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News, Research and Events

April 8, 2021



Baker Institute and Carter Center launch U.S. election reform event series

In 2005, former President Jimmy Carter and former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, co-chaired the Commission on Federal Election Reform, which produced a report on the U.S. electoral process and recommendations on maximizing ballot access and election integrity. Yesterday, the [Baker Institute Presidential Elections Program](#) and [The Carter Center](#) launched “The Carter-Baker Commission: 16 Years Later,” a series of five virtual events designed to examine key recommendations from the commission and use them to frame deeper discussions about emerging electoral reform issues. Panelists include U.S. election experts, election administrators and leaders from across the political spectrum.

“In the midst of sharp polarization and division in our political environment, we welcome this collaboration with The Carter Center,” said Baker Institute [Director Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian](#). “It is crucial that questions of election reform are addressed in an objective and data-driven manner.”

[Click here](#) to watch yesterday’s discussion on “Election Integrity and Ballot Access” or learn details about future events in the series.

In this session, Texas lawmakers have multiple opportunities to improve drug policy with reforms that are evidence-based and have broad public support. They should seize the moment.

[Katharine Neill Harris](#), Alfred C. Glassell, III, Fellow in Drug Policy,
in the [Houston Chronicle](#)



Minimum wage debate continues

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law last month, ultimately excluded a mandate to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and the debate on the effects of a wage hike continues. In a new [Baker Institute Blog post](#), public finance fellow [Joyce Beebe](#) considers possible developments ahead and the pros and cons of raising the minimum wage.

Most states now have a minimum wage that is higher than the federal mandate of \$7.25 per hour. Supporters of a federal increase say this validates the need for consistency nationwide, but others cite it as evidence that labor markets vary among states.

Both sides of the debate say the data backs their positions: critics argue a wage hike could lead to unemployment, higher costs for consumers and even job automation, while advocates counter that the boost will spur the economy by lifting millions of working poor out of poverty.

Recent polling shows that a majority of Americans support a higher federal minimum wage, which has not changed since 2009. Policymakers should aim for “a portfolio of benefits that enable workers to contribute to their communities and live meaningful lives,” Beebe writes. “A compromise is better than no adjustment at all.”

Read more at the [Baker Institute Blog](#).

Upcoming Events

Webinar — Texas and the COVID Tracking Project: Lessons Learned and Future Steps. Judith Oppenheim, the Texas COVID-19 data specialist for the COVID Tracking Project, takes a deep dive into the data to explore the effects of the pandemic on different parts of Texas and offers recommendations to improve infectious disease reporting. **April 12 | 1:30 p.m. CDT**

Roundtable Dialogue: The 2021 Texas Legislative Session. At this member-exclusive webinar, political science fellow Mark P. Jones discusses the current Texas legislative session, delving into controversial topics such as the state's electric grid, voting rights, redistricting, the George Floyd Act and partisanship. **April 14 | Noon CDT**

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Rice University, MS-40, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-1892