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GENERAL INTEREST

Recession to Recovery: A decade in Perspective

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta - 2016 Annual Report - April 18, 2017

<https://www.frbatlanta.org/economy-matters/annual-report/2016>

“The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s 2016 annual report takes a look at the four dimensions of recovery following the Great Recession. How have cyclical and secular factors affected the economy’s return? What role did monetary policy play in this recovery? What events have transpired over the last 10 years that have directly or indirectly affected the recovery?”

Kevin L. Kliesen

Does Data Confusion Equal Forecast Confusion?

FRB Saint-Louis – Economic Synopsis – March 28, 2017

<https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/economic-synopses/2017/03/28/does-data-confusion-equal-forecast-confusion>

“Forecasters, policymakers, and financial market participants closely scrutinize the regular economic data flows for signs about the economy’s future strength. But there are many types of data. Some of these data measure goods and services that are produced and consumed each month, while other types of data measure economic sentiment or financial market variables. Over the past few months, a noticeable discrepancy has developed between the types of data that forecasters and others regularly use to assess the strength or weakness of the U.S. economy, as measured by real GDP growth in the current quarter.”

The Decline of Economic Opportunity in the United States: Causes and Consequences

US Congress – Joint Economic Committee – Hearing – April 5, 2017

<https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings-calendar?ID=77BCA30A-C2A5-40C5-8CAF-6C61F821842E>

“The purpose of today’s hearing is to gain insight into why the recovery, besides being so slow, is also uneven. Many parts of the country face problems more severe than national average economic growth and unemployment rates convey. Some areas effectively are still in a recession... Many of our communities are hurting, and I believe that increased private investment, restoring economic dynamism and the resulting accelerated economic growth can help them recover. We have an excellent panel of witnesses today, and I look forward to insightful testimony on economic dynamism and the challenges facing local and regional economies in this country.”

With Budget Debate Looming, Growing Share of Public Prefers Bigger Government

Pew Research Center - April 24, 2017

<http://www.people-press.org/2017/04/24/with-budget-debate-looming-growing-share-of-public-prefers-bigger-government>

“As Congress faces an April 28 deadline to fund government operations, the public is now split in their general preferences on the size and scope of government: 48% say they would rather have a bigger government providing more services, while 45% prefer a smaller government providing fewer services.”

James C. Capretta

CBO's Forecast Shows Long-Term Deficit Reduction Should Be the Top Budget Priority

American Enterprise Institute – Economic Perspectives - April 2017 – 8 pages

<http://www.aei.org/publication/cbos-forecast-shows-long-term-deficit-reduction-should-be-the-top-budget-priority>

“The Trump administration has inherited a relatively strong economy that is near full employment and a federal budget that is badly out of balance over the long run, as shown in CBO's most recent long-term forecast. Financial markets have been assuming for months that a Trump budget would be stimulative, including a net tax cut, higher defense spending, new spending on infrastructure, and little restraint on entitlement spending. What the US needs at this point is a major fiscal course correction, focused on long-term entitlement reform that lowers the risk that excessive debt will harm growth or cause a crisis; that is not inconsistent with an economic and fiscal plan that includes pro-growth tax reform and higher levels of defense spending.”

INCOMES – INEQUALITY - IMMIGRATION

Carlos Garriga, Bryan J. Noeth, and Don Schlagenhauf

Household Debt and the Great Recession

FRB Saint-Louis – Economic Perspectives – Second Quarter 2017 – 24 pages

<https://files.stlouisfed.org/files/htdocs/publications/review/2017-04-12/household-debt-and-the-great-recession.pdf>

“In the mid-2000s, household private debt reached a new level 1.2 times larger than personal income— before collapsing during the Great Recession. This paper uses microeconomic data to document the main changes in personal debt and explore the behavior of debt across generations over two periods: before and after the Great Recession. Special emphasis is placed on participation rates by category of debt (the extensive margin), volume borrowed (the intensive margin), and default behavior. Key findings include that between 1999 and 2013 the fraction of individuals with only unsecured (e.g., credit card) debt decreased, as did their balances. In addition, most forms of private debt (mortgages, credit card debt, and auto loans) had significant boom-bust cycles, but the effects across generations have been very asymmetric.”

Ryan Streeter

Young Americans Aren't Moving Like They Used To

American Enterprise Institute - USA Today - April 14, 2017

<http://www.aei.org/publication/young-americans-arent-moving-like-they-used-to>

“Americans instinctively know that sometimes, in order to move up, you have to move out. And moving from one place to another has long been a key element of upward mobility in the nation. Until now. Today, few cities in the country combine economic dynamism with affordability. New trends, meanwhile, demonstrate that while some people are still moving, their reasons aren't what they used to be.”

TAX POLICY

Top Frustrations with Tax System: Sense That Corporations, Wealthy Don't Pay Fair Share

Pew Research Center – April 14, 2017

<http://www.people-press.org/2017/04/14/top-frustrations-with-tax-system-sense-that-corporations-wealthy-dont-pay-fair-share>

“A majority of Americans now view the federal tax system as unfair, including similar shares of Republicans and Democrats. But partisans differ in their concerns about the tax system, with Democrats far more likely than Republicans to express frustration that some corporations and wealthy people don't pay their “fair share.”

Jane G. Gravelle

The “Better Way” House Tax Plan: An Economic Analysis

Congressional Research Service – Report - April 25, 2017 – 41 pages

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44823.pdf>

On June 24, 2016, House Speaker Paul Ryan released the Better Way Tax Reform Task Force Blueprint, which provides a revision of federal income taxes... One objective of tax reform is to increase output and efficiency. However, the plan's estimated output effects appear to be limited in size and possibly negative... As currently proposed, the plan loses significant revenue which, according to some estimates, could more than offset the supply responses and eventually lead to a contraction in output.

Caroline Freund and Joseph Gagnon

Effects of Consumption Taxes on Real Exchange Rates and Trade Balances

Petersen Institute – Working Paper – April 2017 – 29 pages

<https://piie.com/system/files/documents/wp17-5.pdf>

“This paper examines the effects of border-adjusted consumption taxes (mainly value added taxes or VATs) in a sample of 34 advanced economies from 1970 through 2015. Freund and Gagnon 's findings largely support the theoretical assertion that a country 's real exchange rate rises in proportion to any increase in its border-adjusted consumption taxes, with little effect on the current account balance and modest offsetting effects on trade and income balances. The border-adjusted cash flow tax proposed by House Republicans, however, differs in important ways from the consumption taxes examined in this study, raising the possibility of a slower and more complicated adjustment with temporarily larger trade effects.”

Harry Stein

Stop Cutting Taxes for Corporations and the Wealthy

Center on American Progress - April 10, 2017

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/04/10/430161/stop-cutting-taxes-corporations-wealthy/>

“Anyone can clearly see whether proposed legislation would cut taxes for the wealthy or corporations, thanks to high-quality, nonpartisan analysis from the independent Tax Policy Center and the legislative branch's Joint Committee on Taxation. Trickle-down tax cuts have repeatedly failed to produce broad-based economic growth. A significant majority of Americans not only oppose such tax cuts but would support higher taxes on the wealthy and big corporations.”

Cecile Murray and Elizabeth Kneebone

The Earned Income Tax Credit and the White Working Class

Brookings - The Avenue - April 18, 2017

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/04/18/the-earned-income-tax-credit-and-the-white-working-class>

“According to our tax model estimates, the vast majority (86 percent) of EITC-eligible taxpayers do not have a bachelor's degree, and just over half have no more than a high school diploma. In addition, about half of all EITC-eligible taxpayers are white. Furthermore, white taxpayers who do not have a college degree—the so-called white working class—make up fully 40 percent of all taxpayers eligible for the EITC. At the same time, the EITC benefits the black and Latino working class, who combined also account for 40 percent of all taxpayers eligible for the credit. The most common occupations for EITC-eligible working-class taxpayers include traditional blue-collar jobs in transportation and material moving and construction and extraction, as well as service-sector jobs in industries like retail, accommodation and food service, and health care.”

MONETARY POLICY

Examining the Federal Reserve's Mandate and Governance Structure

House Financial Committee – Hearing - April 4, 2017

<http://financialservices.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=401697>

“This hearing will examine how well the Federal Reserve’s (i) statutory mandate (ii) and governance institutions more generally are performing in terms of providing foundational support for business and household economic opportunities.”

Òscar Jordà, Moritz Schularick, and Alan M. Taylor

Monetary Policy Medicine: Large Effects from Small Doses?

FRB San Francisco - Economic Letter - April 3, 2017 – 5 pages

<http://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/files/el2017-09.pdf>

“If inflation increases rapidly, how do we know that higher interest rates will bring prices under control? And how do we know how much of the monetary “medicine” to administer? Economics relies primarily on observational data to answer such questions, while medical research uses randomized controlled trials to evaluate treatments. Applying that method to economics, the long history of international finance turns out to be an excellent laboratory to conduct monetary experiments. These experiments suggest that interest rates have sizable effects on the economy.”

Ben S. Bernanke

The Fed and the Zero Lower Bound

FRB New York – Blog – April 12 & 13, 2017

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/ben-bernanke/2017/04/12/how-big-a-problem-is-the-zero-lower-bound-on-interest-rates>

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/ben-bernanke/2017/04/13/the-zero-lower-bound-on-interest-rates-how-should-the-fed-respond>

“In his latest blog posts, Ben Bernanke looks at the effects of the zero lower bound on interest rates, including recent findings that short-term interest rates could be zero as much as 30 to 40 percent of the time. How big a problem is the zero lower bound? -- How should the Fed respond

Daniel Heller

Do Digital Currencies Pose a Threat to Sovereign Currencies and Central Banks?

Peterson Institute (PIIE) – Policy Brief – April 2017 - 10 pages

<https://piie.com/system/files/documents/pb17-13.pdf>

Bitcoin is the first digital currency to receive widespread recognition and interest, largely because of "distributed ledger" technology that allows it to provide relatively low-cost peer-to-peer transfers of money. Its communitarian ownership model and the fact that bitcoin simplifies international payments have led many to believe bitcoin will one day replace sovereign currencies—and the central banks that issue them. However, the bitcoin system lacks the means to handle fluctuations in demand and supply—much like a currency based on gold coins. As long as central banks continue to pursue stability-oriented monetary policies, they will have little reason to fear that the bitcoin system will replace them.”

FINANCE

William C. Dudley

Principles for Financial Regulatory Reform

FRB New York - Remarks at the Princeton Club of New York, New York City - April 07, 2017

<https://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/speeches/2017/dud170407>

“President Dudley discussed the regulatory changes that have made the financial system much sounder and said he is open to changes that could lessen some of the burdens imposed on the financial services sector by post-crisis rules. While it may be “entirely appropriate to take a critical look at the changes that were made to the

regulatory regime,” he said, it is important that any changes to laws and regulations “be grounded in what we have learned.”

Colleen Baker, Christine Cumming, and Julapa Jagtiani

The Impacts of Financial Regulations: Solvency and Liquidity in the Post-crisis Period

FRB Philadelphia - Working Paper – April 18, 2017 – 30 pages

<https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/research-and-data/publications/working-papers/2017/wp17-10.pdf>

“This paper discusses the new financial regulations in the post–financial crisis period, focusing on capital and liquidity regulations.”

Examination of the Federal Financial Regulatory System and Opportunities for Reform

House Financial Committee – Hearing - April 6, 2017

<http://financialservices.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=401720>

Providers of financial services are generally subject to a variety of regulatory and supervisory requirements. This hearing will examine the impact the rules and processes from federal financial agencies, specifically the Federal Reserve, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the National Credit Union Administration, have had on financial companies and their customers. The hearing will also examine opportunities for reform of these federal financial agencies, with the aim of improving transparency, accountability and due process for regulated persons and entities and their customers.”

Baird Webel, Coordinator

The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act: Background and Summary

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41350.pdf>

“This report reviews issues related to financial regulation and provides brief descriptions of major provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act, along with links to CRS products going in to greater depth on specific issues. It does not attempt to track the legislative debate in the 115th Congress.”

The Financial CHOICE Act (H.R. 10) and the Dodd-Frank Act

Congressional Research Service – Insight – May 1, 2017 – 3 pages

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IN10695.pdf>

“The bill is a wide-ranging proposal with 12 titles that would alter many parts of the financial regulatory system.”

A Legislative Proposal to Create Hope and Opportunity for Investors, Consumers, and Entrepreneurs

House Financial Committee – Hearing - April 26&28, 2017

<http://financialservices.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=401784>

<http://financialservices.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=401820>

“Financial CHOICE Act of 2017: To create hope and opportunity for investors, consumers, and entrepreneurs by ending bailouts and Too Big to Fail, holding Washington and Wall Street accountable, eliminating red tape to increase access to capital and credit, and repealing the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act that make America less prosperous, less stable, and less free, and for other purposes.”

Nathan Sheets

Race to the Top: The Case for the Financial Stability Board

Peterson Institute – Policy Brief – April 2017 – 11 pages

<https://piie.com/system/files/documents/pb17-12.pdf>

“The Financial Stability Board (FSB) has helped strengthen international financial regulatory standards, and as a result, the global economy—and hence the US economy—is more resilient and better able to support strong, sustainable, and balanced growth. The FSB has provided a framework to encourage other jurisdictions to toughen their regulatory regimes in line with steps taken in the United States. The FSB, however, does not have a perfect track record, and Sheets suggests several areas where the FSB could be improved.”

Nellie Liang

Higher Capital Is Not a Substitute for Stress Tests

Brookings – Report - April 24, 2017 – 8 pages

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/es_liang_stresstests_04-24-17.pdf

“Stress testing large banks was one of the key innovations in financial regulation that followed the financial crisis. Since the crisis, stress tests have evolved from a crisis-management tool to a supervisory function to help prevent another financial crisis by ensuring banks pre-emptively build capital for severe economic conditions. The Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 made supervisory stress tests mandatory for systemically important financial institutions. Concerns that stress tests are expensive to implement have led to a proposal to eliminate or reduce the frequency of stress tests if bank holding companies meet higher capital requirements. However, higher capital requirements on their own would not provide many of the significant benefits of current stress testing practices.”

Financial Technology: Information on Subsectors and Regulatory Oversight

GAO - Report - April 19, 2017 – 71 pages

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/684187.pdf>

“Advances in technology and the widespread use of the Internet and mobile communication devices have helped fuel the growth in fintech products and services, such as small business financing, student loan refinancing, mobile wallets, virtual currencies, and platforms to connect investors and start-ups. Some fintech products and services offer the potential to expand access to financial services to individuals previously underserved by traditional financial institutions. GAO was asked to review a number of issues related to the fintech industry, including how fintech products and services are regulated. This report, the first in a series of planned reports on fintech, describes four commonly referenced subsectors of fintech and their regulatory oversight.”

OTHER ECONOMIC POLICIES

Philip A. Wallach and Nicholas W. Zeppos

How Powerful is the Congressional Review Act?

Brookings – Report - April 4, 2017

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-powerful-is-the-congressional-review-act>

“Capitol Hill has lately been abuzz with the discovery that an obscure procedural reform, the Congressional Review Act (CRA), may be a far more powerful deregulatory tool than has been commonly understood... Recently, there have been claims that “more than 800 economically significant rules... could be on the table” for CRA disapproval. In this brief paper, we provide the most rigorous study to date of rules potentially vulnerable to the CRA because of misreporting. We find that 348 significant rules passed during the last two decades could be vulnerable to reversal through CRA resolution—far fewer than others are claiming. As a result, we give the most realistic attempt to understand the maximal reach of a souped-up CRA.”

Rachel del Guidice

13 Ways Trump Has Rolled Back Government Regulations in His First 100 Days

The Daily Signal – Article - April 23, 2017

<http://dailysignal.com/2017/04/23/11-ways-trump-has-rolled-back-government-regulations-in-his-first-100-days>

“As President Donald Trump reaches his 100th day in the White House on April 29, he will have worked with Congress to rescind more regulations using the Congressional Review Act than any other president.”

Robert W. Crandal

Restraining the Regulatory State

Regulation – Article – Spring 2017

<https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/regulation/2017/3/regulation-v40n1-3.pdf>

“A Regulatory Review Office could help Congress determine if new rules are benefiting the public.”

Rena Steinzor

The War on Regulation

The American Prospect – Article – Spring 2017 -

<http://prospect.org/article/war-regulation-0>

“Under Trump, it's open season on health, safety, labor, financial, and environmental measures—that protect people who voted for him... The president has not advanced any coherent theory for the rollbacks other than the litany that deregulators have advanced for decades: Regulations are bad. They take away jobs and destroy the economy. To make America great again, we need to kill them... Yet at some point, President Trump will be held responsible for the inevitable regulatory failure that will follow from his policies,”

Jeremy Mohler & Donald Cohen

The Incoming Privatization Assault

The American Prospect – Article - April 24, 2017

<http://prospect.org/article/incoming-privatization-assault>

“With the Trump presidency and Republican control of Congress, privatization will drastically accelerate—from privatized infrastructure and private prisons to voucherized schools and Medicaid or Medicare. Despite claims of greater efficiency, the reality is usually higher fees and costs, reduced services, lower wages, and loss of public control. The essence of a public service is cross-subsidy. Free or low-cost provision of water and sewer service, public transit, public education, and public parks tends to help lower-income people, based on the premise that these are basic public goods. Market principles, by contrast, abhor cross-subsidies. When public goods are redefined as market commodities, the system raises costs to users, especially those with lower incomes.”

Intellectual Property – Driver of Innovation: Making Our Lives Healthier, Safer, and more Productive

Committee on the Judiciary – Hearing – April 25, 2017

https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/meetings/intellectual-property_driver-of-innovation-making-our-lives-healthier-safer-and-more-productive

“This hearing will explore how the United States intellectual property system is supporting innovation and in the process, helping to save lives, feed the world, and change the way we interact with technology. We'll also

hear from innovators and law enforcement about the nature and scope of some of the challenges that IP-intensive industries face in enforcing IP rights.”

Kevin C. Corinth

Toward a More Efficient Housing Safety Net

AEI Economic Perspectives - April 25, 2017

<http://www.aei.org/publication/toward-a-more-efficient-housing-safety-net>

“Citing a housing affordability crisis, some have called for a federal entitlement to housing assistance by expanding the housing voucher program. I argue that this would be an inefficient way to help low-income Americans. Aside from their administrative costs, vouchers distort housing decisions and fail to serve as a platform for increasing opportunity. I argue for a more efficient housing safety net based on three objectives: preventing housing loss whenever possible, quickly rehousing people when literal homelessness occurs, and providing supportive housing for the most vulnerable.”

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Richard Shearer and Alan Berube

The Surprisingly Short List of US Metro Areas Achieving Inclusive Economic Growth

Brookings - The Avenue - April 27, 2017

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/04/27/the-surprisingly-short-list-of-u-s-metro-areas-achieving-inclusive-economic-growth>

“Citing a housing affordability crisis, some have called for a federal entitlement to housing assistance by expanding the housing voucher program. I argue that this would be an inefficient way to help low-income Americans. Aside from their administrative costs, vouchers distort housing decisions and fail to serve as a platform for increasing opportunity. I argue for a more efficient housing safety net based on three objectives: preventing housing loss whenever possible, quickly rehousing people when literal homelessness occurs, and providing supportive housing for the most vulnerable.”

Scott A. Brave and Paul Traub

Tracking Detroit’s Economic Recovery After Bankruptcy With a New Index

FRB Chicago – Fed Letter – April 2017 – 5 pages

<https://www.chicagofed.org/publications/chicago-fed-letter/2017/376>

This article presents evidence that Detroit’s economy is doing noticeably better than before the city filed for bankruptcy in July 2013. In order to track the city’s economic recovery following its bankruptcy, we use a new index that quantifies Detroit’s overall economic performance from 1998 to the present.”

Birmingham: A Powerful History Forged from Iron

FRB Atlanta - April 26, 2017

<https://www.frbatlanta.org/economy-matters/2017/04/26/birmingham-a-powerful-history-forged-from-iron.aspx>

“Alabama’s largest city is enjoying something of a renaissance. A couple blocks from Birmingham’s Railroad Park, a seven-year-old downtown jewel, sleek condominiums rise alongside the new home of the Birmingham Barons minor league baseball team. Scattered throughout town, trendy restaurants and galleries have earned plaudits from the likes of the New York Times and Garden & Gun magazine. But like most American cities, Birmingham’s economic energy flows only so far. West of downtown lie sagging old mill villages. Most striking is the abandoned Ensley works: century-old brick buildings and a half-dozen smokestacks stand above the woods that in 33 years have all but swallowed a factory that once employed thousands.”

BUSINESS

The Challenges and Opportunities of Running a Small Business in Rural America

Senate Committee on Small business – Hearing – April 26, 2017

https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Hearings&ContentRecord_id=7CCD2988-AD83-4562-83CD-0495F9E430B2&ContentType_id=14F995B9-DFA5-407A-9D35-56CC7152A7ED&Group_id=43eb5e02-e987-4077-b9a7-1e5a9cf28964

“Rural America is not monolithic; many areas are doing quite well, and dramatic regional variations limit the usefulness of broad generalities in describing rural economies. The true fault line is not between rural and urban communities but rather between communities that are highly connected and those that are isolated. Increasing the connectivity of rural communities in terms of access to infrastructure, global markets, capital markets, the Internet, and human capital is essential for their future success.”

Jeannette N. Bennett

Advertising: Dollars and Decisions

FRB Saint-Louis – Page One Economics – April 2017

<https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/page1-econ/2017-04-03/advertising-dollars-and-decisions>

“The purpose of advertising has remained constant over time: to create demand for products by influencing consumer tastes and preferences. However, advertising techniques and strategies have changed and will continue to do so... Mark Twain said, “Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.” Finding the “right kind” of advertising present challenges to both advertisers and consumers. Changing technology and demographics force advertisers to change strategies, venues, and messages as they showcase their products. Consequently, the challenge continues for consumers to use the “right kind” of decisionmaking. As a consumer, it is your responsibility to carefully analyze and evaluate ads. That is, if you want to keep more dollars in your pocket.”

Julie Wagner and Dan Watch

Innovation Spaces: The New Design of Work

Brookings - Report - April 10, 2017 – 64 pages

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cs_20170404_innovation_spaces_pdf.pdf

“Innovation spaces—buildings and interiors used in the innovation economy ranging from incubators to research institutes to innovation centers and start-up spaces—are growing significantly in cities and suburbs across the globe. In both the United States and Europe, for example, accelerators and incubators have more than doubled since the financial crisis.” This paper “finds that not only are these spaces proliferating, they are also changing to reflect the evolving collaborative, cross-sector, and high-tech nature of innovation.”

SCIENCE - INNOVATION

Tech Policy To-Do List

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation – Report – April 2017 – 30 pages

http://www2.itif.org/2017-tech-policy-to-do-list.pdf?mc_cid=f3a64d1709&mc_eid=c56f7c6ab9

“Every state and congressional district in the country has a stake in the continued progress of technological innovation. But what can policymakers do to foster it? This report provides a menu of actionable proposals for the Trump administration and 115th Congress to foster growth, opportunity, and progress.”

Robert D. Atkinson

In Defense of Robots

National Review – Article – April 21, 2017

http://www.nationalreview.com/article/446933/robots-jobs-industrial-future?mc_cid=426e84de32&mc_eid=c56f7c6ab9

“There was a time when most U.S. academics, pundits, and politicians had faith in tech-powered productivity growth. Now many have turned against it out of misplaced fear that it is driving us toward mass unemployment. But this robophobia is misguided. Instead of pumping the breaks on progress, the best way to improve workers’ quality of life is to embrace tech-led automation while controlling low-skilled immigration and providing better adjustment assistance for those who are displaced.”

INFRASTRUCTURE – TRANSPORTATION

William Dupor

So, Why Didn’t the 2009 Recovery Act Improve the Nation’s Highways and Bridges?

FRB Saint-Louis – Economic Review – Article – April 12, 2017 – 14 pages

<https://files.stlouisfed.org/files/htdocs/publications/review/2017-04-12/so-why-didnt-the-2009-recovery-act-improve-the-nations-highways-and-bridges.pdf>

“Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) provided nearly \$28 billion to state governments for improving U.S. highways, the highway system saw no significant improvement. For example, relative to the years before the act, the number of structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges was nearly unchanged, the number of workers on highway and bridge construction did not significantly increase, and the annual value of construction put in place for public highways barely budged. The author shows that as states spent Recovery Act highway grants, many simultaneously slashed their own contributions to highway infrastructure, freeing up state dollars for other uses. Next, using a cross-sectional analysis of state highway spending, the author shows that a state’s receipt of Recovery Act highway dollars had no statistically significant causal impact on that state’s total highway spending. Thus, the amount of actual highway infrastructure investment following the act’s passage was likely very similar to that under a no-stimulus counterfactual.”

Keeping Goods Moving: Continuing to Enhance Multimodal Freight Policy and Infrastructure

Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure – Hearing - April 4, 2017

<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=424FEE54-A1B3-4DF0-B3B0-577D4EBFA77A>

“This hearing will examine the importance of the multimodal freight transportation network and policies needed for a growing economy.”

Stephen W. Salant and Nathan Seegert

Why Private Sector Tolling of Roads Is Not an Efficient Anti-Congestion Policy

Resources for the Future – Discussion Paper – April 2017 – 24 pages

<http://www.rff.org/research/publications/should-congestion-tolls-be-set-government-or-private-sector-knight-pigou>

“Roads in the United States are congested and in disrepair. If private sector tolls are used to finance road infrastructure projects, such tolls will harm motorists, lengthen commute times, and provide less revenue than tolls set by the government.”

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Fueling the 21st Century Wireless Economy

House Energy and Commerce Committee – Hearing - April 5, 2017

<https://energycommerce.house.gov/hearings-and-votes/hearings/facilitating-21st-century-wireless-economy>

“The United States’ economy is moving rapidly in the direction of connectivity and digitalization...One of the key components of this evolution is wireless service... Because of these existing and emerging uses, wireless communications networks are expanding at a rapid rate, requiring greater inputs than ever before. This includes not only physical infrastructure, like towers and fiber, but also the need for additional spectrum, the radio frequencies that power wireless connectivity. In order to develop a consistent and reliable pipeline of this finite resource, policy-makers have focused efforts on promoting efficient use of spectrum, through mandates, incentives, and other frameworks that ensure that airwaves are utilized effectively.”

Nigel Cory

Cross-Border Data Flows: Where Are the Barriers, and What Do They Cost?

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation – Report - May 2017 – 42 pages

http://www2.itif.org/2017-cross-border-data-flows.pdf?mc_cid=b72c3d403b&mc_eid=c56f7c6ab9

“Data is the lifeblood of the modern global economy, yet 35 countries and counting have enacted unwarranted restrictions that make it more expensive and time consuming—if not illegal—to transfer data overseas. This is costing the global economy billions of dollars—and the burden falls not just on trading partners, but also the very countries that impose barriers. Policymakers around the world should step up efforts to roll back these unwarranted barriers to modern trade.”

Doug Brake

A Policymaker’s Guide to Rural Broadband Infrastructure

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation – Report – April 2017 – 24 pages

<http://itif.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7cd0aa45750e929d69baf0fe2&id=9f19c5f98b&e=c56f7c6ab9>

With discussion of a potential infrastructure package that many rightfully hope will include rural broadband, it’s worth examining previous attempts to spur rural broadband service, revisiting the basic policies used to encourage deployment in those geographies where the economics don’t support competitive delivery, and distilling guidance for any new attempts. Among the key lessons: focus first on unserved areas, and rely on proven mechanisms such as reverse auctions.

AGRICULTURE

L. Val Gidding

How the Administration Can Unshackle Innovation in Agricultural Biotechnology

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation – Report – April 2017 – 29 pages

<http://itif.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7cd0aa45750e929d69baf0fe2&id=5a0c4e9f33&e=c56f7c6ab9>

Overly cautious regulations that contravene decades of academic research are stifling innovation in agricultural biotechnology. The Trump administration should roll back these needlessly precautionary regulations and encourage much-needed innovations that produce safer and more sustainable crops and livestock while still preventing unreasonable risks to public and environmental welfare.

Determining Climate Effects on US Total Agricultural Productivity

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences – March 21, 2017

<http://www.pnas.org/content/114/12/E2285>

“The sensitivity of agricultural productivity to climate has not been sufficiently quantified. The total factor productivity (TFP) of the US agricultural economy has grown continuously for over half a century, with most of the growth typically attributed to technical change. Many studies have examined the effects of local climate on partial productivity measures such as crop yields and economic returns, but these measures cannot account for national-level impacts. Quantifying the relationships between TFP and climate is critical to understanding whether current US agricultural productivity growth will continue into the future.”

EMPLOYMENT – WAGES - COMPENSATION

How Do People Find Jobs?

FRB New York - Liberty Street Economics – April 5, 2017

<http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2017/04/how-do-people-find-jobs.html>

“What is it that brings employers and job seekers together? And does searching for a job while unemployed lead to different outcomes than conducting a job search while employed? Our bloggers find that certain employed workers tend to have more effective searches than their unemployed counterparts, and receive better offers as well—in terms of both wages and nonwage benefits.”

David Cooper

Who Would Benefit From a \$15 Minimum Wage?

Economic Policy Institute – Report - April 26, 2017

<http://www.epi.org/publication/15-by-2024-would-lift-wages-for-41-million>

“Since 2009, the federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25. The author looks at the impact of the Raise the Wage Act of 2017, which would gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2024, link it to changes in the median wage thereafter, and gradually eliminate the lower minimum wage for tipped workers. Cooper finds the proposed bill would benefit 41.5 million workers—nearly 30 percent of the workforce.”

How Many Weeks of Unemployment Compensation Are Available?

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities – Background – April 4, 2017 – 3 pages

<http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/policybasics-uiweeks.pdf>

“Workers in most states are eligible for up to 26 weeks of benefits from the regular state-funded unemployment compensation program, although nine states provide fewer weeks and two provide more.”

Comparing the Compensation of Federal and Private-Sector Employees, 2011 to 2015

CBO – Report - April 25, 2017 – 30 pages

<https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/52637-federalprivatepay.pdf>

“During the 2011-2015 period, the difference between the wages, benefits, and total compensation of federal civilian employees and those of similar private-sector employees varied widely depending on the employees’ educational attainment.”

Scott D. Szymendera

Workers’ Compensation: Overview and Issues

Congressional Research Service – Report - April 20, 2017 – 36 pages

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44580.pdf>

“Workers’ compensation provides cash and medical benefits to workers who are injured or become ill in the course of their employment and provides benefits to the survivors of workers killed on the job. Benefits are provided without regard to fault and are the exclusive remedy for workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths. Nearly all workers in the United States are covered by workers’ compensation.”

Ross Eisenbrey and Celine McNicholas

False Choice for Workers—Flexibility or Overtime Pay

Economic Policy Institute – Policy Memo - April 3, 2017 – 5 pages

<http://www.epi.org/files/pdf/125639.pdf>

“In February, the Working Families Flexibility Act was introduced; this legislation would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to allow private-sector employers to get out of the requirement to pay overtime and instead give hourly employees comp time. Ross Eisenbrey and Celine McNicholas explain that the bill does not give working families more flexibility—it simply lets employers delay paying any wages for overtime work for as long as 13 months.”

RETIREMENT – HEALTH

Andrew G. Biggs

An Agenda for Retirement Security

American Enterprise Institute - April 3, 2017

<http://www.aei.org/publication/an-agenda-for-retirement-security>

Most Americans are not looking for a handout, but they understandably worry about their retirement incomes, and calls for more government involvement will only proliferate in the absence of reform. Given that President Trump has so far said little about Social Security other than his pledge to protect the program, Biggs argues that forward-looking members of Congress now have an opportunity to seize the policy discussion and show what the right approach to protecting the elderly and the next generation of Americans might look like.”

The Current State of Retirement Security in the United States

Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs – Hearing - April 5, 2017

<https://www.banking.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=4D1E4335-7863-45E6-8F22-967E95E759A6>

The witnesses are: The Honorable Kent Conrad, Senior Fellow and Co-Chair of the Commission on Retirement Security and Personal Savings, Bipartisan Policy Center; and Professor Walter Russell Mead, Distinguished Fellow at Hudson Institute, Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs and Humanities, Bard College, and Editor-at-Large, The American Interest.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Uncertain Future of Globalization

First Year Project 2017 – Essays – April 2017

<http://firstyear2017.org/issue/the-uncertain-future-of-globalization>

Dancing with China by *Brantly Womack* - <http://firstyear2017.org/essay/dancing-with-china>

Make Friends and Influence People by *Jeffry Frieden* - <http://firstyear2017.org/essay/make-friends-and-influence-people>

Prepare for a Crisis by *Barry Eichengreen* - <http://firstyear2017.org/essay/prepare-for-a-crisis>

The Big Picture by *Menzie Chinn* - <http://firstyear2017.org/essay/the-big-picture>

Make Trade Great Again by *Christina Davis* - <http://firstyear2017.org/essay/make-trade-great-again>

Trade Enforcement: Information on U.S. Agencies' Monitoring and Enforcement Resources for International Trade Agreements

GAO – Report - April 13, 2017

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-399>

Trade agreements are a key component of the U.S. government's efforts to boost exports. The vast majority of U.S. exports are covered by at least one trade agreement, and several federal agencies work to monitor and enforce these agreements. These agencies estimated using more than 700 full-time equivalent staff, at a cost of more than \$100 million, to carry out these responsibilities in fiscal year 2016. The U.S. also funded 80

capacity-building projects (at a cost of about \$256 million) to help its trading partners meet their obligations under free trade agreements—particularly labor and environmental commitments.”

Mary Amity and Caroline Freund

US Exporters Could Face High Tariffs without NAFTA

FRB New York - Liberty Street Economics – April 17, 2017

<http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2017/04/us-exporters-could-face-high-tariffs-without-nafta.html>

“One underappreciated benefit of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is that U.S. exporters have been exempt from potential tariff hikes facing other exporters. Our bloggers argue that without NAFTA, U.S. exporters could face significant tariff increases and at the very least would face a greater level of policy uncertainty.”

CHINA

Christopher J. Neely

Chinese Foreign Exchange Reserves, Policy Choices, and the U.S. Economy

FRB Saint-Louis – Economic Perspectives – Second Quarter 2017 – 26 pages

<https://files.stlouisfed.org/files/htdocs/publications/review/2017-04-12/chinese-foreign-exchange-reserves-policy-choices-and-the-u-s-economy.pdf>

“China is both a major trading partner of the United States and the largest official holder of U.S. assets in the world. The value of Chinese foreign exchange reserves peaked at just over \$4 trillion in June 2014 but has since declined to \$3.19 trillion (as of August 2016). This very large decline in foreign exchange reserves is unprecedented, and some analysts have speculated that continued sales of these (mostly U.S.) assets might significantly impact the U.S. and global economies. This article explains the reasons for this large decline in official assets, China’s available policy choices, and how these choices could affect the U.S. economy.”

China’s Technological Rise: Challenges to U.S. Innovation and Security

House Committee on Foreign Affairs – Hearing – April 26, 2017

<https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-chinas-technological-rise-challenges-u-s-innovation-security/>

Witnesses:

Dean Cheng, Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, The Heritage Foundation

Robert D. Atkinson, President, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

Robert E. Scott, Director of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Research, Economic Policy Institute

The End of China’s Export Juggernaut

FRB New York - Liberty Street Economics – April 12, 2017

<http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2017/04/the-end-of-chinas-export-juggernaut.html>

“In recent decades, China claimed an ever-larger share of the U.S. import market at the expense of other countries, but that trend now seems to have run its course. Our bloggers look at the headwinds hitting China’s exports and affecting its growth outlook.”

G. John Ikenberry and Darren Lim

China’s Emerging Institutional Statecraft - The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Prospects for Counter-Hegemony

Brookings – Report - April 2017 – 27 pages

<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/chinas-emerging-institutional-statecraft.pdf>

“With the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China is offering alternatives to global institutions. G. John Ikenberry and Darren Lim examine how Beijing might use this approach to challenge the U.S.-led international order.”

Jack Karsten

New Approaches for Meeting China’s Growing Energy Demands

Brookings – TechTank – April 5, 2017

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2017/04/05/new-approaches-for-meeting-chinas-growing-energy-demands>

“Per-capita energy consumption in China has quadrupled since 1980 and demands on the country’s energy resources are expected to continue increasing. Jack Karsten summarizes Darrell West and Qi Ye’s report on how new technologies can help China balance its increased energy demands with economic, environmental, and public health concerns.”

ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

Ben Adler

Saving the Planet Goes Local

The American Prospect – Article - April 21, 2017

<http://prospect.org/article/saving-planet-goes-local-0>

“The Trump administration plans to decimate environmental safeguards—so blue states and cities are stepping up their efforts to arrest climate change.”

ENERGY

Devashree Saha and Mark Muro

Patenting Invention: Clean Energy Innovation Trends and Priorities for the Trump Administration and Congress

Brookings – Report - April 26, 2017 – 25 pages

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/final_cleantech.pdf

“This first brief of two on cleantech innovation looks at technology patenting activity as a key indicator for monitoring the development of new technologies, as represented by the volume and topics of new patents resulting from public and private funded research. What do these data show? Overall, the data show that even as cleantech patenting has grown over the years, serious concerns remain about the competitiveness of the U.S. cleantech innovation scene. At the same time, while much of America’s patenting takes place in relatively few large metropolitan areas, significant cleantech innovation activity extends into all regions of the country. That breadth underscores both the relevance and potential of low carbon innovation.”

Luke Bassett and Jason Walsh

The Trump Budget Cuts Hit Coal Communities and Workers Where It Hurts

Center on American Progress - April 24, 2017

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2017/04/24/430842/trump-budget-cuts-hit-coal-communities-workers-hurts/>

“Despite promises to revitalize the U.S. coal industry and bring back coal mining jobs, President Trump’s actions would not restore coal country. In fact, they threaten current federal economic and workforce development efforts to aid coal communities in transition.”