CSG Releases Special Capitol Research Policy Series Based on 2011 Book of the States Data

By Jennifer Horne [1]
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The Council of State Governments continues a long tradition of “sharing capitol ideas” with the publication of the 2011 edition of The Book of the States. The Book of the States has been the reference tool of choice since 1935, providing relevant, accurate and timely information, answers and comparisons for all 56 states, commonwealths and territories of the United States.

The 2011 volume includes 150 in-depth tables, charts and figures illustrating how state government operates. It also includes more than 30 articles from state leaders, innovative thinkers, noted scholars and CSG’s in-house policy experts that analyze and report on the transformations taking place in state government. Staff members mined more than 500 sources to obtain the information shared in The Book of the States.

The Council of State Governments is our nation’s only organization serving all three branches of state government. CSG is a region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy.

Regional Analysis:

- **Trends in State Tax Rates: Excise Taxes** [2]
  State revenues appear to be rebounding, but generally remain below prerecession levels. Compared to prior downturns, states relied less on rate increases to sustain sales tax revenue during the Great Recession. Some states raised cigarette and gasoline taxes.

- **Trends in State Tax Rates: Corporate Income Taxes** [3]
  State revenues appear to be rebounding, but generally remain below pre-recession levels. At the start of 2011, state corporate income tax rates largely mirrored those assessed in 2007 - three states had raised rates, while five had lowered them. More change may be on the way in the 2012 fiscal year, as debate continues on issues like nexus thresholds and taxation of out-of-state entities.

  Nearly every state saw an increase in real gross domestic product in 2010—a welcome sign of economic recovery after two straight years of drops in the national average. Each region performed differently, with a few states posting impressive 4-plus percent gains and a majority of states falling between 1.5 and 3.5 percent.

- **Unemployment Insurance Trust Funds** [6]
  Unemployment rates remain high and many people have been without work for extremely long
periods of time, exhausting state unemployment trust funds quickly. More than half the states are borrowing from the federal government to cover costs, which could have an impact on future fiscal stability.

- **Trends in State Prison Populations** [7]
  State prison populations experienced a slight decline between 2008 and 2009, while the federal population increased 3.4 percent. However, state prison populations have risen significantly - up by 13 percent - since 2000.

**National Analysis:**

- **Office of Lieutenant Governor** [8]
  Lieutenant governors are often the first in line of succession when a governor leaves office in the middle of a term. But that’s not always the case. Lieutenant governors may obtain duties through gubernatorial appointment, statute, the Constitution, direct democracy action or personal initiative.

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