institute, January 1st, 2011

<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001488-Immigration-Policy.pdf>

This paper reviews the evidence on the effects of less-skilled immigration to the U.S., and considers the implications of this evidence for immigration reform ideas. It begins with a review of the costs of less-skilled immigration, in terms of competition to native-born American workers and fiscal costs; as well as the benefits of such immigration in the form of lower prices to consumers, higher profits for employers, and greater efficiency for the U.S. economy.

STATES ASSERT NEW ACTIVIST IMMIGRATION ROLE IN ALTERED POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Migration Policy Institute, January 18, 2011

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=822>

In the aftermath of the mid-term elections, the contentious debate on national immigration policy has shifted to the states as many state legislatures around the country are gearing up to introduce strict immigration enforcement measures targeting unauthorized immigrants.

UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND COSTLY THE HIGH PRICE OF LOCAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Center for American Progress, January 24, 2011

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/cost_of_enforcement.pdf

A handful of local communities across the nation enacted unconstitutional, discriminatory, and costly immigration controls in recent years in an effort to chase away undocumented immigrants and their families and friends, many of whom are American citizens. This growing backlash against Hispanic immigrants in particular was driven by fear, economic uncertainty, and cultural differences in these localities: small towns in New Jersey, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Texas, and one county in Virginia.

U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE

Congressional Research Service, January 4, 2011

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/155049.pdf>

In recent years, the United States has admitted an increasingly diverse group of refugees and other humanitarian cases with a diverse set of needs. There seems to be broad consensus that the U.S. refugee resettlement assistance system is not adequately meeting the needs of these new arrivals and is ripe for reform. The National Security Council is leading an interagency review of refugee resettlement, the forthcoming results of which may further energize reform efforts. To help inform possible future efforts to reform the refugee resettlement assistance system, this report discusses existing resettlement assistance programs, key challenges and issues in providing effective assistance, and policy options to reform the current system.

JUSTICE

THE DEATH PENALTY IN 2010: YEAR END REPORT

Death Penalty Information Center, December 21, 2010

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/2010YearEnd-Final.pdf>

The death penalty continued to be mired in conflict in 2010, as states grappled with an ongoing controversy over lethal injections, the high cost of capital punishment, and increasing public sentiment in favor of alternative sentences. Executions dropped by 12% compared with 2009, and by more than 50% since 1999. The number of new death sentences was about the same as in 2009, the lowest number in 34 years.

In a recent national poll conducted by Lake Research Partners, 61% of U.S. voters chose various alternative sentences over the death penalty as the proper punishment for murder.

NO SHIFT TOWARD GUN CONTROL AFTER TUCSON SHOOTINGS

Pew Research Center, January 19, 2011

<http://people-press.org/report/695/>

In the wake of the Tucson shootings, there is no significant change in public views on the issue of gun control and gun rights. Currently, 49% of Americans say it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns, while 46% say it is more important to control gun ownership.

LABOR

UNION MEMBERSHIP

Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 21, 2011

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>

In 2010, the union membership rate--the percent of wage and salary workers who were members of a union--was 11.9 percent, down from 12.3 percent a year earlier. The number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions declined by 612,000 to 14.7 million. In 1983, the first year for which comparable union data are available, the union membership rate was 20.1 percent, and there were 17.7 million union workers.

UNIONS AND UPWARD MOBILITY FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WORKERS

Center for Economic and Policy Research, January 2011

<http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/unions-aapi-2011-01.pdf>

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are, with Latinos, the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. workforce. In 2009, Asian American and Pacific Islanders were one of every 20 U.S. workers, up from one in 40 only 20 years earlier. AAPIs, again with Latinos, are also the fastest growing ethnic group in organized labor, accounting for just under one-in-20 unionized workers in 2009. Even after controlling for workers' characteristics including age, education level, industry, and state, unionized AAPI workers earn about 14.3 percent more than non-unionized AAPI workers with similar characteristics.

MEDIA

DESIGNING SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR GOVERNMENT

Brookings Institution, January 2011

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/01_social_media_policy/01_social_media_policy.pdf

Government agencies in the United States and around the world are increasingly looking to leverage social media to improve the quality of government services and enable greater citizen engagement. One central challenge that has emerged is the blurring line between the three types of social media use by government employees, namely agency use, professional use, and personal use.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF THE INTERNET

Pew Internet and American Life Project, January 18, 2011

http://pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2011/PIP_Social_Side_of_the_Internet.pdf

The internet is now deeply embedded in group and organizational life in America. A new national survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project has found that 75% of all American adults are active in some kind of voluntary group or organization and internet users are more likely than others to be active: 80% of internet users participate in groups, compared with 56% of non-internet users. Moreover, social media users are even more likely to be active: 82% of social network users and 85% of Twitter users are group participants.

POVERTY

WHO IS POOR? A NEW LOOK WITH THE SUPPLEMENTAL POVERTY MEASURE

U.S. Bureau of the Census, December 20, 2010

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/supplemental/research.html>

In 1995 the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Panel on Poverty and Family Assistance released a report that evaluated the current method of poverty measurement in the United States and recommended change. The NAS panel recommended changing the definition of both the poverty thresholds and the family resources that are compared with those thresholds to determine poverty status. One of the goals of the NAS panel was to produce a measure of poverty that explicitly accounted for government spending aimed at alleviating the hardship of low-income families.

The 2010 Interagency Technical Working Group was charged with developing a set of initial starting points to permit the U.S. Census Bureau, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), to produce a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)

RELIGION

FAITH ON THE HILL

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, January 5, 2011

<http://pewforum.org/Government/Faith-on-the-Hill--The-Religious-Composition-of-the-112th-Congress.aspx>

The 112th Congress, like the U.S. public, is majority Protestant and about a quarter Catholic. Baptists and Methodists are the largest Protestant denominations in the new Congress, just as they are in the country as a whole.

A few of the country's smaller religious groups, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Jews, have greater numerical representation in Congress than in the general population. Some others, including Buddhists and Muslims, are represented in Congress in roughly equal proportion to their numbers in the adult U.S. population. And some small religious groups, such as Hindus and Jehovah's Witnesses, are not represented at all in Congress.

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