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Election 2017: The Policy Priorities of New Jersey College Students

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Acknowledgements

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While there was much excitement surrounding the 2016 Presidential election, but 2017 is a pivotal year for New Jersey as a new governor will be elected and several high-profile legislators are either retiring or vying for advancement. The new government faces substantial public problems, the solutions to which will have short- and long-term implications for the state's college students. Criminal justice reform, the opioid epidemic, taxes, investment in higher education, the under-funded pension obligation, and many other issues, will shape students' decisions of whether to remain in New Jersey and contribute or leave. Alas, political participation tends to be the lowest among younger voting-aged citizens, including traditional college students (File 2014). This limits their voice in politics.

Recent research by the William J. Hughes Center demonstrated the need for institutional support in the development of comprehensive civic learning programs in higher education (Forrestal 2016). This report aims to provide institutional support for a specific slice of civic engagement. Namely, I seek to amplify student voices in the pressing policy problems facing the new government in New Jersey. Two types of student civic engagement are represented. First, the report presents survey data on student views regarding the most important problems facing New Jersey. Second, it includes deeper policy briefs on many of these issues. This report does not claim to provide the definitive perspective on college student desires for state government. It does, however, provide data on a

slice of students attending public two- and four-year institutions in New Jersey, which should be of interest to policymakers who care about this emerging set of voters and workers. Furthermore, the report demonstrates how institutional resources can be used to foster civic engagement among our students, so that the voices of these future residents and taxpayers can be better heard.

This report will progress as follows. First, it provides a brief background on some of the current challenges facing New Jersey's college students, as reported by the media and other researchers. Then, results of a statewide survey of college students are presented in order to gain a better appreciation for what a sample of students view as the most important problems facing the state, whether the state is headed in the right direction or on the wrong track, and their perception of the state's economy. The broader survey is then followed by a section of policy decision briefs written by students at Stockton University. The briefs provide a deeper view of the issues that are most important to college students. They also serve as an educational tool for lawmakers and the public. Furthermore, most provide specific recommendations for policy action, thus allowing readers to gain an appreciation for the students' perspectives on tackling each problem. The report will conclude with thoughts on how New Jersey's public institutions can encourage student civic engagement beyond voting and have student voices heard on pressing public policy matters.

Challenges Facing New Jersey's College Students[1]

College students are in a season of life where they face large transitions and uncertainties. Uncertainties about career paths and whether there will be a job for them at the end of their studies. College students, even those at Ivy League institutions like Harvard, express concerns about economic growth and job availability (Menon 2016). Even though economic news was more positive in 2016, New Jersey's economy has not grown nearly as fast as the overall U.S. economy since the end of the Great Recession (Marcus 2016). The state ranks 32nd in terms of overall unemployment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017) and 50 out of 51 states (and the District of Columbia) in terms of its foreclosure rate (RealtyTrac 2016). New Jersey also commonly ranks at or near the top rates for all of its methods of taxation (Drenkard and Kaeding 2016, Kaeding 2016, Klernan 2016). Ultimately, a 2017 report by WalletHub rated New Jersey as 40 out of 51 for Millennial[2] quality of life (Bernardo 2017).

[1] I have chosen to focus this section of the report on "traditional" college students, using age (under 25) as the demarcation of traditional.[1] There are many different views as to what constitutes a traditional versus non-traditional student (National Center for Education Statistics 2015), however I have chosen this approach because it keeps the focus on the age cohort (18-29) of greatest recent concern regarding civic engagement in the United States (Putnam 2000) and globally (United Nations n.d.). That being said, both traditional and non-traditional students completed the included survey and submitted included policy briefs.

[2] The specific age range for each generation varies by source. I rely on the following designations outlined by the Center for Generational Kinetics (n.d.): Generation X (41 to 52 years old); Millennials or Generation Y (22 to 40 years old); and Centennials or Generation Z (21 and younger).

In addition to broader economic trends, increases in college tuition and debt load are of substantial concern to college students. Costs topped the list of student concerns about college in a national survey (Jacobs 2014). In New Jersey, average student loan debt varies a great deal from institution to institution. Table 1 displays the average student loan debt for 22 New Jersey colleges or universities. New Jersey's average debt load is almost identical to the national average, but this still puts eleven institutions above the national average.

Table 1. Average Student Loan Debt from a Subset of New Jersey Colleges and Universities

Stevens Institute of Technology	$48,244	**United States Average**	**$30,100**
Bloomfield College	$46,574	Ramapo College	$29,150
Georgian Court University	$40,927	Rutgers-Camden	$28,541
NJIT	$37,195	Montclair State University	$28,070
The College of New Jersey	$36,994	Rider University	$25,697
Stockton University	$33,201	Rutgers-Newark	$25,697
William Patterson University	$33,068	Rutgers	$25,334
Kean University	$32,581	Caldwell University	$24,615
Felician College	$31,709	Drew University	$24,345
Rowan University	$31,652	New Jersey City University	$23,416
Monmouth University	$31,487	Princeton University	$8,577
New Jersey Average	**$30,104**	Seton Hall University	No Data

Source: Institute for College Access and Success. 2015. *Student Debt and the Class of 2015*. 11th Annual Report. October. http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2015.pdf.

New Jersey also faces a well-documented out-migration problem (United Van Lines 2017) that is particularly severe among Millennials

aged 18-24 (New Jersey Business & Industry Association 2016). In fact, the overall net loss of Millennials remains, even when accounting for in-migration of 18 to 30 year olds. Meaning, young people, educated by the publically funded K-12 school system, are leaving New Jersey and not returning. The outmigration is at least in part due to the fact that New Jersey does not have enough higher education capacity for its own students (New Jersey Higher Education Task Force 2010). Thus, approximately 37 percent of New Jersey college students attend school outside of the state (Guo 2015). New Jersey has been taking measures to reverse this trend (e.g., the Building Our Future Bond Act of 2012[3]), however the continuing net outmigration of Millennials could have a substantial effect on the state. As Millennials have surpassed Generation X "as the largest generation in the U.S. labor force" (Fry 2015), their loss shapes New Jersey's long-term economic outlook. Overall population loss also plays a role in New Jersey's representation in the federal government, as the state lost one congressional district after the 2010 U.S. Census.

The above highlights several economic challenges faced by New Jersey's college students and the reciprocal effects on the state, but does not even touch the broad array of issues that students care about for personal, social, or ideological reasons. Unfortunately, without a voice, the preferences of Millennials and Generation Z will not be incorporated

[3] http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2012/bills/s2500/2500_r2.htm.

into the pressing policy debates in Trenton.[4] Millennials are left out of state legislatures across the country (Beitsch 2015), and New Jersey is no exception. No legislators are under the age of 30 now and the median age is 57 for members of the Assembly and Senate (Froonjian and Coopersmith 2016). Thus, legislators must use other means for understanding student views. I turn now to one source of such information: a survey of New Jersey college students from across the state.

A Survey of College Student Views

It is difficult to ascertain a general student voice on policy problems, as previous statewide polling has not directly targeted this population. Unfortunately, a statewide random-sample poll of New Jersey's college students is prohibitively expensive. That does not mean, however, that we cannot gather some sense of student policy priorities. To this end, a poll was developed and fielded to the state's 31 public two- and four-year colleges and universities between April and May 2017. Appendix A describes the survey's methodology and provides response rates for each participating institution. The following survey results do not represent a random sample that is representative of the entire student population at the public institutions, but it does provide insight

[4] See Schlossberg (2016) for one primer on differences between Millennials and the emerging Generation Z. Generalized descriptions of Generation Z are, of course, fairly speculative, considering the oldest are only now graduating college.

into the perspectives of respondents and a reference point for future survey research.

The first survey question addressed student views on the most important problem facing New Jersey. It was adapted from Gallup's Most Important Problem (MIP) question. Table 1 below displays the major topics referenced by each student.[5] The majority (55%) of respondents indicated economic issues as most important, with taxes being of greatest concern. This actually stands in stark contrast to Gallup's national poll. In their results from April and May 2017, Gallup only found 24 and 21 percent of Americans, respectively, concerned about economic issues.[6]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cost of higher education (including tuition and student debt) and jobs were the next most oft-cited economic problems in the survey. Lawmakers in Trenton should pay particular attention to the fact that our student respondents reported issues of distrust in government and leadership (state and federal) as the most important non-economic problem. Additional research should be conducted, specifically in New Jersey, as to why students distrust state government.

[5] It is important to note that a few respondents included multiple problems in their response, thus the total number of responses is higher than the total number of respondents.
[6] See http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx for historical trends in responses to this question nationally.

Distrust in government is followed closely in importance by drug abuse, which Governor Christie is championing in his final year in office. Considering the rapidly growing overdose epidemic in New Jersey (Stirling 2016), this issue is likely to remain a concern after the elections.

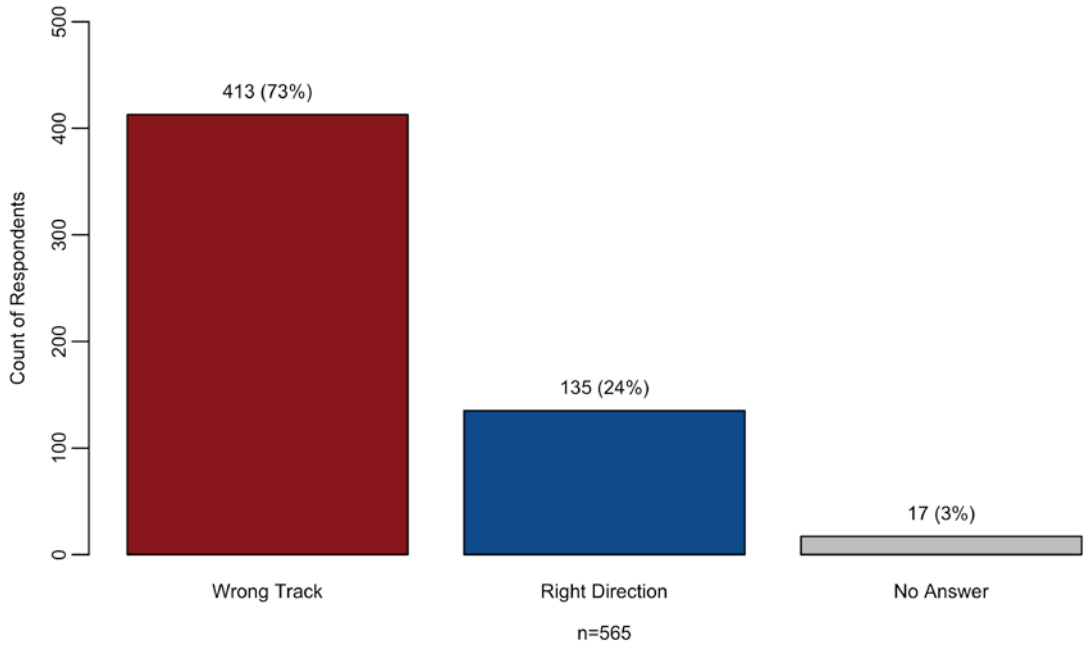
Table 1. Results from April-May 2017 Survey of New Jersey College Students: Most Important Problems Facing the State

	April-May 2017
Economic Problems (Net)	**55.07**
Taxes	17.40
Cost of Higher Education	7.43
Jobs	5.57
State Finances	5.07
General Economy	4.05
Financial Security	2.20
Poverty	1.86
Wages	1.52
Atlantic City	0.84
Union Contracts	0.84
North Jersey Casinos	0.68
Debt (Unspecified)	0.68
Agriculture	0.34
Social Problems (Net)	**44.93**
Government (Distrust, Leadership)	8.61
Drug Abuse	8.45
Education	7.77
Environment	7.26
Infrastructure	3.38
Healthcare	2.87
Criminal Justice (Crime, Reform)	2.36
General Social	2.03
Racism	1.18
Immigration	0.51
Other	0.51

n = 592 items mentioned by 565 respondents

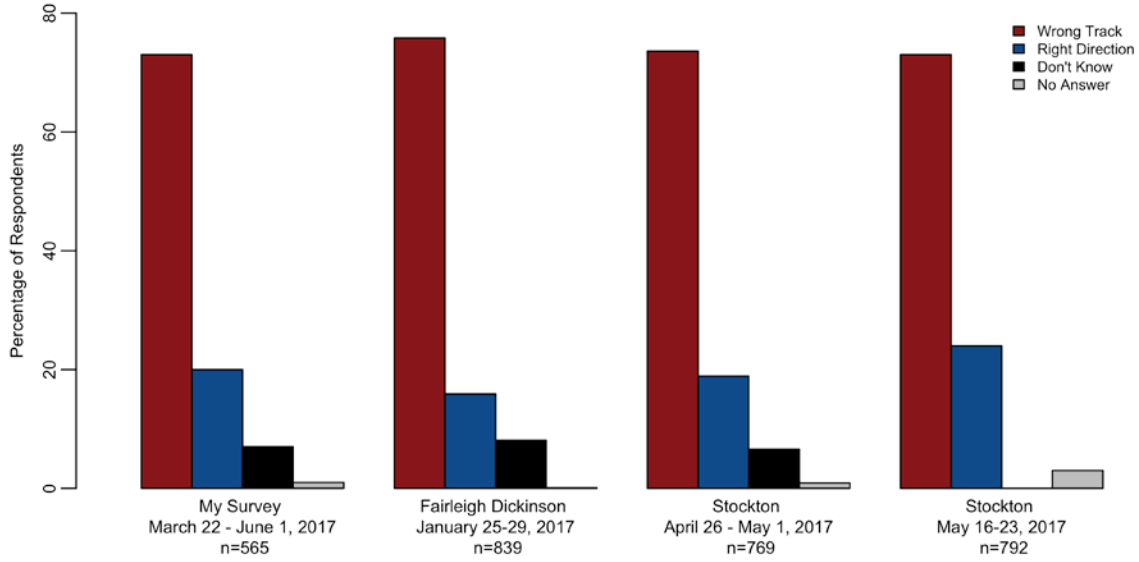
The second question in our survey asked respondents: “Is the state of New Jersey going in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?” As Figure 1 displays, 73 percent of respondents believe that New Jersey is on the wrong track. This mirrors quite closely the results of statewide random-sample polls recently conducted by Fairleigh Dickinson (Public Mind)[7] and The Hughes Center at Stockton University[8] (see Figure 2). Thus, like the rest of New Jersey, our student respondents are highly pessimistic of the state’s current direction.

Figure 1. Answers to "Is the state of New Jersey going in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?"



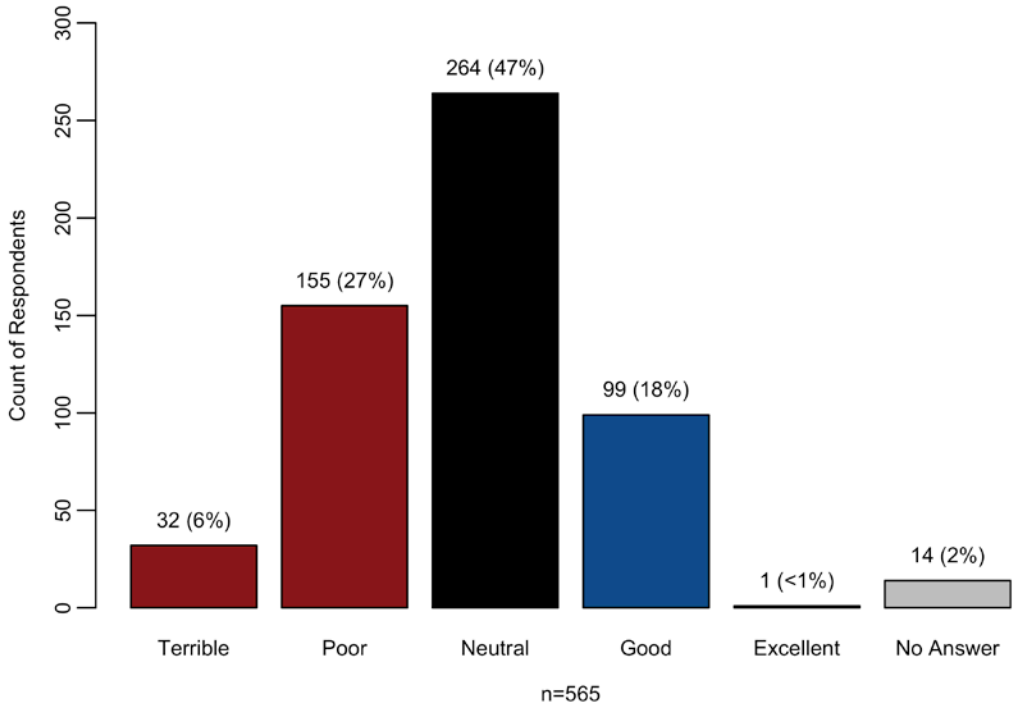
[7] See http://view2.fdu.edu/publicmind/2017/170131/ for full results.
[8] See https://stockton.edu/hughes-center/polling/documents/2017-0525-nj-primary-2017-wfs-poll-1.pdf and https://stockton.edu/hughes-center/polling/documents/2017-0525-nj-primary-2017-wfs-poll-2.pdf for full results.

Figure 2. Comparison of Our Respondents with Recent Statewide Polling Results



The final opinion question in our survey asked students to rate the New Jersey economy on a scale from excellent to terrible. While the plurality of our respondents (47 percent) was neutral regarding the state's economy, more were negative (33 percent) than positive (18 percent). It is apparent that these respondents are pessimistic regarding the economy they are preparing to enter. Such a view may shape decisions about whether to stay in New Jersey for Millennials that are already leaving in the highest rates of all age cohorts (New Jersey Business & Industry Association, 2016).

Figure 3. Respondent's Views Regarding the New Jersey Economy



In addition to the above opinion questions, we asked respondents whether they had voted in the 2016 Presidential election and anticipate voting in the 2017 Gubernatorial and Legislative elections. As Figures 4 and 5 display, our respondents appear to be quite politically engaged. Eighty-one percent reported voting in the 2016 election and 64 percent reported that they anticipate voting in 2017. The voting rate for 2016 is much higher than the overall youth turnout rate nationally[9] and the anticipated voting rate for 2017 is far higher than historical voter turnout among 18-29 year olds in New Jersey.[10] While this may be criticized as bias in our ability to present the priorities of New Jersey's public college

[9] CIRCLE (2016) reported roughly 50 percent turnout in 2016 among 18-29 year olds.
[10] Only 18 percent of 18-29 year olds voted in the 2013 gubernatorial election (CIRCLE 2013).

and university students, it is notable that our survey captures a group of students that self-report high political engagement. While their views may not completely capture all students, they are likely closer to those of students who will actually cast ballots in the fall election.

Figure 4. Respondents Reporting Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election

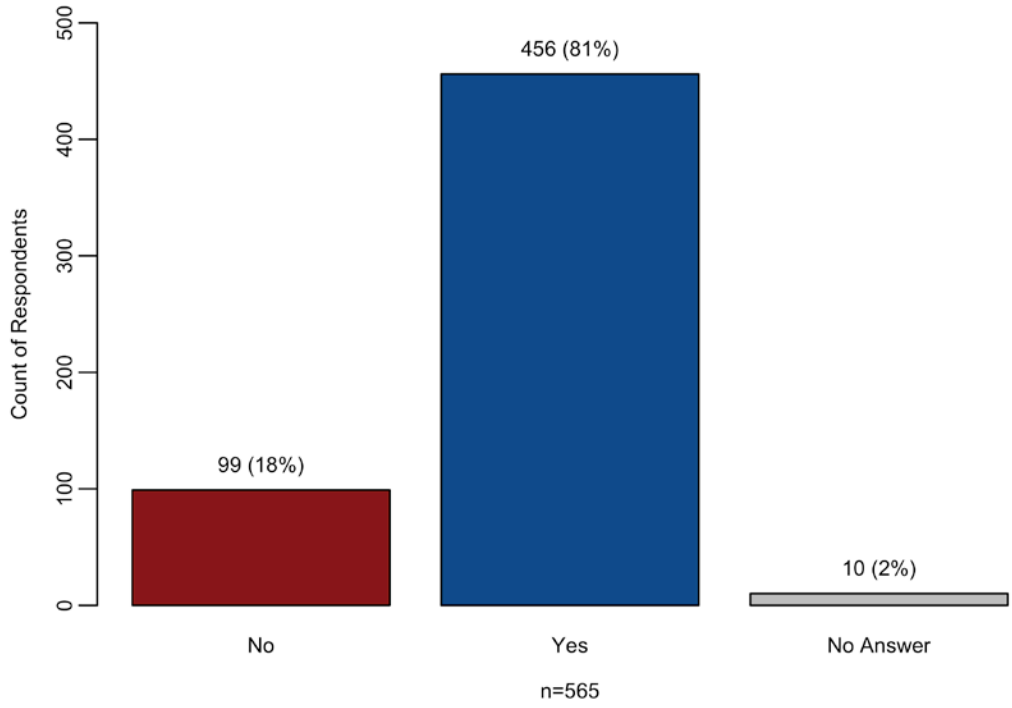
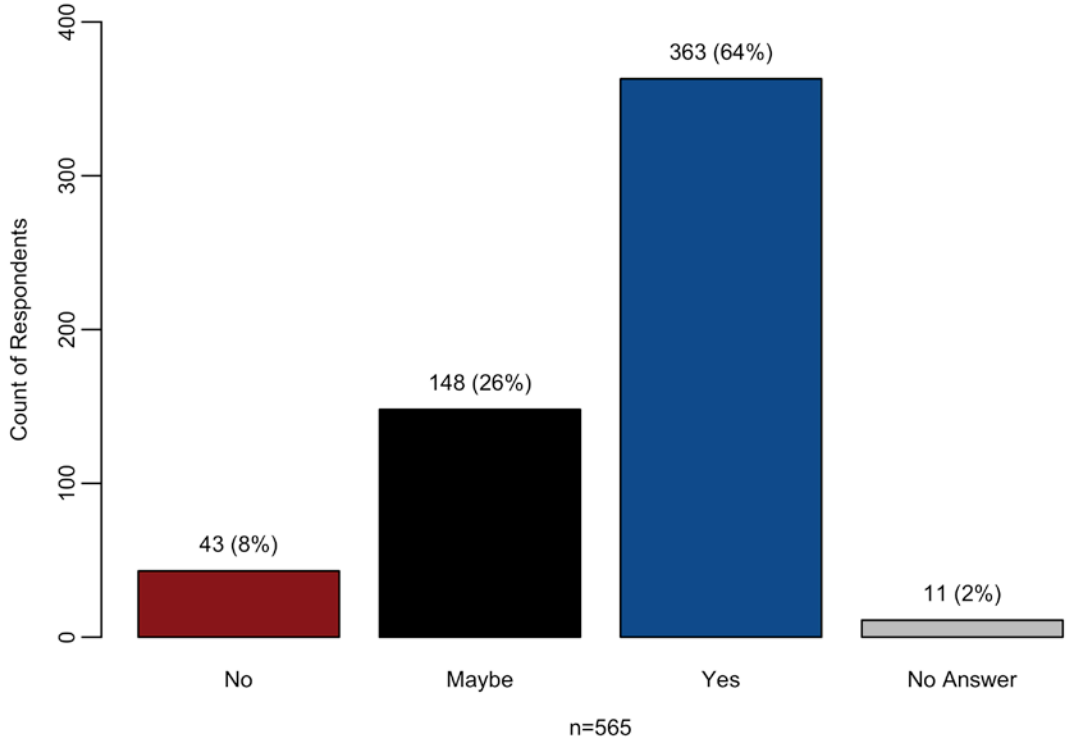


Figure 5. Anticipation That Respondents Will Vote in the 2017 New Jersey Election



Additional Insight from Kean Students

In addition to our survey that was issued statewide, Dr. Jacqueline Keil has graciously provided additional data regarding the views of students at Kean University. Students in a course on state and local politics conducted this survey in the spring semester of 2017. The students helped to design the survey as a pedagogical exercise and then used convenience sampling for fielding the survey.[11] A total of 160 students responded. Some questions were similar to our survey, but there were also divergent questions that provide additional insight into student views regarding New Jersey state government.

[11] Students circulated the survey to peers in their classes.

A clear majority of survey respondents (70.6%) indicated being either very interested (17.5%) or somewhat interested (53.1%) in New Jersey politics. Meaning, only 29.4% of the sample was not interested at all in the state's political affairs. Like our sample, these students appear to be highly politically engaged. Of the 160 total respondents, 69.4% (self) reported that they voted in the 2016 Presidential election. Furthermore, 70% reported that they intend to vote in the 2017 New Jersey elections. As with our sample, it seems unlikely. The views expressed by this sample are again reflective of college students with a higher propensity to vote.

In terms of the present Christie and Trump Administrations, the majority of respondents were unfavorable towards both. In total, 71.9% indicated being either somewhat dissatisfied (23.8%) or very dissatisfied (48.1%) with the Christie Administration. Only 13.1% were very satisfied (1.8%) or somewhat satisfied (11.3%). The remainder was unsure (15%). As for the Trump Administration, the majority (66.9%) provided an unfavorable evaluation, with 53.1% being very unfavorable. Interestingly, this means that fewer respondents were unfavorable towards the Trump Administration than the Christie Administration, although the proportion of highly negative opinions was higher. It is important to recognize, however, that 48.8% of respondents self-identified with the Democratic Party.

Of particular interest to the present report, students were asked the following question: “If you could improve ONE thing in New Jersey, what would it be? (For example, taxes, public transportation, road conditions, environmental conditions, etc.).” This is akin to the most important problem question presented above. Table 2 displays the results from the Kean University sample. It is important to note that though he answer was open-ended, the majority of respondents chose one of the example answers (taxes and transportation). In this sample, the relative importance of economic versus social problems is flipped, compared to Table 1 above. Over half of these respondents listed social problems as their top concern. Transportation issues were the most non-economic (roads, public transportation, etc.). Taxes are clearly the most substantial economic problem, far more so than jobs or the broader economy.

Table 2. Results from Kean University Sample: Things Students Would Improve in New Jersey

	Spring 2017
Economic Problems (Net)	**44.97**
Taxes	36.69
Cost of Living	4.14
Cost of Higher Education	2.96
Jobs	0.59
Public Sector Pension	0.59
Social Problems (Net)	**55.03**
Transportation	37.28
Environment	4.73
Education	3.55
Government (Distrust, Leadership)	2.96
Criminal Justice (Crime, Policing)	2.37
Legalizing Marijuana	1.78
Infrastructure	1.18
General Social	0.59
Gun Rights	0.59

n = 169 items mentioned by 160 respondents

The New Jersey college students surveyed above are concerned about many pressing issues facing the new legislature and governor. There are particularly broad concerns about their ability to afford living in the state. Having established this broader perspective of student views, I now turn to an opportunity for a group of students to dive deeper into specific issues that they care about.

Most Important Problem Policy Proposals

The preceding survey provided one window into the policy views of students at New Jersey's public universities and colleges, but the following section of this report offers a deeper perspective. In the spring of 2017, students at Stockton University prepared two-page policy decision briefs on what they viewed as the most important problem facing the next New Jersey government. Marijuana legalization was the most popular policy topic, but was rivaled in total by a collection of issues related to the economy and affordability, including affordable housing, tax abatements, minimum wage, the gas tax, welfare, and infrastructure.

Students spent the semester researching their topic and preparing to write this final brief. Most are advocacy briefs, meaning the students make recommendations for solutions to the problem they address. These are, of course, works of students learning not only the subject matter, but also the art of persuasive writing. Meaning, the briefs below vary greatly in quality. Each was lightly edited before publication, but I strove to allow the student's voice to still shine through. The following set of briefs is therefore informative on the issue as well as the students' perspectives on each topic. Please see Appendix B for the list of contributors, including their major and degree status. Table 3 provides the topic, page numbers, and author of each brief.

Table 3. Table of Contents for Policy Briefs

Specific Topic	Pages	Author
	Economic	
Affordable Housing	21	Heather Gordon
Tax Abatements	23	Gavin Rozzi
Minimum Wage	25	Chanel Johnson
Gas Tax	27	Christopher Baran
Gas Tax	29	Christopher McVeigh
Welfare	31	Isola Webbe
Gateway Project	33	Ryan Sims
	Marijuana Reform	
	35	Charles Alyanakian
	37	Jason Artrip
	39	Thomas Clark
	41	Nickolas Johnson
	43	Erica Naranjo
	45	Alexander Stevens
	47	James Vicari
	Criminal Justice/Legal	
Criminal Justice Reform	49	Karleanne Dutton
Solitary Confinement	51	David Yoon
Solitary Confinement	53	
Body Cameras	55	Jessica Jones
Bail Reform	57	Dina Terilla
Firearms	59	Ryan Berry
Sanctuary Cities	61	Alejandra Londono
Death with Dignity	63	Kevin Brady
	Veterans	
Diversion	65	Peter Ananko
Deprogramming	67	Andre Daigle
	Education	
School Funding	69	Lauren Lucca
Common Core	71	Leighanna Ritter
	Atlantic City	
College Town	73	Matt Cairoli
Economic Inequality	75	Derek Straga

Affordable Housing: A Comprehensive Plan

Heather Gordon

New Jersey is among the most expensive states to live in within the United States. On average, New Jersey's property taxes are the highest in the nation and still rising in many areas.

Additionally, New Jersey has the fifth most expensive rental housing market in the nation, and an estimated 61% of New Jersey residents cannot afford the cost of a two-bedroom apartment.

Finally, with the minimum wage in New Jersey set at $8.44 an hour and with the knowledge that a household needs to earn approximately $24.54 an hour in order to afford rent/utilities in a two-bedroom apartment, it is obvious that such a disparity is unsustainable for average-income earners.

Policy Implications

The Mount Laurel decision in New Jersey required municipalities to ensure that developers of housing units provide a reality for a number of affordable housing units to be built for every housing complex. However, since the Mount Laurel decision over a decade and a half ago, the state has failed to meet these requirements.

Although some measures have sought to solve the issue of affordable housing in New Jersey, the problem remains. Homes are still out of reach for most New Jersey residents based on their incomes.

Another method of approaching this issue involves devoting funds to programs that assist home buyers/renters, but with the state's pension obligation hovering around $100 billion and taxes already sky high, throwing money at such programs does not provide long-term solutions.

Recommendation 1: A comprehensive approach

All of the issues facing New Jersey are interconnected. The issue of affordable housing relates to the issues of high taxes, low wages, drug use, prison reform, and so on. If we view these issues as a web spread out over society, we can recognize that each issue affects every other issue, like ripples spreading throughout the web. This means that any solution that seeks to truly address affordable housing (or any other problem facing the state) must be holistic and comprehensive. This requires looking at the bigger picture in order to tackle issues at the roots.

Recommendation 2: Raise the minimum wage at intervals

Over the past several decades, the cost of living and inflation have risen, while the minimum wage has remained nearly stagnant. It is not reasonable for employers to pay workers a wage that does not even approach livability, and thus, we must strive to raise the minimum wage to match inflation.

- To be implemented incrementally, there should be a three-year plan to reach a minimum wage of $15 an hour for all employers.
- Larger corporations (i.e., Walmart, McDonalds) should pay a higher minimum wage of $18 an hour, to be reached by the end of fiscal year 2019.
- Smaller businesses should receive tax supplementation in order to meet the standards of $13 an hour by the end of fiscal year 2019, and $15 an hour by the end of 2020.
- Extra money for workers will lead to a healthier, more robust economy.

Recommendation 3: Close the tax loopholes for the wealthy/reinstate the estate tax

Unlike the staggered raising of the minimum wage, these two recommendations are available to be enacted immediately. By closing the tax loopholes for the wealthy and requiring that they pay their fair share of taxes, the burden would be relieved from the lower/middle income residents.

Additionally, reinstating the estate tax in New Jersey would help to earn much-needed taxes. Allowing people to inherit large estates and not requiring them to pay taxes on that unearned income is not a reasonable expectation.

Recommendation 4: Prioritize state spending for lower/middle income renters/owners

The federal government spends up to $200 billion annually to assist home renters/buyers, and of that $200 billion, 75% of that money goes to higher income renters/buyers. In other words, the bulk of this federal money goes to helping people who can already afford homes to afford *better* homes, instead of assisting people who cannot afford homes at all. While New Jersey lawmakers may be limited in their influence of federal funds, they can ensure that state funds are devoted to helping lower/middle income people afford homes.

Recommendation 5: Invest in education and careers in green technology

If we fail to educate people for jobs of the future, people will not *have* jobs in the future. Rather than spending state money on short-term-fix programs, investing in education that yields careers in green technology serves more than one purpose.

- Green/clean technology serves to tackle the negative effects of climate change and global warming, helping to ensure a future for the coming generations.
- The market for jobs in technology is growing rapidly, and there is no sign of this growth stopping anytime soon.
- An educated population is a prosperous population; increased civic engagement is a must.

Recommendation 6: Provide single-payer healthcare

Due to the astronomical costs of healthcare in the United States, the majority of people are one major medical issue away from falling into poverty or terrible financial straits.

Ensuring that everyone has access to quality, affordable healthcare is a necessity for a healthy population. This can be accomplished in the same manner every other major country in the world is accomplishing it.

Recommendation 7: Get rid of PILOT

PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) allows successful large businesses to pay taxes based on a percentage of their sales, rather than at the same rates other property owners pay. This huge tax break costs the state millions and needs to be axed immediately.

Recommendation 8: Expand guesthouse zoning

As many younger people are choosing to remain living at home with their families and/or parents, the expansion of guesthouse zoning would make it easier for land owners to build additional housing structures on their property.

Conclusion:

In order to address the issue of affordable housing in New Jersey, a comprehensive and holistic approach is necessary. Only by treating issues at the root and enacting policy that reinforces this treatment will long-lasting change be possible.

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Municipal Tax Abatements

Gavin C. Rozzi

New Jersey municipalities can grant tax abatements, which allow for a significant reduction or elimination of property taxes paid to local government by certain types of development projects. Currently, New Jersey law gives municipalities broad discretion to grant tax abatements; the vast majority of abatements negotiated between municipalities and developers do not provide for any revenue to taxing entities other than the municipal government – such as counties, fire districts and boards of education. This is because existing state law does not require the municipality to distribute the revenue derived from abatements as they do regular property taxes collected from other properties with their borders.

The lack of limits placed on municipalities allows for potential abuses of their discretion to issue abatements, due to the significant control given to local land use and municipal officials over them. Additionally, despite economic benefits touted by abatement proponents, they can negatively impact local property tax revenue by creating budget shortfalls for other taxing entities that lose out on revenue from abatement agreements. They can also create unsustainable problems for the municipality's tax base by shifting the tax burden elsewhere, resulting in an inevitable increase elsewhere.

Types of Tax Abatements in New Jersey

There are two primary types of tax abatements authorized by state law that can be granted by municipalities in the state. Short-term abatements can last up to 5 years and can cover properties such as single and multi-family homes along with some types of commercial properties.
Long-term abatements can be granted for up to a maximum of 30 years, or shorter if the duration is capped by municipal ordinance.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Common to both long-term and short-term abatements are payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreements. These agreements, which are negotiated between the municipal governing body and the developer receiving the abatement, specify an annual service charge that will be paid to the municipality; this charge is typically far lower than regular property tax rates and not subject to yearly increases in rates faced by regular property taxpayers.

Policy Implications

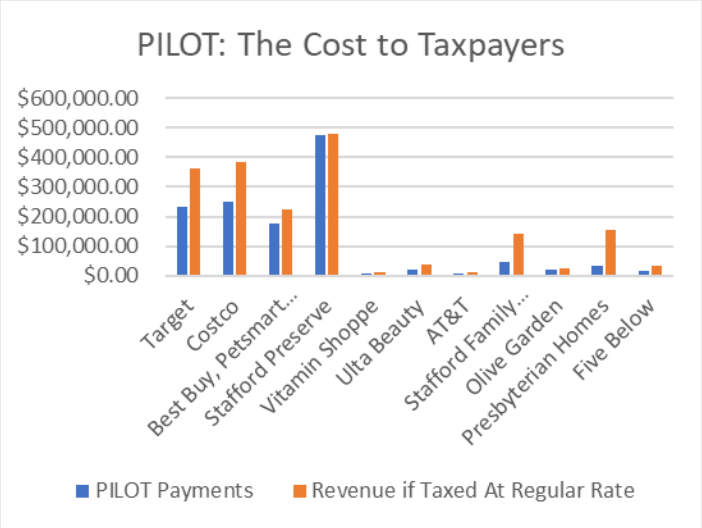
If the inherent inequities surrounding tax abatements are not addressed by state officials, the potential exists for significant shifts in the tax burden. Existing tax abatements granted by municipalities have deprived schools and counties of revenue, leading to painful tax increases elsewhere to make up for the shortfalls.

Policy Recommendations

- State law governing tax abatements must be amended to provide a portion of PILOT revenue to taxing entities like school boards, counties and fire districts that currently miss out on tax revenue they would otherwise receive.
- Limits should be placed on the ability of municipalities to grant tax abatements to new development projects.
- Independent evaluation of costs / benefits should be required through the Local Finance Board before tax abatements can be granted to prevent municipal abuses of discretion or collusion.
- A centralized database of tax abatements should be created to promote transparency and allow public to understand their impact.

Case Study: Stafford Township Landfill Redevelopment Project

The township council of Stafford Township (Ocean County) authorized the granting of long-term tax abatements to developer Walters Group to build a shopping complex, which resulted in a PILOT agreement with the developer. As a part of the agreement, the developer paid costs to close the landfill on the property. In 2016 alone, Stafford taxpayers subsidized the project to the tune of $587,401.59 – the difference between the amount of money the township would have received if the retail stores were taxed at the municipality's regular rate.



Source: Author

This difference in property tax revenue is not the only way that local property taxpayers will pay to subsidize abatements. Stafford has both a local elementary school district and is a member of the Southern Regional School District. Because Stafford's abatement affects tax revenue of a regional district, all other sending districts of the regional school district are inevitably forced to make up the difference in revenue lost out to Stafford's PILOT agreements.

Conclusion

While tax abatements can be a valuable tool to encourage development and revitalize blighted areas, their unchecked use can cause revenue shortfalls to other taxing entities aside from the municipalities that benefit from them, presenting cause for concern. State reform and oversight of municipal abatements is essential to prevent long-term tax inequities and budget shortfalls, while ensuring that the public interest is served.

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"Agana Shopping Center" by Abasaa is Public Domain.

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New Jersey's Minimum Wage

Chanel Johnson

Today's minimum hourly wage in New Jersey is $8.44. It went up 66% from August 2015. Consumer Price Index is a tool to see the average living person expenses each year. The inflation did not rise which explains why the minimum wage did not rise as much as it should have. New Jersey is a very expensive state to live in. The minimum wage is low, but the cost of living is high. An average person who is working full time (40 hours per week) only makes $17,555 each year. The current minimum wage cannot support the living expenses required to survive. In order for a person to survive on a daily basis with basic expenses of food, clothing, bills and providing for a family, the individual should at least be making $13 an hour. For a person earning $8.44 an hour (minimum wage), the paycheck goes towards all the bills,

"Raise the Minimum Wage" by Paul Sableman is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

finances are not available for any extra living expenses. People are working extra hours just to meet the minimum needs and to match the outcome of someone making $13 per hour.

Recommendation

My solution would be to raise the minimum wage to $13 per hour. There would be positive results as follows:

- A person will not be living from paycheck to paycheck
- A lot of poverty areas will improve their living standards
- Residents will be able to afford to live in this expensive state and not move

These results are helpful because New Jersey residents will not struggle. They can afford to pay their bills and still have additional money for their other living needs. People can enjoy their days off instead of picking up extra work days. The poverty rate would go down if the minimum wage would increase. Additionally, the minimum wage increase would help the struggling families to financially cover their expenses. Most of these people earning minimum wage are not working for themselves; they are working to provide for their family. The current minimum wage is not enough to do that.

Increasing the minimum wage to $15 per hour would be too much of an increase; it would ruin small businesses. Consequently, this may cause employees to be laid off and the unemployment rate may increase. As a result, my suggestion to increase the minimum wage to $13 would benefit all businesses and make a stable living in New Jersey.

"Fight for $15 on 4/15" by The All-Nite Images is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Most of New Jersey's residents would agree to work for $13 per hour instead of $8.44 per hour. It might not be the $15 per hour that they are requesting, but they will not struggle as much as they do now with the current minimum wage.

Conclusion

An increase in the minimum wage to at least $13 an hour would be a good start to end poverty. S-15/A-15 did say it should increase to $15 an hour over the years but we need something to go in effect right now for the struggling families. It does not have to be $15 per hour but it should be more than $8.44 per hour. East Orange Mayor Lester E. Taylor III has agreed to sign the proposal for raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour. He feels the working class families should be put first and not have to struggle anymore. Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders says the average worker cannot afford the basic living needs with the minimum wage at its current value. The minimum wage is low but the cost of living in New Jersey continues to increase. If government leaders agree that the minimum wage is not helping the average working New Jersey resident then this is a major problem that needs to be fixed soon. The increase of the minimum wage would help many struggling people on a daily basis without picking up extra hours or even a second job.

"Fast food workers on strike for higher minimum wage and better benefits" by Fibonacci Blue is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Gas Tax

Christopher Baran

Issue

In 2016, Governor Christie signed a bill raising the gas tax 23 cents per gallon. New Jersey drivers no longer pay the second-lowest state gas taxes in the United States (see Table 1). The increase took effect November 1, 2016. This was the first time for a tax hike since Christie has been in office and the first time since 1988 that the gas tax was increased. The issue with the gas tax is that commuters feel the personal financial effects of the gas tax immediately. If you are driving a small car and fill up the tank five to six days each month, the hike will cost you $17-$22 each month. For larger vehicles, it will cost $28-$55. This tax will also cost the consumer more money because of a ripple effect. Companies will add a gas surcharge on deliveries which will cause stores to charge more money on products. Also, the 23 cent gallon gas tax hike might only be the beginning. There is a loophole in the law that drivers cannot do anything about. The law gives the state treasurer the ability to change the rate from year to year if the state does not hit its gasoline revenue targets. The citizens have no input on the matter as well so we are stuck with it.

Table1 : Gas Tax Rates Before NJ Increase (Jan. 1, 2016)

Rank	*State*	*Tax Per Gallon*
1	Pennsylvania	50.40 ¢
2	Washington	44.50 ¢
3	New York	42.64 ¢
4	Hawaii	42.35 ¢
5	California	40.62 ¢
6	Connecticut	37.51 ¢
	New Jersey (Nov 1, 2016)	37.50 ¢
7	Florida	36.58 ¢
8	North Carolina	35.25 ¢
9	Rhode Island	34.00 ¢
10	Nevada	33.85 ¢
49	New Jersey	14.50 ¢

Source: *Tax Foundation*. AB 14 is Assembly Bill 14, which raised the gas tax.

Recommendation One: Tax Overtime

One way to reduce the burden of the increased gas tax is to raise it gradually over time. For instance, in the first year of the tax raise it 5 cents per gallon instead of taxing people an extra 23 cents per gallon all at once. People should not be required to pay the extra 23 cents per gallon right away.

The chart to the right shows that before the increase, New Jersey had the second lowest state to pay tax on gas. After the increase, this is no longer the case. From the new gas tax, New Jersey will be the one of the highest paying states in taxes for gas in the country.

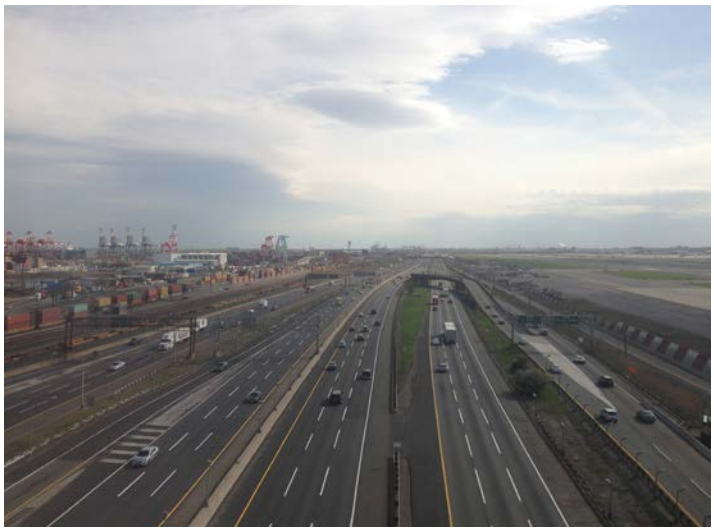
Furthermore, another huge issue with the tax is that drivers from other states that drive through New Jersey to commute to work, will not need to get gas in New Jersey anymore. Since the tax will make New Jersey one of the more expensive states to get gas at. This will cause New Jersey to lose money from the commuters.

"Wawa Gas Pump, Tampa, Florida" by Minale Tatersfield is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

NJ Transportation Fund

In the original Motors fuel tax, it was levied primarily on sales of gasoline and diesel fuel. The original law was passed July 10th, 1984 which raised the gas three cents. Which annually made $25 million for the state.

New Jersey's gas tax will be dedicated to transportation funding. The purpose of the increase was to help pay for the $16 billion in transit projects over the next eight years. The gas tax will finance an eight year $16 billion transportation program that will draw another $16 billion in federal matching dollars. All the revenue from the gas tax is going directly to the transportation project which was on the Public Question No.2 (2016). In 2017 alone, the tax will end up costing the state citizens over $160 million and estimates 1.4$ billion by the year of 2021.



"NJ Turnpike From Airplane Near Newark" by Famartin is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Recommendation Two: Roads

New Jersey ranked last again in the nation return of investment on rod spending. Costing 2.18 million per mile to rebuild and maintain roads and bridges according to the latest Reason Foundation highway report. This amount is ridiculous. It's three times as much as any other state. That number has increased since 2014, when the state spent a total of $2.02 million per mile. For my second recommendation, New Jersey should cut the spending on building and maintaining roads. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie should look at other states and see how they operate their transportation fund to see where they cut cost. The money could be going to somewhere else instead of to the state's highways that are triple the cost of any other states.

Conclusion

From the data collected New Jersey should cut spending on maintaining roads and bridges. New Jersey should also have the tax of gas go up, but over a period of time instead of giving the tax all at once. This will give citizens time to adjust to the tax instead of costing the daily driver an extra $17-$22 per month.

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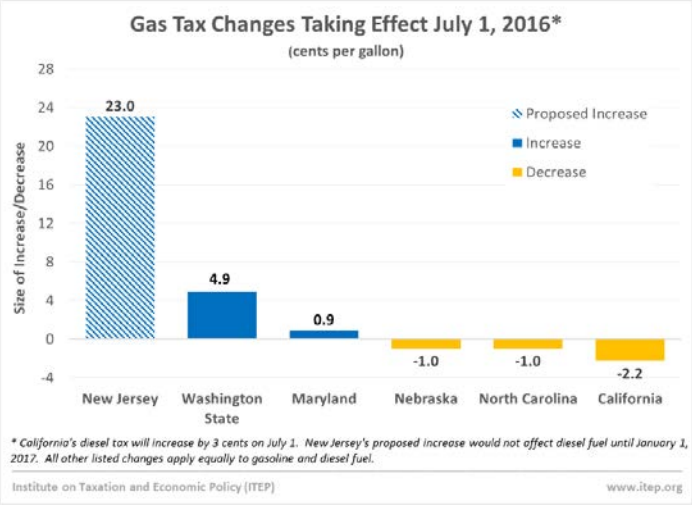
Gas Tax

Christopher McVeigh

About Gas Tax

The gas tax was instated during the past year. It was a 23 cent increase on our gas prices; therefore, the tax on gas in New Jersey is now 37.5 cents.



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The picture above shows how New Jersey's gas tax will be five times larger than any other tax in 2016, beating out Washington State. Also, drivers will spend about $184 to $276 more per vehicle per year because of this tax. On the other hand, this tax was created to help the crumbling roads in the state of New Jersey. It will add $32 billion to state funds for the purpose of road and transit projects over the next eight years. It would phase out New Jersey's estate tax, changing the threshold from $675,000 to $2 million in 2017 and eliminating it completely in 2018. It will raise the earned income tax credit, which helps low-income residents, from 30 to 35 percent for the current tax year, as well as increase the tax exclusion on retirement income over four years to $100,000 for joint filers. Veterans would get a personal exemption for state income taxes under the measure. It will lower sales tax from 7% to 6.625% in July.

The gas tax will not only boost the transportation fund, it will also boost the economy. The gas tax increase will give 1700 jobs back to New Jersey's people.

Gas Tax Amendment

In 2016, the state of New Jersey voted on this gas tax. Not too many people knew what it actually meant. There were a lot of commercials saying how to vote but not too many voters actually understood the Amendment. What we voted on in 2016 was to make sure that all money from the gas tax would go to the transportation-system upgrades only. First, we must look at what is on the books already. New Jersey has a 10.5 cent per gallon tax on gasoline as we buy it at the pump. Also there is a 4 cent tax on petroleum products. The actual total gas tax before the new gas tax was 14.5 cents per gallon. If you are buying diesel fuel, the tax was 13.5 cents per gallon. You would think that in the past all of the tax went to the transportation fund; however, that is not correct. Only Revenue linked to the first 10.5 cents (of diesel fuel) went to the trust fund. Twenty million dollars, from the other three cents, were used elsewhere. Since the ballot question was approved in November, all revenue from the increased gas tax would be constitutionally obligated to go to funding transportation.

Recommendation 1: Not a 23 cent Spike Right Away

With this new gas tax, the people of New Jersey will pay the 23 cent increase immediately. I feel that we should decrease it from the 23 cents down to 14 then have a general increase over the next eight years. With the current arrangement, the tax will sky rocket from 23 cents to 37.5 cents in a certain amount of time. If there is a plan set in stone that has some increase every year, the price will increase by four cents each year.

If we started the tax at 14 cents per gallon then increased it by four cents every year it will hit 37.5 in about six years. This will give people time to adjust to the prices of the tax and not be overwhelmed by the high price increase. Also, this might have been a better idea than giving all the tax breaks. All the tax breaks will cost New Jersey about 1 billion dollars. The main problem people saw with this tax is the 23 cents extra it will cost them. 14 cents would be a much easier pill to swallow and having a plan to steadily increase it will let people know when the tax increase is coming.

Recommendation 2: Spend Less on Road Work

New Jersey spends the most on road per mile than any other state; New Jersey spends about $2.18 million per mile to rebuild and maintain roads and bridges. The next highest state is Florida which is at a cool $741,292 per mile. There is about 39,000 miles of roadway in New Jersey. The cost for all those miles comes to around $85 billion. Now compare it to cost of roadwork in Florida, it would cost around $2.9 billion. That would save us approximately $80 billion. There would be no need for the gas tax if New Jersey just paid an appropriate amount for the cost of maintaining the roads. To go along with this the state administration spends $44,388 per mile which again is the highest in the country. Washington State is the median cost at $12,505. So now New Jersey administration spends $1.7 billion dollars, while Washington spends around $487,000. That would save the state over $1.3 billion.

So combined the state could save over $81 billion for the road work they would have to do for the entire state. This would completely get rid of the gas tax that would only bring in $32 billion over the next eight years and still have around $50 billion to use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the gas tax will help the state with money for the maintenance of roads. The tax starts at 23 cents and will rise all the way up to 37. 5 cents per gallon. It will give the state around $32 billion over the next 8 years. While cutting at or away at some of the other taxes. Many people were confused on what the amendment said about the gas tax in 2016. It was a good thing voters voted yes because it made sure all the money created from the gas tax would go to the transportation fund. The two changes I would make would be to start off with a 14 cent increase and have it gradually increase by 4 cents every year for the next six years. That would let people know the plan for the tax and not have the gas price sky rocket from the very beginning. Finally, I would change how we pay for road work and the administrative spending on such road work. If we just cut down on those two things there would be no need for the gas tax in the first place.

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Counterproductive Welfare Regulations

Isola Webbe

It has been over two decades since the Democratic President Bill Clinton passed a Republican-sponsored bill to reconstruct the nation's social services system (NJ Spotlight). The former president instituted the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The law replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC), which provided social services for eligible individuals, with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF), now commonly referred to as welfare.

New Jersey's welfare system, governed by the Department of Human Services, uses the Division of Family Development as its primary source of information pertaining to programs and services. Under the division are smaller county agencies and designated locations that distribute services and resources to eligible individuals and families. The focus of this brief is on the WorkFirst NJ Program (WFNJ).

What is WorkFirstNJ?

The WorkFirst NJ Program is focused on helping recipients get off welfare and into employment. The program is among many other overseen by the Division of Family Development. WFNJ recipients may receive cash benefits and certain cases are eligible for Emergency assistance, which can include clothing, shelter, temporary rental assistance, and more. The services are provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The General Assistance (GA) program is also available for welfare recipients who are eligible.

Per the Division of Family Development webpage, the program highlights work as the first step in the positive direction towards building a new life and "brighter future."

The Issue

Welfare regulations in New Jersey, specifically regarding those of the WorkFirst New Jersey Program (WFNJ), are counterproductive. The failure to properly incorporate changes within the local and national economy and in regulating services encourages a long-term dependency on welfare programs.

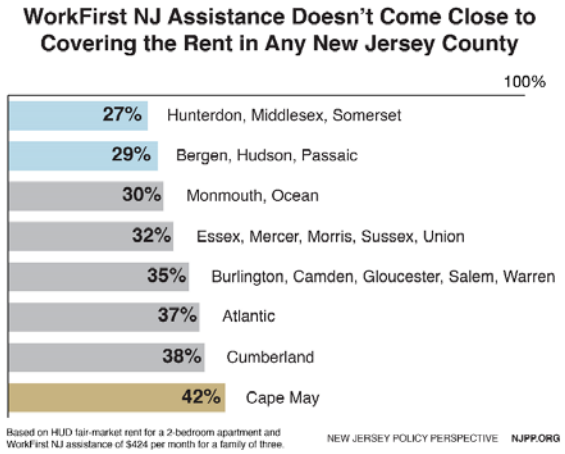
Quarterly reports of welfare programs in New Jersey were recently released on the Department of Human Services website. In 2016, the TANF caseload decreased by 6,851 cases, from 27,787 in July 2015 to 20,936 in July 2016 (STATS). Individuals and families who are receiving services or those who need services are wrapped in regulations that both limit their eligibility for services and the amount of resources that they can receive. The ACLU expressed its concerns regarding a welfare reform legislation. The legislation discussed five issues pertaining to the following: arbitrary time limits of services, child exclusion rules, limits to amounts payable to individuals and families, and the denial of benefits to legal aliens and convicted felony drug offenders (Welfare).

Based on the New Jersey State Plan for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, there are specific regulations that need to be reexamined. The plan states that first-time pregnant women are not eligible for benefits, but recipients convicted of misrepresenting themselves or providing misleading documents to receive benefits are not eligible for benefits ranging from twelve months to ten years after conviction. While limits placed on the length of receiving benefits and the amount of benefits remain valid issues in the new plan, another regulation that needs reconsideration is regulations pertaining to out-of-state residents who are eligible to receive benefits (PLAN).

Why do WFNJ regulations provide benefits to an out-of-moves to New Jersey benefits, but a first-time soon-to-be mother cannot receive benefits?

The Governor Must

When planning and regulating welfare services in New Jersey, the new Governor of New Jersey must acknowledge the overwhelming changes to both the local and national economy while considering the cost of living in New Jersey. Per Raymond J. Castro's *No, New Jersey's Poorest Aren't Offered a 'Very Large Package of Benefits,* New Jersey Policy Perspectives reported that welfare assistance in New Jersey has not increased for twenty-nine years and New Jersey provides the lowest benefits in the Northeast. It also stated that, "A family of three receives just $424 a month – an amount that now represents just 25 percent of the federal poverty level, contrasted with the 61 percent it represented in 1981." As depicted in the graph below, based on HUD's Fair Market Rate, that is only about a third of the rent for a two-bedroom apartment in New Jersey. That is estimating that the entire amount of assistance went to housing payments.



Castro, Raymond J. (2016). "No, New Jersey's Poorest Aren't Offered a 'Very Large Package of Benefits." New Jersey Policy Perspective. May 18.

Recommendation

While some may argue that money is not the answer to all the problems in New Jersey, better resources and increased funding can be a solution to the welfare problem. I recommend a strategic analysis and reexamination of data used to institute welfare regulation. Welfare regulations in New Jersey need to be thoroughly reexamined with the consideration of changes in the local and national economy and increasing levels of inflation versus the stagnate generation of income.

Another recommendation that I propose is mandatory courses for welfare recipients on topics related to the following: savings and finances, independent living, and utility management. These classes will be geared to not only stress the importance of getting off welfare but to also help to better prepare welfare recipients for the life post-TANF. These recommendations focus on providing sufficient temporary services to individuals and families in the hopes of eventually no longer needing welfare services. Also, the second recommendation proposes solutions to not only problems with dependency on welfare, but also proposes solutions to combating economic inequality among welfare recipients.

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The Gateway Project

Ryan Sims

The Issue

New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country. Meaning, we have the most citizens in the least amount of space. Due to our geographic proximity, many of our residents commute daily to New York for their jobs. New Jersey sends three times as many workers to New York than New York sends to New Jersey (Frassinelli 2013). In 2009, 16 percent of Manhattan commuters came from North Jersey (Moss et al. 2012). Further, from 2002 to 2009, Manhattan saw a 21 percent increase in commuters from Northern New Jersey, the largest of any source (Moss et al. 2012).

The current infrastructure supporting almost all of these commuters is the Holland Tunnel. The tunnel, opened in 1927, was an incredible engineering feat for its time. However, time has taken its toll and this vital path between New York and New Jersey needs fixing. Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman has stated that the current tunnel has 20 years before one or both tracks inside the tunnel must be shut down (Strunsky 2014). Clearly, the clock is ticking.

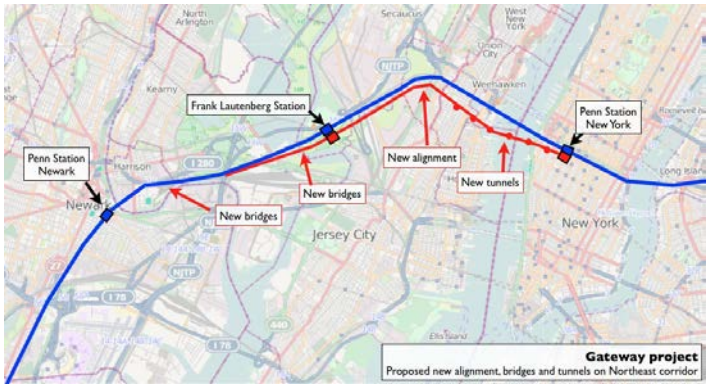
"Holland Tunnel-Tollbooths" by formulaone licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Gateway Project

Enter the Gateway Project. It is a comprehensive solution to a fast-growing problem facing New Jersey and New York. It will consist of a brand new "Hudson Tunnel" being built next to the existing Holland Tunnel. The new tunnel, in conjunction with the rehabilitation of the existing tunnel, will double the number of trains that can pass through between New York and New Jersey daily.

The Gateway Project is not just a convenience project for New Yorkers and New Jerseyans. The Obama Administration called it "the most important planned piece of rail infrastructure in the country." (McGeehan 2015).

Map of the Gateway Project



"Gateway Project Overview" by Peter Eastern licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Benefits

The benefits of the Gateway Project go far beyond commuters being able to get to work faster. With a new and improved tunnel, Manhattan gains and maintains its access to the workforce that New Jersey commuters have to offer. Their skills and services are essential to New York City's economy and, by extension, their ability to get to the city is essential as well. The total income of all New Jersey commuters in Manhattan totals over $33 billion annually (Gardner 2016). Without a suitable replacement to the infrastructure, Manhattan and New Jersey will lose a considerable portion of this income. The tunnel itself will also be a large job creator. Jobs will be created for the approximately eight years it will take to build, and for its maintenance and operation going forward.

"Holland Tunnel" by Will Fisher licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Other benefits include reduced travel time, reduced travel costs, emissions reductions, safety improvements, reduced highway congestion, improved travel reliability, reduced train crowding, and avoidance of travel disturbance.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

With all of this in mind, a Cost-Benefit Analysis done by Amtrak found that even with conservative discount estimates, the cost-benefit ratio for the Gateway Project would be 2.16 (Gardner 2016). Meaning, the wide-ranging economic benefits of the Project will greatly outweigh its costs.

Funding for the Project will not be small. Preliminary estimates have put the total cost of the project at $24 billion (Rinde 2016). The states of New York and New Jersey have agreed to split the cost of the project. More recently, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey set aside $2.7 billion for the project. The next governor of New Jersey must continue these plans and make this vital project a priority.

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Lower the Property Tax in New Jersey

Charles Alyanakian

New Jersey is one of most densely populated states in the country; only Rhode Island has more residents per square mile. A dense population indicates that it costs more money to provide services. When there are a lot of people located in one area, the cost of public services like public works will cost the residents of the Garden State more to live here. Because of how densely populated the state is, New Jersey is among the top 10 states in which to live in the country. Marc Pfeiffer, the assistant director for the Bloustein Local Government Research Center, points to the cost of property tax for the reason why the state has become increasingly expensive. Unlike other states where county and municipal governments impose local income and sales taxes, this is not allowed in New Jersey, which means the property tax collected pays the bills for local government, schools and whatever other county expenses that need to get paid. The advantages of having property tax pay for all local and county expenses is that the taxes are reliable.

Policy Implications

Because the property tax covers county and local government expenses, New Jersey residents have faced increasing tax hikes on property taxes. Between 2004 and 2006, residents saw seven percent per year tax growth. In 2011, Governor Christie put a two percent cap on property tax growth. Still with the cap on property tax growth, New Jersey residents paid an average of $8,549 in 2016.

There are a dozen reasons why New Jersey has the highest property taxes in the country. The first reason Pfeiffer points to is the number of municipalities and school districts in the state. There are 565 municipalities and 600 school districts in the state, which implies a lot of payroll.

Additionally, the state of New Jersey public worker pensions are having strains on every state budget. With the 565 municipal employers paying for almost all of their shares into the Public Employees' Pension System and both the Police and Fire Retirement System, the cost for funding the public works pensions continues to increase, making the property tax revenues very critical to keeping the state economically afloat. Depending on property tax to keep the state afloat is not fair for the residents living in the state; why should hardworking residents of the state have the burden of maintaining the state economically? The other reason for the high taxes on property is the cost of funding the public education system. Education is the largest part of the three-headed property tax beast: county, municipal, and school expenses. With so much pressure on the property taxes in the state, some people have upwards 22% of their annual take-home income. What can be done to lower the property taxes?

"Tax" by 401kcalculator.org is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

It is not a problem that can easily be solved. The state has always had property tax problems; if it could have been solved, it would have been solved. Lawmakers and local officials have encouraged municipalities to consider consolidation, which they believe would be a big cash saver for residents. In 2011, residents of Princeton Borough-Princeton Township voted for a merger. The communities have saved close to $2.5 million dollars; however, Mercer County residents are still paying the most on property taxes in the state. The situation to solve the high cost of the property taxes is there needs to be a new tax revenue that is inducted, and that will generate revenue that will drive the property taxes down.

Recommendation: Legalize the Marijuana Industry, take the revenue and fund public schools

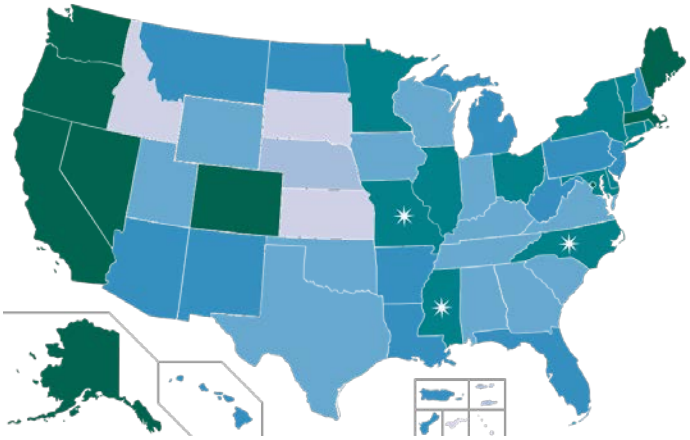
Legalizing the Marijuana Industry and using the revenue to offset the cost of funding public schools will ease property taxes.

Funding Public Schools cost $377 million in 2015-2016.

- To have relief on the property taxes in the state, there needs to be a new revenue stream to fund public schools. If the state legalizes the marijuana industry, the industry could produce $300 million in revenue.
- With the new taxes, the marijuana industry can ease the property tax by funding public schools.
- Lawmakers can put a 25 percent tax rate in effect, which is then phased- in over three to five years.
- The new tax revenue could cut the property tax in half. Instead of paying $8,500 annually, it could be only $4,200 a year for property tax
- The marijuana industry should be regulated, just like the alcohol industry.

Conclusion

The only way to make the cost of living in New Jersey more affordable is if there is a new tax introduced, and the marijuana industry is the way to make the state affordable for all of the residents of New Jersey.



"Map-of-US-state-cannabis-laws" by Lokal_Profil licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.

- Jurisdiction with legalized cannabis
- Jurisdiction with both medical and decriminalization laws
- Jurisdiction with legal psychoactive medical cannabis
- Jurisdiction with legal non-psychoactive medical cannabis
- Jurisdiction with decriminalized cannabis possession laws
- Jurisdiction with total cannabis prohibition

Marked states have only legal non-psychoactive medical cannabis

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Legalization of Marijuana

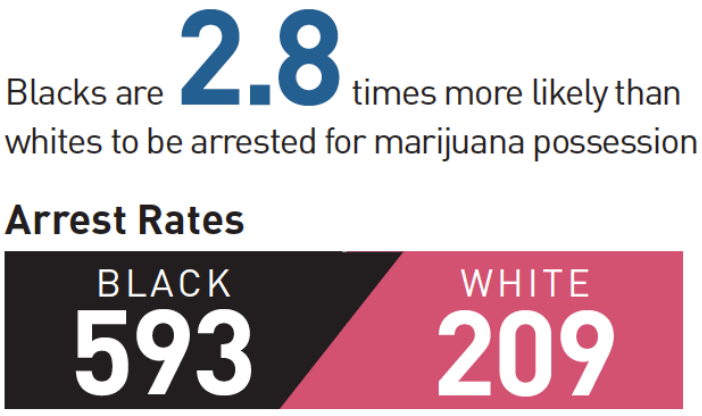
Jason Artrip

The main issue at hand is that marijuana is illegal. To understand this issue better the history of marijuana in the country and why it's illegal must be looked at. Marijuana was first made illegal in the city of El Paso, Texas in 1915. The drug was starting to be banned due to the increasing use of it by the Mexican immigrants at the time. The country believed that it caused the immigrants to go crazy. Slowly, the whole country started to ban marijuana. This was all based on racist ideologies put out by the media and government. The government at the time had lifted the prohibition ban; this left an entire governmental office completely with no purpose. Harry Anslinger who was the head of the Department of Prohibition was trying to find a purpose for his department so he joined in on the attack on marijuana.

"Drug Bottle Containing Cannabis" is Public Domain (PD-1996).

Currently in New Jersey, marijuana is illegal for recreational use, but it is available for medical use. The process to get medical marijuana in New Jersey, however, is a very long and painful process; therefore, it is easier to get it on the streets. Since people are turning to the streets for the drug, they may not be receiving only marijuana. Sometimes it could be laced with other drugs like cocaine or opiates.

The criminal effects of marijuana are severely hurting New Jersey. In 2010, New Jersey spent over $127 million dollars on enforcing marijuana possession laws. That is a giant waste of tax payer dollars for something that does not cause any harm while under the influence. In the state of New Jersey, nearly every 21 minutes someone is arrested for a marijuana-related crime. The criminal justice system is broken because it cannot handle the overcrowded court rooms and prisons for the high amount of marijuana offences that occur. The penalty in New Jersey for marijuana possession can be anything from a fine to jail time to even deportation in certain cases. These laws need to be reformed and changed to match the modern overcrowding in prison to help that issue, not solve it. The chart below shows how race is even affected by marijuana laws in New Jersey.



ACLU. (2013). The War on Marijuana in Black and White. June. Page 165.

Proposals

The state of New Jersey should make the recreational use of marijuana legal. They cannot do this in one easy step, however. There are too many factors involved. What I propose is a 10-year plan. In those ten years, a few things must be accomplished.

Any prisoner who is in prison for a possession or any nonviolent marijuana crime must be released and placed back into society. This is why I say a 10 year plan. We cannot just open the gates and let all the prisoners walk free; there must be some form of order to their release. These prisoners should not receive any compensation for their time because when they were arrested and sentenced, it was for a just reason at the time of their crime.

Another thing that must happen is the dropping of all current criminal cases regarding possession of marijuana. The defendant will not receive any fines or punishment for their actions. Charges will be dropped and they will be free to go. Any pending fines or outstanding fines must be paid because they were issued when the act was illegal.

Also, all funds that are going towards the government's war on marijuana must be redistributed to the proper channels for better use of the money. All this money that is being spent on marijuana will go towards prison reform or even just be put to the budget of the police forces.

The most rapid change that needs to happen is for law enforcement officers to stop all arrests or investigations that are based on marijuana charges. An age of 21 will be set as the age when one can purchase and recreationally use marijuana.

Medical use shall be granted to all so that people with diseases that can benefit from the drug are given the treatment they need.

Now that New Jersey has a plan for the legal side of the drug, they need to plan a distribution side. The drug will be sold at dispensaries that get their marijuana from many different sources. They can self-grow or buy from a licensed farmer.

The state of New Jersey should also follow what the state of Colorado did when it came to the taxation of marijuana. Colorado taxes the drug and then the state votes on what to spend that tax money on. They can vote to spend it on anything from education to roads and bridges. This vote happens every year before taxes are due.

Conclusion

The state of New Jersey would clearly benefit from the legalization of marijuana. Most of the state is for it, except for the current governor, who will be out of office soon. The marijuana legalization isn't an argument of whether it will happen it, rather how soon it will happen.

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Construction through Cannabis

Thomas Clark

New Jersey's roads and rails, sewers and drinking water systems are old and only getting older. Asphalt, iron, and steel all follow the laws of physics, meaning the minute they are installed, they also begin to degrade. Regular maintenance may help keep them going, but eventually sewer pipes and bridges need to be replaced.

How bad is New Jersey's infrastructure? The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) produced a report card on the states' infrastructure using the typical A through F grading scale. They graded each category as follows:

- *Solid Waste*: B- (*highest grade received*)
- **Roads**: D+
- **Bridges**: D+
- **Drinking Water**: C
- **Parks**: D+
- **Transit**: D-

Of the 13 aspects of New Jersey's infrastructure graded by ASCE, the state received a final grade point average of D+. This is a grade that cannot even get a student through college.

"Pulaski Skyway at NJ TPK, Newark" by Doc Searls licensed under CC BY 2.0

Factors Leading to the Current Situation

- New Jersey is a corridor state, leading to substantial interstate traffic.
- Extremes of hot and cold weather lead to expansion and contraction of roads, causing potholes.
- Transportation Trust Fund is severely in debt ($14 billion).
- Zero resources available to be funneled into infrastructure reform.

The biggest issue involving our state's degrading infrastructure is the inability to allocate appropriate funds. For infrastructure reform to begin, we must first find an alternate form of revue beyond raising existing taxes and further burdening citizens.

The Cost of Marijuana Prohibition

- The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey estimates that local governments spent $211 million enforcing marijuana laws between 2000 and 2010.
- Prohibition costs New Jersey roughly $180 million each year in uncollected tax revenue.
- Cost of housing an inmate per year in New Jersey is $31,000 (52% of drug arrests made in 2010 were for marijuana).
- Lives are ruined due to arrests involving marijuana.

Colorado Findings

Colorado was the first state to legalize recreational marijuana in the United States. Since 2014, there have been incredible outcomes related to legalization (Rough 2016):

- Violent crime in the state had decreased by 2.2%, burglaries are down 9.5%, and overall property crimes decreased by 8.9%.
- "Revenue from retail cannabis sales amounted to at least $40.9 million by October 2014, with an allotted $2.5 million to increase the number of health professionals in public schools."
- Colorado is generating so much tax revenue that an additional $30.5 million was returned to taxpayers.
- "Marijuana-related arrests have dropped 84% since 2010", with legalization further reducing low-level arrests for charges like simple possession, saving law enforcement approximately $2 million in adjudication costs.
- "Colorado's unemployment rate has dropped, at least in part due to the 16,000 jobs that were created due to the marijuana industry."

"Cannabis Station" by Jeffrey Beall licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Recommendation

I am recommending that New Jersey legalization recreational marijuana and dedicate 100% of the tax revenue to infrastructure improvements, until the state receives a B or better grade from ASCE.

Allocation of Tax Revenue from Marijuana

Legalization of recreational marijuana proved in many cases (Colorado, Washington, etc) to provide a deep well of financial resources for governments. These resources are vital for improving the finances of the state of New Jersey.

With that said, the resulting funds need to be effectively allocated to the most pressing infrastructure problems. Thus, I recommend that areas receiving the lowest grades by the ASCE receive the largest shares of marijuana tax revenues.

- **Transit and Levees (D-)**: Receive 25% of revenue until restored.
- **Dams and Wastewater (D)**: Receive 20% of revenue.
- **Roads, Bridges, and Parks (D+)**: Receive 20% of revenue.
- **Drinking Water, Hazardous Waste, Rails and Ports (C)**: Receive 20% of revenue.
- **Energy (C+)**: Receive 10% of revenue.
- **Solid Waste (B-)**: Receive 5% of revenue.

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A Need for Reform, Marijuana in New Jersey

Nickolas Johnson

As we move through the calendar year of 2017, it is clear that our nation is a changing one. There are parts and pieces of our society that have once been viewed as taboo that are now acceptable to the general public and, in marijuana's case, wanted by the public. After the results of a 2017 poll of Americans revealed majority are in favor of legal marijuana, Tim Malloy, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll, had this to say "(Marijuana's) acceptance is growing yearly, monthly, There's never been a downturn." As states like Washington and Colorado continue to excel with their legal marijuana programs through societal and economic benefits, it is evident it is time for reform in the state of New Jersey.

Issues

As with any topic that peaks the public and government interest, there are large sums of tax dollars involved that will be saved if there is a marijuana reform in the state. Each year millions of dollars are spent on arrests and incarceration of nonviolent marijuana users. This pursuit and incarceration costs the state a great deal of money, keeps prisons full, and disposes of a great deal of manpower the state and municipalities have in the area of law enforcement. These marijuana offenses are nonviolent offenses that many times tarnish citizens' records if arrested for possession or use, which certainly contributes negatively to the ability to enter a well-paying career. In 2010, $127,343,512 were spent on marijuana law enforcement. This $127 million was spent from anywhere to incarceration expenses for nonviolent users all the way to the court system to prosecution for a small amount of marijuana on someone's person.

Table: Arrests in 2015 by Type

Type of Arrest	Percentage
Drug	14%
Heroin, Cocaine, Derivatives	3.56%
Marijuana	6.05%
Synthetic/manufactured	0.97%
Other	3.42%
Non-Drug	86%

Source: FBI. (2015). 2015 Crime in the United States. Table 29 and Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations Table.

The high number of arrests has caused a nationwide overcrowding of prisons, and one of which can be addressed as it has been in legalized states such as Colorado. The table above displays 2015 arrests compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). It can be seen that marijuana is the largest contributor to the drug-related arrests. For a "drug" that is currently legal in eight states, this seems like too large of a focus for law enforcement.

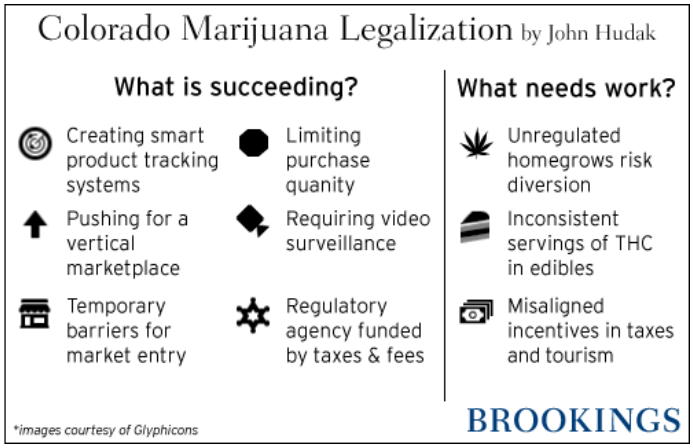
In addition to the large sums of taxpayer money that are spent on marijuana-related arrests, there is also a disparity that is negatively affecting minorities in relation to marijuana. African Americans were 2.8 times more likely to be arrested for Marijuana possession than whites despite similar usage rates in New Jersey (ACLU 2014). As previously stated, drug arrests substantially decrease one's chances of employment in a well-paying career; nonviolent charges for marijuana should never impede one's chances within a career field.

Reference

ACLU of New Jersey. (2014). *Marijuana Arrests in New Jersey*. Fact Sheet.

Recommendation

To address these problems that New Jersey, as well as much of the United Sates, is facing, there are a few approaches the state could take towards legalization. The first step in the process of legalization would first be decriminalizing marijuana in the state. Decriminalizing has proved to be effective in states and cities that are not yet prepared to open the gate to legal recreational marijuana. Cities such as Philadelphia have opted to implement decriminalization. Decriminalization makes marijuana use or personal possession not a criminal charge and makes it similar to a speeding citation and simply prompts officers to issue a fine to the individual responsible for violating the law. With New Jersey being a state that has struggled financially, decriminalization would immediately save tax dollars that, under current legislation, would be spent on arrests and incarcerations. This would be the first strategic move for the state towards recreational use of marijuana state-wide, the goals being cutting costs and generating large sums from tax revenues.



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Approaches

This brief will focus on two approaches that the pioneer states of Colorado and Washington have used with their implementation of legal marijuana.

The Washington Approach

Washington State maintains clear separation between pot growers, processors, and retailers. Washington also still forbids home production. This is largely due to the fear of lost tax revenues due to home cultivation. No local government opt out; this means local counties cannot forbid marijuana businesses from operating in their county. The barriers to entry are relatively low, making the market relatively easy for companies to enter.

"Colorado" by ErgoSum88 is Public Domain.

The Colorado Approach

Colorado allows entrepreneurs to produce cannabis and sell it at retail, and such businesses are actually required to produce the majority of the pot they sell; Colorado allows adults to grow up to six cannabis plants at home (or 12 plants per household). Local governments can opt out giving local counties the power to disapprove of marijuana businesses in their county. The state also institutes higher barriers to entry, including increased state fees to start marijuana businesses. These two approaches should be relied upon when structuring New Jersey's own approach that best fits the needs and wants of our great state.

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Legalization of Marijuana

Erica Naranjo

What it is

Marijuana is classified as a schedule-1 drug federally. It is defined as "the dried leaves and flowering tops of the pistillate hemp plant that yield THC and are smoked in cigarettes for their intoxicating effect" (Merriam-Webster). It is used by people every day to get high which is defined as "excited or stupefied by or as if by a drug" (Merriam-Webster). The controversy over the legalization of it is widespread with strong opinions coming from both sides.

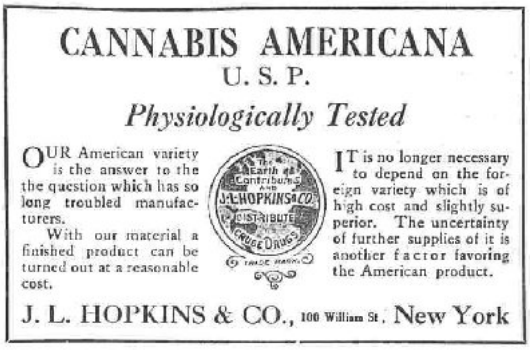
Views of New Jersey Politicians

NJ Senate President Stephen Sweeney took a trip to Colorado and liked the results of the legalization of marijuana. He likes how safe and profitable it is. It has reduced drug related crimes by 80% and has given the state of Colorado $135 million in tax revenue. Those statistics alone should be enough to sway the opinion of our governor, Chris Christie, but it is not. Chris Christie has vowed to veto any legalization bill, but his term is up in January 2018.

"New Jersey State House" by Marion Touvel is Public Domain.

Legalize it Medically & Recreationally

Marijuana is legal medically in New Jersey, but it is extremely difficult to obtain. Marijuana is also difficult to study since it is federally illegal and classified as a schedule-1 drug. Studies done on it are usually not the best quality, so accumulating research is difficult. One study examined patients suffering from nausea from chemotherapy, depression, anxiety, or a sleep disorder. They were given either a cannabis related product of a placebo in place of that product. The patients did not know which is which. The results showed that there were improvements in the patients that had the cannabis related product over the placebo.



"Cannabis Americana" is Public Domain (PD-1996)

A problem with legalizing marijuana medically is that when patients are prescribed it by their doctors, they have to figure out which products to use and which will work the best. With sufficient research not available, it is to the patient's discretion. And even trying to figure out what works can be difficult since there was a study done showing that food products containing cannabis are not always properly labeled, leaving people not knowing how much they are actually taking in. If we are going to legalize this drug and make it legitimate, proper regulation of products in the state needs to happen. Making it easier to get would mean saving people's lives.

Marijuana being illegal can compared to alcohol prohibition of the 1920s and early 1930s. The people who are for this prohibition of marijuana do not have their facts straight. It has been proven time and time again that cannabis is not addictive and that it is good for your mental and physical health. When alcohol was illegal, there was a strong black market. The regulation of alcohol could not be maintained. The same is happening with cannabis. So much money is going into regulating a drug that is less harmful in the long-term and the short-term. Studies done on the long-term effects of smoking marijuana regularly are hard to come by since the study of it is rather new, but from what has been studied, it is much less worse for the human body in the long-term compared to alcohol and cigarettes, two drugs that are very easy to get.

As far as studies are showing, the only drawbacks are that it affects the brain as it develops and that it puts you at risk of hurting yourself when you are actually high on the drug. Those two things are also affects that alcohol has on people, and law enforcement officers are more focused on finding teenagers drinking than adults drinking because it is legal to drink at 21.

"No Alcohol Under 21" by Areatius is licensed under CC BY 3.0.

Officers can focus and be more successful at enforcing the law when it is a smaller age group to target. If marijuana is legal recreationally, the legal age would be presumably 21 but teenagers will still use it. That sounds a like a big problem but it is not as bad as it sounds. Officers will be cracking down on young people's use of cannabis rather than the entire population. And people over the age 18 and under the age of 21 will not find themselves in prison for 10 years after being caught with weed on their person, so you will have less people incarcerated. It is a very positive situation from a lot of different angles. If marijuana is regulated instead of staying prohibited, it will do a lot more good than bad for our society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my policy proposal is to make this drug legal for recreational and medical use. All of the reasons that I think it is a good idea are listed above. The problems it will fix include incarceration rates going down and giving people more medical options. It will also increase the amount of tax money the state takes in.

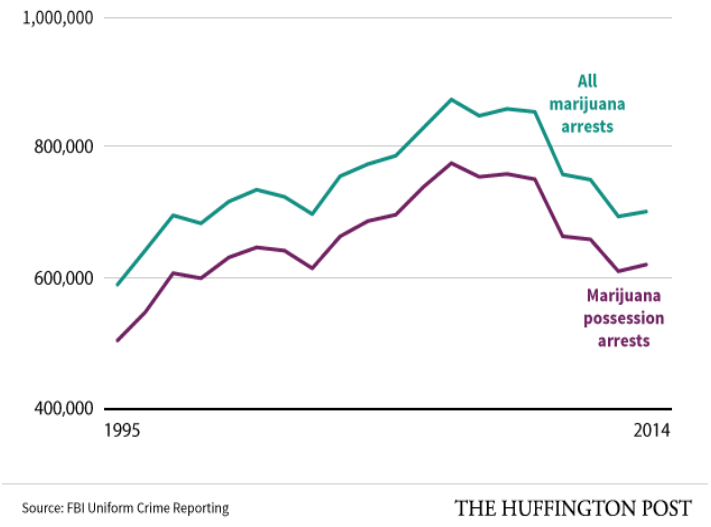
Overall, I think it is a drug that can help a lot of people with a lot of different things. Arguments against cannabis are generally based on things that people assume, such as it being addictive or bad for your mental and physical health, both things that it has been proven to help. I think if people did the right research and saw the positive effect it has on people, then they could be convinced.

Recreational Marijuana in New Jersey

Alexander Stevens

Twenty-six States and the District of Colombia have broad laws legalizing Marijuana in some way. Some states have decriminalized and others have medical marijuana laws.

New Jersey has an overcrowding problem in its jails and prisons that can easily be improved with marijuana legalization.



Source: Wing (2015).

As you can see in the figure above, there are a large number of arrests for the Class 1 drug Marijuana. This creates a serious overcrowding problem in our local jails and state prisons, space that should be reserved for more serious crimes. Arrests in all states for possession, cultivation, and distribution of marijuana have plummeted since voters legalized the use permitting adults (see figure above). The reduction of arrests is saving jurisdictions millions. From a criminal justice view, this is a significant development. Police would arrest more for marijuana use than all violent crimes combined.

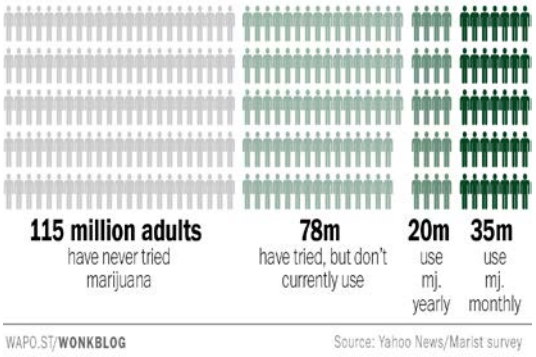
My Policy

The policy intends to open up jail cells in prisons and jails in New Jersey. Every time someone is arrested it overcrowds the jails and takes up space that could use for serious criminals that actually need to be in jail. Since adult possession of marijuana has been legal in Colorado, the state has benefitted in dramatic decrease in marijuana-related arrests and convictions. Furthermore, every state that has legalized marijuana has experienced an increase in tax revenues.

Law enforcement officers made over 700,000 arrests on marijuana-related changes in 2014. 88.4% were made on possession of marijuana alone. With those numbers, you can justify why I am making this argument of overcrowding jails in New Jersey. Authorities are known to spend more than $3.6 million in enforcing marijuana laws. Furthermore, the problems caused by being arrested with marijuana include: being caught in the criminal justice system, trouble getting hired, long-term financial problems, and unpaid fines coming back around to get you.

When you are arrested you have to pay a fine that corresponds with your charges. Next, if you go to jail, that is a loss of tax income for the state while many are in jail for marijuana.

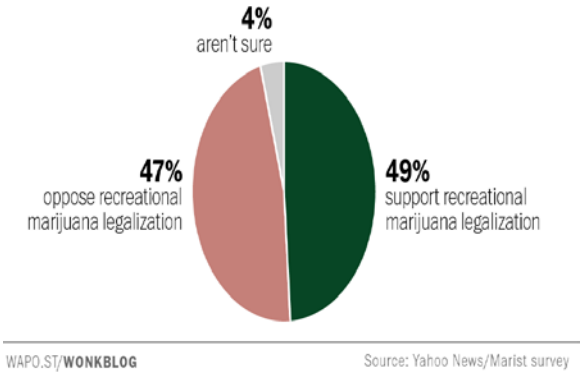
The United States is gradually becoming a nation of red, white and green. After just four states on the map passed initiatives legalizing non-medical marijuana, one in five Americans now lives in a state where it is legal in some form (recreational, medical, or decriminalized).



Source: Ingraham (2017).

The above chart demonstrates how mainstream marijuana smoking is becoming. Nearly 55 million Americans smoke it monthly or yearly. Additional states have also legalized after this data was collected.

My policy will not only clean out the jails and prisons with non-criminals, but also generate millions of dollars in a short period of time that can go towards any of the state's needs. Colorado collected $76 million in total marijuana-related taxes in 2014, which increased to $135 million in 2015. The market for marijuana is thus a rapidly growing source of revenue for a state when it is legalized.



Source: Ingraham (2017).

The tax could be similar to the federal tobacco tax which is $23 per pound and that could easily generate $500 million a year. New Jersey is already an expensive state to live in because of its dense population, so the state could tax the legalization of marijuana as high as they want to. It would not change the fact that people still will smoke as frequent as they do now.

It is not 100 percent certain that all crime rates will drop due the legalization of marijuana. However, legalized states have experienced drops in arrest rates since legalization. Further, just like alcohol and tobacco there is an age limit for marijuana. But, I feel it is impossible to stop the youth from getting marijuana from dispensaries. For example, it is currently impossible to stop all youth from drinking or smoking tobacco at a young age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overcrowding of jails and prisons is huge problem for New Jersey. Too many citizens are being incarcerated for the possession or distribution of marijuana. This problem creates a broad focus on drugs for law enforcement officers. Legalizing marijuana allows police to focus on the drugs, like opioids, that are killing citizens. Marijuana can also provide a huge income for the state.

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The Economic Benefits of Marijuana

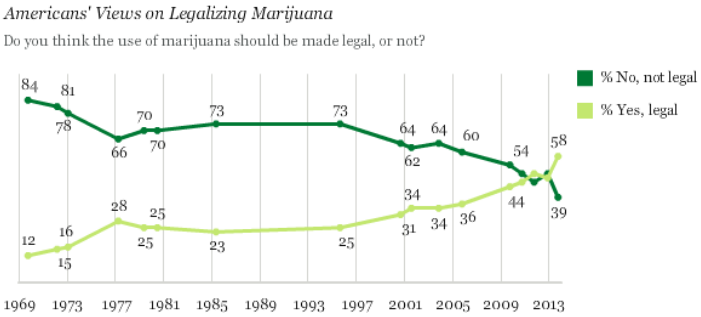
James Vicari

Issue

Marijuana is currently a Schedule 1 drug under the U.S. Controlled Substances Act, meaning it is has no possible medicinal use. This makes research on the benefits of marijuana incredibly difficult. It is medically legal in New Jersey, but it is not legal recreationally. In addition, the Rutgers Economic Advisory Service has predicted that New Jersey will experience a "weaker looking" economy through 2026. The legalization of marijuana will not single-handedly reverse that trend, but it will certainly benefit the New Jersey economy.

Policy Implications

With legalization and taxation of recreational marijuana, New Jersey will become more financially secure. It will also keep people out of our prisons, which in turn saves taxpayer money. Finally, more Americans are in favor of legalizing the drug than are against legalization.



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"Unemployment Office" by Bytemarks licensed under CC BY 2.0

Theme 1: Reversing the Unemployment Trend in New Jersey with Legalization

The legalization of marijuana will create jobs, which in turn will lower the growing unemployment rate.

New Jersey's overall unemployment rate in October 2016 was 5.2%, higher than the national average. As mentioned, New Jersey's economy is expected to be "weaker looking" through the next decade. The report by Rutgers suggest that the rate will increase to 5.4% and remain that way for the decade.

Marijuana legalization created 18,000 jobs in Colorado and the demand for marijuana is expected to increase 11% each year to 2020. Thus, it is safe to assume that the demand for jobs will likewise increase. Again, legalization will not solve all of New Jersey's economic problems, but it will give our economy a sustainable boost. Alongside other smart decisions, this can make New Jersey a destination to live and work.

Theme 2: Legalizing Marijuana Will Reverse the Declining New Jersey Population

The legalization of marijuana will attract outsiders from the Northeast that do not have such a luxury in their home state.

New Jersey already prides itself on being a tourist destination, especially with Atlantic City. Also, the easiest way to grow an economy is with population growth. New Jersey's population growth, however, is in danger. Rutgers predicts that New Jersey's population growth will "slow," averaging 0.3% over the next year. The country as a whole is expected to grow 1%, meaning New Jersey's growth will be slower than average.

New Jersey also struggles with students leaving the state for college, so what can be done to reverse this? Colorado currently has the second highest population growth rate in the United States. Marijuana is not the sole factor leading to Colorado's growth, but it would be foolish to deny the positive role it plays in that growth. Along with New Jersey's shores, marijuana legalization would be yet another reason for people to make New Jersey their state of permanent residence.

"Seal of Colorado" by Svgalbertian is Public Domain

"Legalize Marijuana Campaign" by Danny Birchall licensed under CC BY 2.0

Conclusion

Legalizing recreational marijuana in New Jersey will not singlehandedly solve all of its problems. It will, however, help in two specific areas: unemployment and a slow-growing population. Instead of embracing the inevitable future of a weaker economy, let us take actions that can reverse this troubling future.

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Criminal Justice Reform

Karli Dutton

Issues

Mass Incarceration

In the criminal justice system, mass incarceration is a substantial problem. Many fines and sentences are irrational. Individuals are arrested for various offenses; however, individuals convicted of some misdemeanors have faced as many as thirty years in prison. These individuals are being excessively incarcerated whether it is for possession of marijuana, unpaid child support, or even unpaid fines. Prison is more likely to make individuals commit crimes. Individuals need a beneficial program rather than locking them away for years over a situation that is not nearly as violent as rape or murder. Excessive incarceration has a terrible effect on individuals when reentering society.

"East Jersey State Prison" by Jackie Finn-Irwin is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

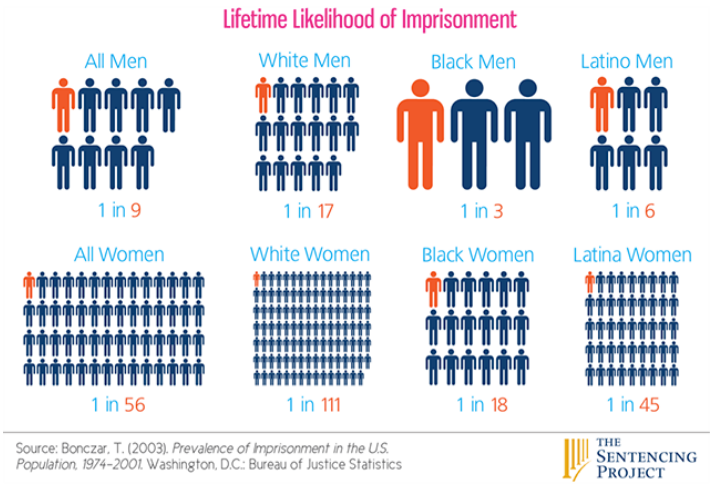
Recidivism

There are very few reentry programs. Inmates cannot realistically reenter society when they are set up for failure. These individuals are unable to get a job because of their background. In addition, these helpless individuals cannot afford to buy a house or even be approved for certain apartments because they do not have jobs that they desperately need to support themselves.

Their previous record prevents these individuals from getting hired, especially with lengthy expungement periods. Convictions are not off of these inmate's records for five years after they are released from prison. It is nearly impossible for these men and women to stay on their feet when they do not have stability. With all of these negative circumstances, these individuals are bound to reenter into the system. The rate of recidivism needs to be reduced dramatically.

Racial Disparity

Minorities are disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system. It is well reported that two individuals who commit the same crime receive different penalties. Recently, a Caucasian male and an African American male committed the same crime. The Caucasian male was enrolled in a rehabilitation program while the African American male was sentenced to thirty years in prison. Racial profiling needs to end and equality needs to be found within the criminal justice system.



Source: The Sentencing Project (n.d.).

Policy Implications

Without addressing mass incarceration, recidivism, and racial disparity, the criminal justice system will continue to be negatively affected. By addressing mass incarceration, concerns in the community will be addressed before issues begin to arise. Police officers will patrol more areas so that individuals will be afraid to commit crimes initially. Fewer crimes will be committed, which significantly reduces incarceration. Considering many inmates are serving time for marijuana-related charges, marijuana will be decriminalized to not only reduce incarceration but also to shift attention to the serious offenders and higher issues within the system.

Alternatives and Programs

- Community service
- Volunteer work
- Job creation
- Crime prevention
- Programs for at-risk youth
- Mental health and drug treatment

Reducing Recidivism

If there were more opportunities for education in the criminal justice system, the rate of recidivism would reduce dramatically. Inmates should be able to attend daily programs, such as classes on money management, how to build a resume, and how to fill out job applications. Instead of sitting in jail for years, inmates should have access to these programs to prepare them for the future. Reentry programs are necessary to adjust individuals into society before they are released. Not only will the rate of recidivism decline, these individuals will have the opportunity to be successful after their sentence is served.

With these programs implemented, inmates will not have to struggle to get on their feet and stay out of trouble.

Race

- Laws need to followed indiscriminately
- Equality needs to be addressed throughout the criminal justice system
- Officers that target minorities need to have consequences to prevent other officers from doing the same

Conclusion

With the aforementioned recommendations, the criminal justice system will prosper. Equality will be seen within the system and more focus can be shifted towards higher concerns. Enrolling individuals in programs or using one of the mentioned alternatives to incarceration will have a positive effect on both the individual and the state. Criminal justice reform is crucial in resolving mass incarceration, the rate of recidivism, and racial disparity within the system.

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The Cost of Solitary Confinement: Does the SHU fit?

David Yoon

Issue

In 1913, Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary discontinued its isolation cages due to its impacts on the mental stability of the prisoners. The men and women who experienced prolonged isolation engaged in self-harm, suffered from paranoia, panic attacks, and developed hostile fantasies about revenge. The political and social unrest in 1960s incentivized the return of its systematized use in U.S prison through immense expansion of supermax facilities. Despite the claimed studies showing lack of external stimuli and social interaction attributed to exacerbated symptoms of depressive/mental disorders, this practice became one of the main disciplinary methods. Depending on the duration of confinement, the exposed prisoners were unable to adjust back into communities following their release. Researchers observed the mental health and behaviors of the prisoners before the solitary confinement and afterwards. Increased incidence of violence towards other prisoners and staff, and practice of self-harm were correlated with prolonged isolation.

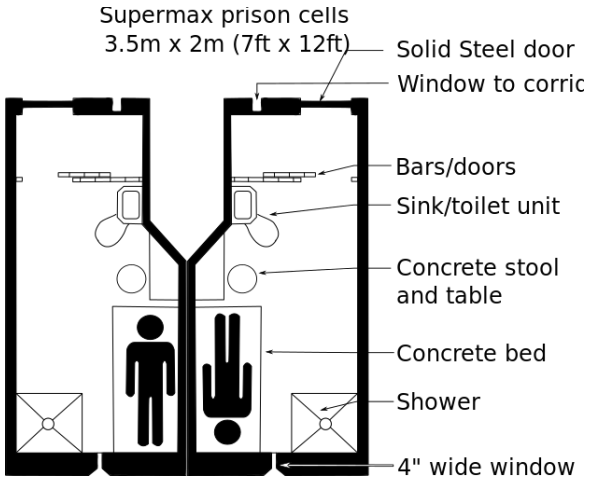
Policy Implication

NJ State lawmakers and chapter of the ACLU had attempted to ban the use of isolated confinement, unless there is reasonable cause to believe that the inmate or others would be at risk of serious harm. In 2016, Governor Christie vetoed the legislative measure, stating that New Jersey's policy is significantly different from the inhumane conditions of other states. Observing the current "restrictive housing units," existing in NJ and their conditions, no distinction is made in their structure from the other states' solitary confinement. The benefits of isolated confinement are far outweighed by the social and economic costs. The use of isolation units as a substitute for rehabilitation has an enduring impact on both the prisoners and state residents.

Theme 1: Reduce the practice of solitary confinement and subject guiding principles to its conditions.

- The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) found detainees in solitary confinements were seven times more likely to harm themselves than other prisoners.

- Stimuli deprivation and loss of relations with others can physically decrease the areas of the brain involved in self-control, spatial orientation, decision-making, and memory.



"Typical Cells in ADX Florence Prison" by RicHard-59 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Policy Recommendations

- Implement a maximum duration (14 days) in which prisoners can be placed in solitary confinement.

- Require more than 8 hours per day be spent minimizing social isolation to prevent development of psychiatric and emotional disorders.

- Implement transparent policy changes through the Federal Bureau of Prisons to standardize the definition of restrictive housing to factor in the details of the placement involving: (1) length of stay; (2) conditions of confinement; and (3) degree of isolation.

Theme 2: End the practice of placing juveniles and pregnant women in restrictive housing.

• Solitary confinement affects the structural growth of frontal lobe during adolescence, which provides ability to control impulses, weight decisions, prioritize, and strategize.

• Prolonged social and physical isolation causes developmental vulnerability on maturing frontal lobe - affecting impulsivity, immaturity, and undeveloped cognitive processing.

Policy Recommendations

• Regulate solitary confinement with a standing committee that substitutes isolation of adolescents and pregnant women with clinically appropriate treatment therapies and interactive group therapies.

• Conduct a regular review by a multi-disciplinary staff committee that provides treatment regarding any medical and mental health needs of juveniles (under 18), young adults (18 – 24), and pregnant women.

• In addition to the standards proposed by the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015, there should be an increased capacity of mental health units and a new requirement based on objective evidence for the need of segregation rather than for administrative reasons.

Time Spent in Punitive Segregation in New York City

Punitive Segregation Durations for Adolescents	
Average Length of Stay	43.1 days
Median Length of Stay	29 days
Modal Length of Stay	20 days
Punitive Segregation Durations for Adults	
Average Length of Stay	42.3 days
Median Length of Stay	27.3 days
Modal Length of Stay	18 days

Source: Human Rights Watch. (2012.). Growing Up Locked Down. Table 2.

Theme 3: Specific penological purpose should be the only reason for solitary confinement.

• If the use of SHU is for rehabilitation, studies show that prisoners conformed to the fear of the confinement system as behavioral control rather than independent reflected decisions, contrary to the common justification for the benefits of solitary units.

• If the use of SHU is for punishment, the practice of disciplinary, protective, and administrative isolation is shown to increase social and mental behavioral issues.

Theme 4: Isolation units should be used as either punishment or rehabilitation for no longer than necessary in order to address an objective problem.

• The correctional staff committee should regularly review the initial/ongoing placement of an inmate in isolation.

• Inmates should be placed in less restrictive conditions as soon as the evaluation is complete and the inmate should be informed as soon as possible unless their safety is jeopardized by other inmates or staff.

• Further develop Reintegration Housing Units to enhance out-of-cell time opportunities to require clinically appropriate treatment therapies, social skill-building, and educational interaction with inmates and staffs.

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Solitary Confinement in New Jersey

Ben Adiletto, MSW

Issue

Solitary confinement for extended periods of time is a cruel punishment that predates the modern justice system and is shown to have a detrimental effect on the mental health of those who endure it. Contemporary uses of solitary confinement include punishment for prison offenses, as well as protective custody for vulnerable individuals. The use of extended solitary confinement, which is sometimes referred to as restrictive housing units, *for a period of longer than 15 days* **is considered torture by the United Nations.**

The mental health effects of extended solitary confinement are both varied and profound. The acute symptoms can become chronic issues when a prisoner is left in isolation. Some of the debilitating chronic symptoms include **perceptual distortions, such as hallucinations and paranoia**. The physical effects from a lack of sunlight and fresh air include migraine headaches and intense fatigue.

Policy Implications

As of 2015, there are an average of **1,000 inmates in New Jersey housed in solitary confinement at any given time**. The most significant portion of those is being held for a period of between one and six months. Solitary confinement creates a more dangerous environment for other prisoners. Extended stays in solitary confinement will make reintegration into society extremely difficult for the inmate.

Proposed Legislation

The **Isolated Confinement Restriction Act,** which was drafted by Senators Lesniak of Union County and Barnes of Middlesex County, would have curtailed this issue. Senate Bill 51 of the 217th New Jersey Legislature passed the Senate on 6/27/2016 and the Assembly on 10/20/2016 before being vetoed by Governor Christie.

The changes that SB 51 offered would have made New Jersey a leader in criminal justice reform. The major changes that this bill proposed included **limiting** solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, or no more than 20 days in a 60-day period, with daily evaluations. The bill also would have barred solitary confinement from being used until all other options had been exhausted. Finally, it would have banned the practice for especially **vulnerable** individuals under the age of 21 or older than 65 years of age.

Examples of Reform from Other States

- Michigan has found reformation of their administrative segregation to produce better inmates and reduce costs.
- Mississippi's reform practices reduced their solitary confinement from 1000 inmates to 150 at a single prison. They then closed the unit. This saved the state $8 million annually and reduced violence by 70%.
- Because of reforms, Colorado closed their administrative segregation facility, saving the taxpayers $13.6 Million.

"Solitary Confinement" by jmiller291 licensed under CC BY 2.0

Race and Gender

This issue disproportionally affects black inmates; while they constitute only 15 percent of the prison population **black inmates comprise 60 percent of those in restrictive housing.** The average stay solitary confinement for inmates housed at Edna Mahan, New Jersey's only all-female prison, **is 338 days**. The Isolated Confinement Restriction Act offers protection that prevents women who are **pregnant** from being held in solitary confinement.

Offenses that Result in Solitary Confinement

- **90 days** for using foul language with a staff member.
- **810 days** for working as a "jail house lawyer" to help female prisoners file a class action civil rights suit.
- **180 days** for a prescription in the wrong dosage. A man was prescribed 50 milligrams of Benadryl. He received two 25 milligram pills instead of a single pill.
- **22 years** for being regarded by prison officials as a "rabble rouser".

"Gladstone Gaol 40" by Fairv8 licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

Recommendations

The Isolated Confinement and Restrict Act represents a progressive step in New Jersey that both houses of legislature have supported. Passage by the governor would show that the best interests of the residents of New Jersey are considered when making policy decisions. This is an **evidence-based policy** that has backing from scientific research and **examples of positive results from other states** that have implemented similar reforms.

Conclusion

The enactment of the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act would move New Jersey's prison system into more humane and effective future. The current practices leave inmates in significantly worse mental and physical states than when they entered. Without strict requirements, solitary confinement is used frequently as a punitive measure with little to no regard for inmate safety or well-being. As seen by the states that have already implemented reforms to their solitary confinement practices, New Jersey's prisons would cut taxpayer costs and be safer for inmates and staff.

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The Future of Police Body Mounted Cameras

Jessica Jones

The topic of Body Mounted Cameras (BMCs) has recently captured public and policymaker attention. While serious concern has been voiced regarding the privacy of the individuals involved in recordings using BMCs, the benefits of their implementation outweigh the costs. Funding appears to be the one major hurtle to overcome regarding wider spread use of the technology, due to the expensive equipment required to successfully use BMCs. This brief examines the likely impact that the implementation of BMCs has on the general public, future court proceedings and possible policy responses.

Introduction

Previous studies have concluded that police shifts without cameras experienced twice as many incidents as shifts with cameras. This has been attributed to a "civilizing" effect on both officers and civilians, who find being recorded to be a reminder to conduct themselves in a less hostile manner.

There is also the potential for the cameras to be used while addressing race relations in connection to police brutality. Research found that the use of cameras lowered the use of force by half provided expedited case resolution that would otherwise be based on differing verbal accounts of what happened with little to no evidence.

The first police department in the United States to implement BWCs in Rialto, California, saw an 88 percent decline in complaints against officers while use-of-force incidents plummeted to 60 percent in 2012. This occurred within the span of a yearlong study in which showed the radical changes of behavior in both civilians and officers.

With this knowledge, the next course of action is the implement a wider use of BMCs, considering proof of the device being effective would be nearly impossible to obtain, without instances to go off of.

With several empirical studies reporting success in the use of BMCs, many of which build upon one another, there should be enough supporting evidence to conclude that using this technology to the advantage of many would be worth the investment of the cameras, which cost upwards of one thousand dollars for a single camera.

The cameras themselves will influence police accountability, data control, regulation, risk management and surveillance. It has also been pointed out that possible benefits of their use would include police transparency, improved interactions with citizens and complaint resolution. With face-based evidence supporting either side of a case fairly, as the justice system originally intended, the cost-effect should be a fairly straight-forward positive effect to consider.

Policy Conclusions

- First, the safety and wellbeing for both civilians and officers using BMCs must be ensured, so that the main benefit of implementing the devices remains intact.
- Second, more ongoing and thorough research through the means of case studies must be enacted, so that future policies have solid grounds on which to
- Third, a collaborative effort between all involved parties, including county, state and government will make the set goals and milestones more attainable in future stages of policy planning and implementation.

Policy Implications

The most glaring issue of BWCs is the lack of or otherwise absence of rigorous, independent studies using experimental and observational methods. This creates limited understanding of the impact and consequences of body-worn cameras and leaves gaps when considering policymaking. More time and resources in general is needed to create a more comprehensive understanding of the implications that the cameras would have when used on a daily basis by police and other law-enforcing agencies.

Clearly stated parameters are a must when considering policies in regard to BWCs. The policy should specify, in writing, the circumstances in which supervisors will be authorized to review an officer's body-worn camera footage. Privacy for both the officers as well as the general public is a key concern, when considering the widespread use of BWCs, and steps must be taken to ensure that the technology in question is not taken advantage of.

Officers and civilians should be permitted to review video footage of an incident in which they were involved prior to making a statement about the incident. Current procedures require tedious paperwork and can take weeks or months for civilians attempting to obtain the footage that would be beneficial in court.

Key Points

- More longitudinal studies need to be completed, in order to determine the true effectiveness of BMCs.
- Existing evidence has shown a "civilizing" effect on both officers and civilians, who have been made aware that they are being recorded.
- BMCs hold the potential to simplify and shorten the process of court hearings with no witnesses, due to providing factual video and audio evidence.
- BMCs hold the potential to simplify and shorten the process of court hearings with no witnesses, due to providing factual video and audio evidence.

Actions for Civil Society

- Coordinate amongst county, state and government to facilitate successful developmental improvements in implementation of the devices.
- Facilitate improved relations between the police force and the community it exists within, so that the occurrence of hostile situations is lowered.
- Ensure that any agency that chooses to adopt BWC policies do so with the benefit of input from the public and local policymakers.
- Closely examine the cost-effectiveness of providing BMCs as well storing footage.
- Allow stored footage to be easily obtainable to the public in the case of a court hearing that would use the footage to the advantage of both the defendant and plaintiff.
- Examine cost-effectiveness of use of the device so that public funding is not wasted on ineffective methods.
- Facilitate an open forum between members of the community and the police department to manage questions and concerns.

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New Jersey Bail Reform

Dina Terilla

Background

New Jersey's bail reform began in January 2017. While the reform is still in its early days, there have been some concerns. The new law changes the process of holding criminals. It replaces the monetary bail system with a computer-based program. The program was initially presented as a solution to save tax dollars and attempt to not cause more disruption for low-level offenders' lives. The program, however, has not worked in the benefit of the taxpayer since its implementation. The courts use a computer scoring system that calculates the risk level of release. The computer's algorithm is allowing more than low-level offenders to be released on recognizance.

According to the Office of the Attorney General (2016), "courts assess the likelihood that a defendant will flee, commit new criminal activity, or obstruct justice by intimidating victims and other witnesses. In addition to establishing clear standards and criteria to guide the way police and prosecutors exercise their discretion in deciding when to seek pretrial detention." With this idea, dangerous criminals will not be able to just pay to be released from jail while others that cannot afford to pay bail are stuck in jail until trial. The Attorney General further states:

> "In cases where the defendant remains free, he or she may have little incentive to accept responsibility and plead guilty in a timely fashion. To address this concern, the Attorney General's directive requires all prosecutors to adopt a graduated plea policy under which plea offers grow tougher over time, not more lenient, so as to encourage guilty offenders to plead guilty, thereby conserving law enforcement and judicial resources and facilitating potential cooperation in ongoing cases."

The bail reform has the makings of what could be beneficial to tax payers, low-level criminals, and society, but there are faults that do not seem to have been addressed.

Problems

The bail reform attempts to help criminals that are unable to pay the bail set for crimes committed. The idea is that for low-level criminals who cannot afford bail, they will not have their lives disrupted until their court date. They will no longer have to miss work or lose their job because of a misdemeanor.

There were 2,059 defendants under the supervision of the Judiciary's Pretrial Services program last In January 2017.

- 40 percent were being monitored with weekly in-person visits or electronic monitoring and house arrest.
- 45.5 percent were being monitored with monthly in-person visits or calling in by phone.
- 14.5 percent were released on their own recognizance. (Grant).

Director Elie Honig of the Division of Criminal Justice states: "Our goal with this directive is to enable prosecutors to use those tools effectively and judiciously to protect the community, recognizing that defendants who are unlikely to flee or commit new crimes should not be jailed at taxpayer expense" (Attorney General 2016). Unfortunately, there have been some problems with the computer system's algorithm.

The Algorithm

The algorithm provides three pretrial risk indicators:

(1) a six-point "failure-to-appear" scale gauging the likelihood the defendant will fail to appear in court;
(2) a six-point "new criminal activity" scale gauging the likelihood the defendant will engage in new crimes if released; and
(3) a "new violent criminal activity" flag, which flags defendants who are likely to engage in violent crimes if released" (Attorney General 2016).

The computer system neither considers previous charges for minors nor pending trials. Thus, this system does not consider the fact that a person charged with a misdemeanor may have already been charged with the same crime or even a different one in the previous months because they have not been to trial yet.

Anecdotal Evidence of Problems

There have already been some complaints about criminals that have been released because of these glitches. In Newark, a man who was charged with possession and distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) near a public park He was rearrested on school property 11 days later for possession and distribution of heroin. In Elizabeth, a man arrested on a gun charge in January, and then released under the recently enacted bail reform, was arrested again three weeks later on charges he attacked a woman. In Little Egg Harbor, a convicted sex offender was released because juvenile records are not included in calculating the PSA's score. (Derosier).

Options for Further Reform

1. Go back to the old system

This would be a step in the wrong direction, as this system was not beneficial to society either. Defendants unable to afford a bail bondsman can spend weeks, months, and sometimes years detained while waiting for their day in court (Billings 2016). Law and public policy compels courts to secure bail only to the extent that it will guarantee a defendant's appearance in court.

2. Build upon the current reforms

1. Commercial bail bonds should be eliminated in favor of a system in which cash bail is not the default method of securing pretrial release.
2. Establish and maintain pretrial services agencies that aid courts in making bail determinations (Billings).
3. For those with drug addiction, provide a proper medical detox in a treatment facility, followed by medical/psychological evaluations before inmates can be moved to dorms. Inmates would do a combination of classroom/book work along with leaving the campus to work on government projects. This would allow for real world experience and tax savings on projects through reduced labor overhead. The last step would then include halfway houses and job placement. The state could also offer tax breaks for companies hiring graduates for entry-level jobs.

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New Jersey Firearm Laws

Ryan Berry

Introduction

New Jersey is our home state, will always feel like home to us and should thus be as safe as home. New Jersey currently has second strictest gun laws in the country. There is diversity in viewpoints over the benefits of these laws. To some, this is a positive fact, as they want to live in a very strict gun law state. But others want to have gun laws in the state that they reside in be a little less strict and more favorable towards them and, in their opinions, closer to the intern of the Second Amendment. People on both sides are extremely passionate on this issue. In this brief I will highlight some of the most important aspects of these laws and what people want to change or maintain.

Issue 1: Background Checks and Firearm Availability

Throughout the United States, background checks are a prevalent topic of discussion. A background check typically includes past employment verification, credit history, and criminal history. Employers often use these checks as a means of judging a job candidate's past mistakes, character, and fitness, and to identify potential hiring risks for safety and security reasons. They are also used to assess whether someone is fit to buy a firearm. If background checks were stricter and took more into consideration, this may help prevent some devastating tragedies.

Recommendations

One of the ways to improve background checks is to first, and most importantly, conduct a background check on every person that buys a gun at any venue in New Jersey. A second improvement is to make the checks stricter by expanding the amount of information they gather.

Firearm availability is another big issue in New Jersey. The push for making semi-automatic weapons illegal in New Jersey is one that will be a benefit, as there is no real need for those weapons for regular citizens. Those types of firearms should be only for police or military.

Another type of firearm arriving on store shelves includes smart gun technology. Smart gun technology is a gun that comes with a safety feature that only allows certain people to use it through activation from an authorized user. This is without a doubt an idea that has merit. Unfortunately it will not be the answer to everything and maybe not help all shootings, but it will help prevent home shootings, misuse, accidents, and gun thefts.

Rapp, Bill and Lanae Erikson Hatalsky. (2013). "How a Felon Buys a Gun." Third Way. June 12.

Issue 2: Carry Permits and Gun Safety

A carry permit, or what some refer to as concealed carry, is defined as the practice of carrying a weapon (such as a handgun) in public in a concealed manner, either on one's person or in close proximity. Not all weapons that fall under concealed carry laws are lethal. The issuance of concealed carry permits is pressing topic that many want to look at and fix.

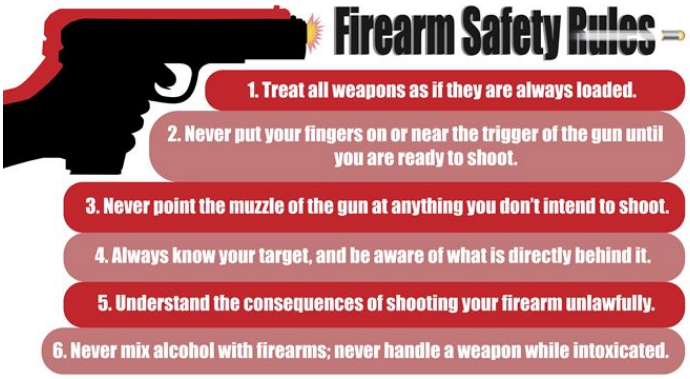
Recommendations

One solution that is being discussed is having a universal carry permit. This means that a carry permit would be like a person's driver's license. Since I have my driver's license for New Jersey and I can drive in New York then why is it different for a carry permit? If someone has a carry permit and is allowed to carry in Texas, why can they not carry in New Jersey? The answer find is simple, firearm laws vary in every state and since they are not universal, then carry permits or concealed carry cannot be universal as well.

Another reason is that the people that have this carry permit are familiar with their state's rules. Going into a different state with unfamiliar rules would be a recipe for disaster. Imagine if someone from a small town in Texas had a carry permit and came to a big city where things can get out of hand, no one knows how this person will react with the firearm on them. Carry permits or concealed carry is without a doubt an extremely tricky situation and one that should be handled with care. New Jersey is a state that can take the lead with this and make sure that it is handled the way it should be.

Theme 3: Gun Safety

Safety is most likely the first word that everyone thinks about as soon as they here about guns or firearms. They do this because it is the right thing to do. Gun safety is absolutely the most important topic surrounding firearms. When people want to get their hunting license they have to pass a test and take a safety class about firearms and to me this would without doubt help prevent terrible deaths that happen from misuse of the weapon.



"Firearm Safety Rules" by Airman 1st Class Rebecca Van Syo is Public Domain.

Conclusion

New Jersey is the second strictest state when it comes to firearm laws. Unfortunately, being strict can be negative when people have to work harder to obtain a weapon. That said, having a firearm is a privilege and people need to remember that privileges can also be revoked. Owning a firearm in the state of New Jersey is something that is earned and people have to hold up their end of being a good citizen in order to keep their privilege.

Sanctuary Cities: A Community Policing Strategy

Alejandra Londono

Issue

In the current political climate, immigration has been on the forefront of the agenda. One specific target of the current President is sanctuary cities. It is necessary to clarify the term sanctuary city. The term is often thought to be a policy to allow local governments to not report illegal aliens to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), or Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO). However, the term is actually a community policing policy that helps creates bonds between the public and local law enforcement.

Local law enforcement uses sanctuary policies in three steps:

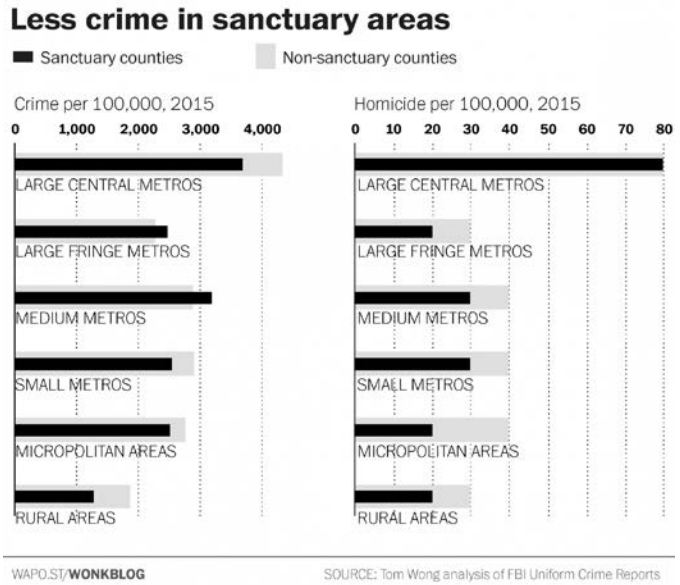
1) limit inquiries about a person's immigration status unless investigating illegal activity ("don't ask")
2) limit arrests or detentions for violation of immigration laws ("don't enforce")
3) limit provision to federal authorities of immigration status information ("don't tell")

This type of community policing is a vital part of society as it creates a trust between local law enforcement and the society it patrols. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), local police forces depend on legal and illegal immigrants to solve crimes and maintain public order. Without sanctuary cities, illegal immigrants would fear immigration investigation and would not come forward with critical information useful to local law enforcement agencies.

Both IACP and the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) deem the threat to sanctuary cities unacceptable, stating, "the hard won trust, communication and cooperation from the immigrant community would disappear."

Crime

Sanctuary cities have a connotation for being notoriously crime-filled. However, according to FBI crime data analyzed by UC San Diego, "sanctuary" jurisdictions have notably lower crime rates. This is opposite of claims made by the federal government, which is trying to prohibit sanctuary policing policies by threatening to remove their federal funding. Additionally, there are disparities in the research, for example the Congressional Research Service and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center came up with different numbers of how many cities and counties have declared themselves a "sanctuary" or have adopted policies of a sanctuary nature, meaning there is no official list of sanctuary cities, nor is this a legal term. Regardless, sanctuary cities are necessary, because according to professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and Criminal justice expert, David A. Harris, immigrants are more likely to be preyed upon by criminals because they assume immigrants will not contact the police out of fear of deportation, marginalizing this group of individuals.



Ingraham, Christopher. (2017). "Trump Says Sanctuary Cities are Hotbeds of Crime. Data Says the Opposite." The Washington Post. January 27.

In a 2009 report form the Police Foundation, 70 percent of "police chiefs believe that immigrant crime victims are less likely to contact local police than other members of the community." This is an alarming statistic, undermining unalienable human rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Additionally, sanctuary cities and other federal actions have sparked debate on the proper role of state and local agencies enforcing federal law. The two major questions that need to be addressed are:

1) To what extent do local sanctuary policies accomplish their goal of encouraging unauthorized aliens to report crimes and how could this goal be accomplished more effectively?
2) To what extent do these local sanctuary policies conflict with federal laws and policies, what happens when they do, and how can these conflicts best be resolved?

Current Policy

Arizona offers a point of comparison for New Jersey. Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce sponsored S.B. 1070, encouraging local law enforcement agencies to check the immigration status of all individuals they come across. The state has implemented several additional provisions that enhance the role of state and local officials in the enforcement of immigration law. In New Jersey, Governor Christie explicitly stated that cities would lose federal funding if they do not comply with federal immigration laws (Biacho). Sanctuary policies, however, cannot obstruct federal enforcement, nor do they try. Current sanctuary policies only state that cities will not use their time and resources to facilitate a deportation or to facilitate the detention of someone who the city's criminal system has already decided to release.

Recommendations

In order to address the two main questions, I make the following recommendations:

1. Analyze the benefits of sanctuary community policing strategies on a local level. They should be most effective in areas with large illegal populations.
2. Allow local law enforcement to create community-policing strategies since these were created to facilitate the cooperation between the community and law enforcement to create a safe environment for all.
3. New Jersey should follow California or New York, which are open to sanctuary cities and have been supportive of community policing policies.
4. New Jersey cities should continue their efforts to create a bond between the local law enforcement agencies and their communities, without undermining the federal law, but also being conscious that "don't ask, don't tell" policies have been effective in minor police interactions or for witnesses in other law infraction cases.
5. Sanctuary cities should do everything possible, without conflicting with federal laws that will potentially lead to funding loss, to make their communities feel safe and included.

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New Jersey's 'Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill' Act

Kevin Brady

Each year, many New Jersey residents are given the awful news that some terminal disease is quickly killing them, and their time is short. As if this news is not bad enough, what is worse is the realization that they more than likely will die in an undignified manner. Many terminally ill patients, in their final days chose to stop eating and drinking, preventing any efforts to prolong their life. The sad reality is that a death as such is often painful, messy, and a heartbreaking sight for families.

Most terminally ill patients, those who have been given 6 months or less to live, often accept their fate and do what they can to ensure their death is dignified. However, in New Jersey, as well as in 44 other US states, the state requires that patients prolong their life, despite their diagnosis, and spend millions of Medicare or Medicaid dollars on something the patients have said they do not want.

For the state, particularly Governor Christie, this is a question of morality: is it right to allow *anyone* to end their life? Religious factions dismiss this bill due to it being against their beliefs. Yet, is it morally right to allow someone, whom has spent years paying taxes and contributing to society, to abandon them in their end of life and force them to tackle a fearful death alone?

Brief Background

For the past few years, the New Jersey legislature has been desperately trying to pass a bill that would allow for a terminally ill person to end their life in a peaceful and dignified manner. Similar to the model "Death With Dignity Act," New Jersey has formulated its own bill, calling it "Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act." The bill, sponsored by State Senators Scutari (NJ-22), and Sweeny (NJ-3), has been written in a way that protects patients from pressure and physicians from unnecessary liability (NJLEG 2016).

Similar bills have been proposed, however all have failed. Some did not make it past committee due to concerns with the language of the text, others missed deadlines, and finally others failed due to concerns about gaps in the physician's roles. For example, a new section that was added in November 2016 stated "the attending physician shall ensure all appropriate steps are carried out." Meaning, two oral requests are made, the patient is considered terminally ill, and the patient is a New Jersey resident. Unfortunately, despite the changes made and the additional oversights that were added, the governor has stated that he will veto any death with dignity bill that comes across his desk.

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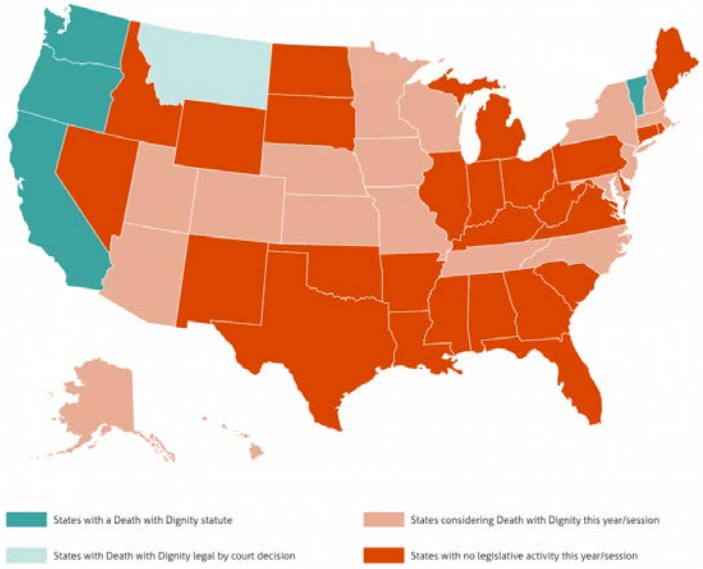
Why Passing This Bill is Important

Not only is there a substantial economic benefit to the state, but also the humanitarian thing to do is to let people have liberty up until their death, giving them more than just one option. Ask yourself, would you want a family member to be fearful in their final days, or relaxed and comfortable?

Other States

Five states have passed Death with Dignity Bills (see figure below). Maine is seeking a vote on the bill this year, with polling 73% support in favor of the bill (DWD 2017).



Death with Dignity. (2016). "State by State Progress." March 17.

- States who have enacted similar bills
- States with some legislative action in 2016
- States without any legislative action in 2016
- No laws specific to assisted suicide

The Facts & Figures

This bill is to be used as a comforting option, to let the patient know that they are still in control. Oregon has spearheaded the push for death with dignity, and has provided some great research.

- In 2016, 204 people received the prescription under the Oregon act, and 133 died. This reveals that not everyone uses the drug, but it helps the patient know that they have a way out.
- Since the passage of the bill in Oregon, 1,749 people were prescribed the medication and only 1,127 used it.
- 80% were over 65 years old and had cancer.

Concerns

It is understandable to see why there are concerns with this bill and, ultimately, ending someone's life. However, some concerns are ignorant to what the patients' are feeling:

- Doctors "Hippocratic Oath" – Physicians preserve life, not end it.
- Women, poor, and racial minority groups may disproportionately request the option because of inadequate social support, or financial burden (Physicians 2000).
- Patients may feel pressured by family due to the burden caused.

All of these concerns have been addressed in the new bill, updated in November 2016. There are extensive safeguards, such as waiting periods, oral requests, screenings, family consultation, and more, that protect the patient in this stressful time.

Recommendations

- Increase palliative care options – create more facilities that are specific to end of life care and better suited to care for the dying.
- Make certain that the patient is in no stress from family pressure to carry out the act. Potentially have a police officer be a witness to both oral requests by the patient.
- Encourage the religious community to support this bill, showing the peace behind its design.

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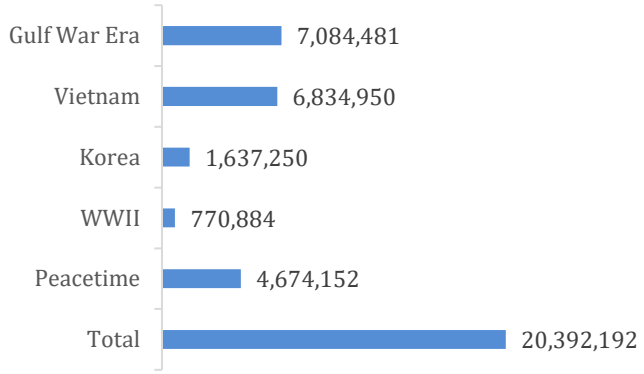
Veterans' Diversion in New Jersey

Peter Ananko

Introduction

Veteran diversion programs are desperately needed in New Jersey, as the state is home to 712,000 veterans, the 16th highest veteran population among the states. We owe it to our New Jersey veterans to have a program like this, as it is something that will not only improve their lives, but also their families. 9% of people in the New Jersey criminal justice system are veterans. 82% of those veterans in the criminal justice system are eligible for VA services.

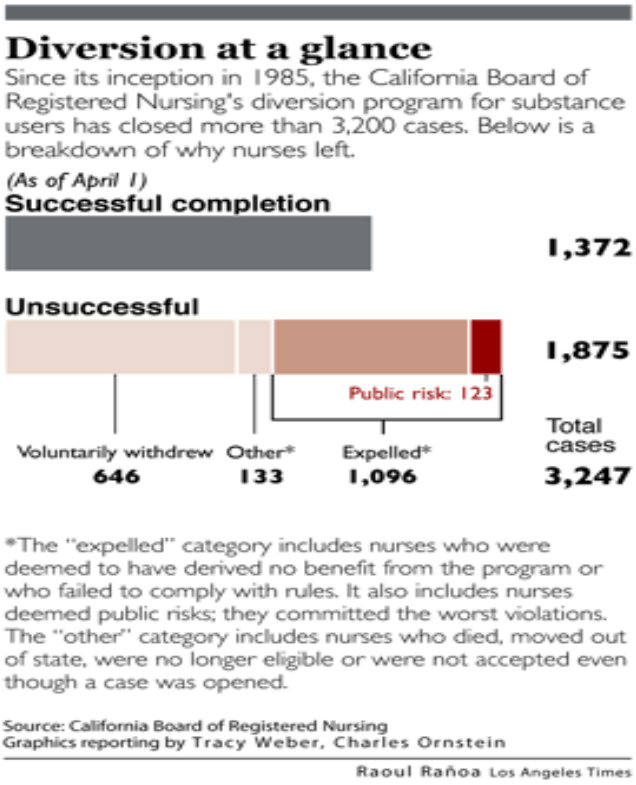
Figure: Living U.S. Veterans by Period of Service



U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. (2016). Table 2L. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

What are Diversion Programs?

They divert veteran soldiers, airmen, sailors, marines, and coast guardsmen, be it reserve or active, involved in the criminal justice system from prison, to reduce veterans' involvement in future crimes, and place them into appropriate rehabilitative alternatives. A veteran, as defined from the Department of Veterans Affairs, is a person "who has served in the active military, and has been discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." New Jersey is one of only ten states that do not offer a diversion program specifically for veterans. States such as Ohio, California, and Florida already have their own programs.



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Why Veterans?

We owe it to them, as simple as that. Veterans' that are plagued with mental disorders such as PTSD or ones who just have not acclimated well into civilian life deserve another chance. What this program will do is reduce the crowding in New Jersey penitentiaries, improve veteran unemployment rates, improve returning veterans' mental health, reduce veteran substance abuse and addiction, maximize utilization of the VA's resources and ensure that veterans are getting the treatment they are owed, increase quality of life for the veteran, his/her spouse, and his/her children, and give troubled veterans what they need in order to successfully acclimate back into civilian life.

Recommendation 1: Adopt a Veterans' Court

A court that will handle veteran-specific charges.

- Offer to veterans regardless of combat service, specifically for the purpose of trying veterans.
- Require monthly court appearances.
- Monitored by a case manager who will work closely with service providers.
- Tailored specifically for the veterans' problem, as no veteran is exactly the same.
- Include programs such as AA meetings, mental health services, drug addiction meetings, whatever may be plaguing the veteran.

"Court Gavel" by wp paarz licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Recommendation 2: Implement Diversion Programs into our Regular Court System

- Similar to previous recommendation, this will be offered to veterans regardless of combat service.
- Monthly court appearances.
- Overseen by different relevant divisions of the court, with the intent to rehabilitate veterans and reintegrate them back into society.
- 6-24 month program, the length of which will be determined by the participants' needs and/or compliance.

Conclusion:

These two recommendations will help the veterans of New Jersey who have unfortunately been addicted to drugs, alcohol, or have deteriorating mental health. These programs will be for the betterment of the New Jersey veteran population, and help give back some of what we owe to these veterans. With the implementation of either of these recommendations, we can see reduction of veteran substance abuse and addiction, improve returning veterans' mental health, and improve veteran unemployment rates.

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Deprogramming: Veterans Deserve It

Andre S. Daigle, U.S. Navy Retired, YN1(AW)

U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Courtney Avon is Public Domain

Summary

Every veteran is unique; every veteran needs to be treated as such to ensure they are thoroughly deprogrammed while on active duty to properly prepare him or her for reentry into the civilian sector. The military programs their service members for war, prepares them to make the ultimate sacrifice for this country, but they are not given the same opportunity to be deprogrammed. The government spends enormous amounts of money to ensure soldiers are combat ready, but falls short in spending the same amount of money to deprogram them.

Statement

Today's men and women who serve our country do so proudly. They are programmed for their expertise in the military (combative and/or non-combative). The federal government programs them to succeed. It does not matter how long each service member/veteran serves, because they are trained/programmed to fulfill their duties. Some serve for one enlistment, while others devote their entire life to serving their country. Unfortunately the federal government, the states, and the counties fall short in fulfilling their part in ensuring each veteran is properly deprogrammed, educated on earned benefits, and fully capable for reentry into the civilian life. There is no coordination between the federal government, state and counties. Veterans are only given a short transitional class with resume writing skills, local employment, and many informative brochures/pamphlets with points of contacts.

Recommendations:

1. Improve coordination

- Establish military/federal, state, and county coordination programs (prior to separation)
- Designate state and county Veteran Service Offices (VSO) for veterans (prior to separation)
- Initiate medical and mental deprogramming counseling (prior to separation)
- Begin service connected claims with coordination of state/county VSOs prior to reentry to civilian sector
- Establish database for coordination efforts between military/federal/state/counties

2. Responsibilities of State and County VSOs

- Attend military Transitional Assistance Programs for Veterans
- Coordinate with Veteran prior to separation from service to establish case management procedures

"Hiring Our Heroes" by 143d ESC licensed by CC BY 2.0

- Coordinate with Veteran for Veteran Affairs claims (prior to separation)
- Coordinate with unemployment services for Veteran employment opportunities
- Establish veteran educational opportunities with local colleges

Positive Results:

- Veterans properly deprogrammed and educated on all earned benefits prior to return to civilian sector
- Veterans informed regarding all state/county points of contacts, once home of record established
- Decrease in veteran suicide rate
- Decrease in veteran homelessness
- Agencies being more interactive with veterans prior to separation from service
- Veterans utilizing all benefits earned due to their service
- Veterans feeling appreciated and welcomed back to the civilian sector
- Veterans being educated on all state/county benefits/discounts/programs

Veteran Suicide

Veterans today are committing suicide due to being neglected. It is a nationwide epidemic and the alarming rate of 22 suicides a day is not accurate. This number does not take into account the veterans that were lost before returning into the civilian sector. It also does not include each and every state. Veterans underutilize the services that were earned while serving this great country. An alarming 70% of veterans who committed suicide were not regular users of Veterans Affairs services (Kime, 2016).

Conclusion

Men and women chose to serve with pride and selfless devotion. They sacrificed time away from their loved ones. Veterans understand they may be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice—to give up their lives in the defense of their country and the values it holds. This willingness to do so represents why our country is so strong and proud. Why can we not give these men and woman the same dedication when they return home from their obligation of service? Veterans deserve to be properly informed/deprogrammed when we put down our obligation and strive to become role models in the civilian sector.

I personally know this first hand. I almost became a statistic after serving for 20 years in the United States Navy. Through my chance meeting of a fellow service member, I was given an opportunity to reevaluate myself and stay on course. All veterans deserve this opportunity at the time of their separation from service.

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Public School Funding for Grades K-12

Lauren Lucca

Issue

The current funding system for public schools is unequal and inefficient. The majority of money for public school funding is generated from property taxes that are paid by homeowners and business owners in the school district. Having the funding based off property taxes means that wealthy districts have more than enough money for schools, while poor districts cannot generate enough money to properly fund theirs. This creates inefficiency in distributing resources to schools and unequal education opportunities for students.

The New Jersey Supreme Court created a way to help the poor districts. The series of Abbott cases resulted in 31 of the poorest school districts in New Jersey receiving extra funding. Those 31 districts are known as the Abbott Districts. While this rule helps those districts, it is hardly effective in fixing the overall funding issue. The Abbott rule does not help the other struggling districts, the ones between the wealthiest and the 31 poorest. There are about 600 school districts in New Jersey and this Abbott rule only helps 31, therefore making it an inefficient way to assist schools with funding.

Recommendation 1: Create a statewide tax exclusively for school funding.

Instead of generating school funding money from property taxes based on districts, the state could create a statewide tax only for school funding.

This tax would equalize school funding by:

- Making the state responsible for determining how much revenue is generated for a school's budget.
- Creating an equal limit for school funding that it is not based on wealth of district.

Essentially this tax would pool the money from all districts into one fund and equally allocate the funds to each of the school districts. This particular solution has been successful in Arizona. Arizona is known as an "equalized funding state," which means school funding is not based on the wealth of the districts. Instead, funding comes from a statewide tax that makes up for the difference in money generated from each district.

While some New Jersey residents may be opposed to another tax, it would lower property taxes, since the funds would now be taken from another tax. It would balance out the cost so that taxes are not raised too much. It is not about raising more money, but rather changing the system in how these funds are equally dispersed to the school districts.

"Boxwood PS Kindergarten Classroom" is Public Domain.

Recommendation 2: Base funding on the expenditures necessary to meet academic goals.
Another solution is to base the amount of distributed funds on how much a district spends in order to meet their academic goals. Equal education opportunities are important, however some school districts require extra effort in order to provide students with the same level of education.

All students learn differently and, based on the demographics of an area, schools in certain districts may include children who need extra help in learning and help in reaching the same level of understanding as children of other demographics from other school districts

If the average amount needed to provide a thorough education was taken into account, the state could assess how much each district would spend annually and allocate the funds based on that figure. For example, wealthy districts generally consist of educated people, who usually start educating their children from an early age. They pay to send their kids to preschool to gain knowledge before entering the public school system. In a poor district, not all parents may be educated, therefore their children are not exposed to early education before entering kindergarten. Those children may need extra help in learning, therefore causing the school to spend more.

Certain districts would spend more while others spend less, balancing out the overall funds needed for the districts. This would equalize the school funding, instead of wealthy districts having an abundance of money that they do not really need.

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Conclusion
The current way that public schools are funded in New Jersey is unequal and inefficient. The current solution to help districts is not practical, considering that there are only 31 Abbott districts and about 600 total school districts in New Jersey.

The best solution for these problems is for New Jersey to become an "equalized funding state". Meaning, a general statewide tax is put into place and the state decides how much to budget to schools, rather than basing it on district wealth. Also, funding should be adjusted based on the expenditures of each school district. Disburse more money to the districts that need the extra money to meet their academic goals for their children. With these solutions, we can better allocate public school funding for a better education

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Common Core in New Jersey

Leighanna Ritter

Defining Common Core

Common Core are standards for K-12 grades in mathematics and language arts. The standards were created by a nonprofit organization called Achieve, Inc., which stemmed from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). Common Core's goal is to make students more college and career ready. For each grade and subject, the standards are formed as expectations for what a student should be learning in a given school year. Students are then tested to determine if they reach these standards by the end of the year. Though Common Core was not created and implemented by the federal government, the U.S. Department of Education offered states an incentive if their state adopted the standards. Forty-five states have adopted Common Core standards thus far.

New Jersey and Common Core

Each state has flexibility to adjust the standards to their particular state's needs. New Jersey adopted calls their program New Jersey Student Learning Standards. They implemented them in the 2013-2014 school year and slight changes will take effect in 2017-2018.

Problems with Common Core

1) Teachers fall into a 'teach to the test' teaching style, limiting creativity in the classroom
2) Insinuates all students learn the same way, creating a 'one size fits all' model.
3) Unrepresentative work groups created the standards
    a. Example: college professors, teachers of another subject, board members of standardized tests, teachers who have not taught in over 10 years
4) Burden on schools with limited resources

Recommendation 1: Reevaluate the Work Groups

Increase Representation

- Include teachers with relevant work experience, early childhood development professionals, English as a second language teachers, and special needs teachers
- Understand the attainability of the goals in schools with different socioeconomic status

Why Begin Again?

The creators of the standards were divided into separate work groups for each subject. Less than half of them were teachers in the subject[2]. It is evident that the working groups did not have the most recent and key knowledge in understanding student's abilities. Creating new working groups allows states to acknowledge the shortcomings of the original standards and have a better idea on how to move forward with better expectations.

Early Childhood Development Professionals as an Asset

Certified early childhood development professionals understand three key components of learning:

1. The characteristics and context of the learner
2. Content of the subject matter
3. The organization and facilitation of learning experiences[3]

The standards have laid out a goal for teachers to push their students in order to successful. With the lack of creativity that the standards provide, their effectiveness is limited for students who learn differently. Early childhood development professionals provide a needed perspective on what it is like for students to grow up in school and the best way to educate them.

Recommendation 2: Reevaluate the Standards and Testing

In order to increase student's success rate, the standards need to be reconstructed.

English Language Learners/Special Needs Students

The standards that are implemented make assumptions that all students learn the same and have equal ability. In order for all students to be successful, there has to be a level of understanding that not all students are the same. In cases such as students learning English as a second language and special needs students, the standards have created a huge burden on the students and teachers in the classroom[1]. These students are expected to learn and score just as well as other students.

Create Conversation in the Classroom

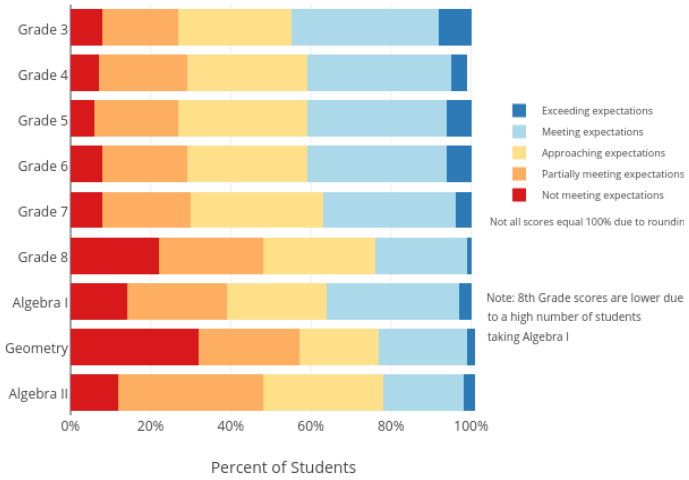
Included in the standards are expectations for students to read, write, multiply, divide, and more, but yet there is only one standard about creating stimulating conversation in the classroom. In order for students to continue to be successful in their future, it is vital to develop their ability to take a stance on an issue and create an argument.

PARCC Testing

In order for the state to quantify if their standards being met students undergo PARCC testing. When the new Common Core standards were put in place so was the new testing system. It has become a more rigorous process and the difficulty of the test has increase in conjunction with the new standards.

Test Results In New Jersey: Mathematics

As the material has become harder, more than half of New Jersey students are barely meeting expectations and almost no students in New Jersey are exceeding it.



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Conclusion

Enforcing standards in school is extremely important and it has always been a part of the New Jersey education system. However, the Common Core standards left too much out. Their program has become extremely rigorous, which creates a disproportionate burden on students who learn differently. By reevaluating the working group and then to reevaluate the standards and the way they are tested are vital to the success rate of students in New Jersey.

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Atlantic City: A Phoenix Rises

Matt Cairoli

Issue

It is no secret that Atlantic City has fallen on pretty hard times. The once booming town of adult paradise is now essentially a casino graveyard. Several things led up to this and several things along the way could have been done to go about bringing change and life back to the now desolate city. For starters, the biggest problem was that Atlantic City had all of its eggs in one basket in a sense. Its main attention draw was that it had casino gambling and bars as far as the eye could see, and that was great when it originally set up shop in the seventies. However, states such as Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York now all have casino gaming. New Jersey would also have had casino gaming statewide, had Question 1 passed on 2016's ballot. Real estate prices have been on a steady decline in Atlantic City with no large rebound in sight. Something has to be done.

Implications

Atlantic City is on life support. Unless we want the entire city to turn into a casino graveyard, then we must find a better use for the city than just casino gaming. Proposed are several ideas that could have a very beneficial impact on the now downtrodden town that was once the pride of South Jersey.

"DO AC" is in the Public Domain

Recommendation 1: Transformation to a College Town

In 2009, Rowan began work on a project called Rowan Boulevard, whose main goal was to bring life back to the downtown part of Glassboro. The drivers were the introduction of a giant shopping mall and relocation of the highway, which took away most of the traffic from the once small bustling town.

Rowan Boulevard Development Map

Brody, Scott. (2016). "Rowan Boulevard Development to Enter Next Phase." The Whit Online. January 25.

Benefits for Glassboro

- Since its creation, the Boulevard project has brought more than 20 businesses to the area;
- It increased real estate values near Rowan;
- and development plans are still ongoing well into 2019.

Stockton recently purchased land and plans to open up their "Island Campus" in Atlantic City. If this campus could go onto being more than just a satellite campus and be an official offshoot that supports a large number of people, then this project could very well bring about a great change in Atlantic City.

What the island campus could do for Atlantic City

- Attract people to the city during slow times for tourism (Fall-Spring)
- Provide more foot traffic, increasing the number of new businesses that could open up to fill the needs of students and visitors
- Rebrand the city as a college town, promoted by students who liver there and can spread the word that it is a good place to be

Stockton's Proposed Atlantic City Campus

Stockton University ©

Recommendation 2: Getting Back to Family

A large issue that the city faces is that when its main clientele is there for gambling and drinking it is not exactly a very family-friendly environment. Las Vegas is named "Sin City" and has the tagline "What Happen in Vegas Stays in Vegas," however the city's family fun attractions is where it succeeds and AC fails. Vegas has magic shows, amusement parks, shopping centers, and restaurants as far as one can see. Beyond the prostitution and the heavy gambling influence that give Sin City its name, Vegas actually has a lot going on for all types of visitors.

A similar path that Atlantic City could take is to fill the family void. First, instead of just having periodic appearances by celebrity bands, comedians, and magicians at random times of the year, try securing long-term engagements. Some Vegas engagements last a decade or more. Atlantic City needs to compete with the growing performance traffic that Philadelphia, Secaucus, and Edison generate.

Atlantic City could explore the following additional options to revitalize for family:

- Transform the boardwalk into something people want to use for the months it is open
- Build amusement parks and waterparks in the now defunct casinos
- Reuse empty Bader Field, even if it is just turned into some kind of park

Conclusion

While these proposed solutions may not bring about a drastic change in Atlantic City, something has to be done to help the struggling city. At this point, anything that could help the city must be explored. As the phoenix rises from the ashes, so too can Atlantic City.

STOCKTON UNIVERSITY
NEW JERSEY'S DISTINCTIVE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Atlantic City Takeover and Income Inequality

Derek Straga

Background

The Municipal Stabilization & Recovery Act, the piece of legislation that allowed the state takeover of the municipal government of Atlantic City, was enacted in November of 2016. This brief will give a short background on the Act and suggest new measures for the state to better fulfill its goals of stabilizing the financial situation of the city.

The focus of this Act was to keep the city from defaulting on its debt payments by saving as much money as possible. The city has seen its debt balloon into about $500 million and watched its tax base crumble. This act gives the state sweeping power over financial decisions, authority to sell municipally owned assets, fire workers and break union contracts. So far, the takeover has cut funding to fire and police departments, which laid off about 100 firefighters and 24 police officers. The proposal also included salary cuts, elimination of payouts for unused sick time, and a different heath plan. This has saved the city millions of dollars, but also puts public safety at risk according to some city officials. Furthermore, the tax settlement with Borgata ended with the city only paying out $72 million, when the city initially owed $165 million, resulting in the city keeping an extra $93 million to resolve its outstanding debt. Because of developments such as these, S&P has boosted the city's credit rating to "CC". However, S&P also says that there is still a 1 in 2 chance of the city defaulting on its bond payments in the next year.

So far, the city has paid on time and in full a $675,000 payment that was due on April 1, 2017 and $1.6 million on May 1. However, the most sizeable payments are due at the end of the year, which leads many people to believe that the city will not be able to pay, and ultimately still declare bankruptcy.

Recommendations

With investors such as Hard Rock International, R&R Development group, NJ Gas and even Stockton University building within the city, some hope that the state takeover would payoff remains. These investments are not only signs that people believe the city is rebounding, but will also rewire the distribution of wealth within the city. With new influxes of people come influxes of money. Stockton would bring students and their families from all over New Jersey, and beyond, to spend their money in the city.

Recommendation 1: New Tax Incentive Targeting Businesses Operating in the City

The hope for this is that new businesses seize an opportunity to come into the city, businesses that may specialize in affordable housing would be included, these businesses would build within the city and better living conditions could be attained by the almost 50% of residents making less than $25,000 a year.

Recommendation 2: Monetize the Water Supply

Current studies show that this would be worth around $100 million to the city. The law stipulates that the Municipal Utility Authority and other ones like it cannot be sold for a year in order to maximize the value of offers for it.

Recommendation 3: Open a Charter School

Right now, the cost to the taxpayers to send children within the city to public schools is on average $26,000 per student. This seems unnecessarily expensive for such a terrible education. 14% of students at Atlantic City High School tested proficient in Math, 27% proficient in English, and only about 67% of the students graduate.

In the Municipal Stabilization and Recovery act, teacher unions and the education system within the city are to be left untouched. If there is no way to amend this in order to break up teachers unions and fire poor teachers that are being protected, then charter schools would be the next plausible option. Opening a state-funded charter school would allow not all, but some, students within the city to get a better education, while saving Atlantic City residents money by reducing the amount taxed and leading to a less-crowded learning environment. The long-term effects of a better education throughout the city would show overtime that this plan had a sustainable future for the residents of the city. Levels of education are predictive of civic engagement, income, and even lifespan. Building state funded charter schools within the city would be one small step that could lead to so many different incredible results.

That last step would only take place if there was a surplus in funds after all the city's debt were to be paid off. However, this may be plausible considering the amount of money the state has already saved the city within a few months of the takeover.

Recommendation 4: Declare Bankruptcy

This would come only if every other measure failed. Bankruptcy is not a get-out-of-jail free card, but it does give municipalities time to get their affairs sorted out. It allows the city to pay somewhat less than its original debt.

Once a municipality declares bankruptcy, it still has to get its fiscal house in order. The city must still balance its budget, pay its legal bills and deal with liabilities such as bonds or pensions. Many cities have declared bankruptcy and seemed to have made a substantial comeback, so it would not be the end of Atlantic City. The only thing is that if bankruptcy were declared by the city, it would most likely affect all of the surrounding municipalities by lowering their credit ratings.

Implications

There still is a lot left to be done, however if the state continues to make progress like this we may see the credit rating of the city improve as early as this year. This is a good sign that Atlantic City is on the right track. Investments within the city by the CRDA, as well as private companies would bring much more money and people into the city, which would boost the overall economy.

The monetization of municipally owned assets such as utilities would also be a big step to getting the city out of debt. Unclean drinking water would be a risk worth taking when trying to get a whole area completely out of debt. I do think that the state should hold off on that measure until it is necessary.

Regarding education, if there is money for that type of reform in the state budget (which there is), this would be a measure that would prove to benefit the city in so many different ways over time, and give make this plan sustainable. The hope for Atlantic City is that all of these avenues are capitalized on, and that no rock is left unturned. The state needs to do everything it can to save this city, or risk putting many other municipalities in danger of default.

Conclusion

Elections are important events for the future of a polity, and this fall will be no different for New Jersey. At the very least, the Governor's Office will experience a transfer of power and the legislature will also see new faces replace some long-standing members. The purpose of this report is to elevate the voice of New Jersey's college students during the election and as the new government begins its business. Granted, this is merely a beginning. The above survey and policy briefs represent the perspectives of a small cross-section of the state's students. But the report provides a foundation for considering how to engage students in more than the fundamental acts of citizenship, like voting.

Students can also have a voice in the challenging policy debates facing Trenton. Students require institutional resources to play a meaningful role in policy debates. Stockton is not the only state institution with a center focused on state and local politics and policy. If the state and its institutions of higher education wish to foster engaged citizens, policy centers can provide the resources for doing so. There are ample opportunities for faculty and centers to work together for the purpose of elevating student voices. Doing so requires creative thinking and energy. It also requires willingness on the part of the institutions to invest resources into student work that is oriented to the public sphere. Institutions fund undergraduate and graduate scholarly research, thus it

can do so also for research meant for public and policymaker consumption.

It is cliché, but Millennials and Generation Z are the future of New Jersey's government and businesses. Thus, understanding their desires and perspectives is important for ensuring that they will be willing to engage in politics in the future and mature into engaged citizens who contribute to their state. Furthermore, the state, like many others, faces substantial challenges in its future. Engaging students also means opening up the decision making process to a broad array of ideas. Doing so can result in new ideas and solutions that may not have emerged otherwise.

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Appendix A: Survey Methodology

The survey described in the body of the report was reviewed by the Stockton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved on March 6, 2017. It was further reviewed by IRBs at Camden County College (approved May 1, 2017) and Raritan Valley Community College (approved April 19, 2017). The survey asked the following questions:

1. What do you think is the most important problem facing New Jersey?
    a. Open-ended response
2. Is the state of New Jersey going in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?
    a. Right Direction
    b. Wrong Track
3. Is the New Jersey economy:
    a. Excellent
    b. Good
    c. Neutral
    d. Poor
    e. Terrible
4. Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. Do you think you will vote in the 2017 New Jersey gubernatorial and legislative election?
    a. Yes
    b. Maybe
    c. No
6. Are you a resident of New Jersey?
    a. Yes
    b. No

The survey was purposefully brief so as to encourage complete responses.

In order to distribute the survey to all 31 public institutions, I gathered contact information for either presidents of student government or officials within student affairs/life offices, if no contact was available

for student government. Requests for distribution of the survey within each institution were sent on the following dates: March 22, April 17, and May 8. While not every institution chose to send the survey to distribute the survey to its students, I received usable responses from the following schools:

School	Number of Respondents
Atlantic Cape Community College	1
Brookdale Community College	1
Camden County College	140
Hudson County Community College	1
Kean University	44
Middlesex County College	1
New Jersey City University	1
Ocean County College	3
Passaic County Community College	1
Ramapo College of New Jersey	1
Raritan Valley Community College	128
Rowan College at Gloucester County	9
Rowan University	2
Rutgers (Any Campus)	4
Stockton University	221
The College of New Jersey	6
William Patterson University	1
Total	565

The four most-represented institutions were Stockton University (221), Camden County College (140), Raritan Valley Community College (128), and Kean University (44). Kean's count does not include the 160 respondents from Dr. Keil's survey. Thus, while the survey does not capture students at all institutions, it does include input from students in different geographical locations and types of schools (two- and four-year). A total of 97 percent of respondents indicated being New Jersey residents.

Appendix B: Contributors

The following students contributed policy briefs that were published in this report. Each student's class standing is as of the spring semester 2017. All students were enrolled at Stockton University.

Heather Gordon is a senior Sociology & Anthropology major.

Gavin Rossi is a junior undeclared major.

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Nickolas Johnson is a senior Business Studies major.

Erica Naranjo is a sophomore Political Science major.

Alexander Stephens is a junior Criminal Justice major (Homeland Security concentration).

James Vicari is a junior Economics major with a Political Science minor.

Karleanne Dutton is a sophomore Criminal Justice major (Forensic Psychology concentration).

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Ben Adiletto is pursuing a Masters in Social Work.

Jessica Jones is a senior Criminal Justice major (Forensic Psychology concentration).

Dina Terilla is a senior Teacher Education major (Social Studies concentration).

Ryan Berry is a senior Business Studies major.

Alejandra Londono is a senior dual-major in Sociology & Anthropology and Languages & Culture Studies with minors in Global Studies, Latin American/Caribbean Studies, and Political Science.

Kevin Brady is a senior Political Science major.

Peter Ananko is a freshman Political Science major.

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Lauren Lucca is a junior Business Studies major (Accounting concentration) with a minor in Political Science.

Leighanna Ritter is a senior dual major in Hospitality & Tourism Management and Political Science.

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