

Editors' Note

This year, more so than others, boasts a complex set of challenges for everyone involved in the policy process. Important issues shine brightly in the national spotlight, ripe for criticism. It is an election year and the constant partisan bickering can leave even those most dedicated to the public sector fatigued. It is times like this, more than ever, that we as policymakers weed through the jargon and the partisanship in our work to research, analyze and decide the policies that shape our lives.

Policy Perspectives remains a valuable platform for us to evaluate policy, question existing practices, and search for new solutions. The collection of articles in Volume 19 reiterates our commitment to a diversity of policy areas. We feature a spectrum of different methods and solutions. We hope that *Policy Perspectives*, even in times when the public loses faith in the role of government, keeps our minds sharp for analysis and primed for solutions. Volume 19 presents seven original articles, four book reviews, and in keeping with last year's revival of an old journal tradition, an interview.

Diana Hincapié's article, *The Impact of a Conditional Cash Transfer Program on Household Income in Colombia* estimates the impact of Familias en Acción, the largest Colombian conditional cash transfer program, on household income. She uses a Quantile Regression methodology and Difference-in-Difference estimators to capture the impact of the program on household income at different quantiles of the income distribution.

Ashley Flint's *Solving Medicare's Fiscal Crisis: An Analysis of Three Policy Options* analyzes options for Congress to consider as they address the problem of rapid cost growth in the Medicare program. The rising costs of Medicare necessitate short-term congressional action of some form in order to maintain solvency.

Amy Diggs' The Expiration of the Ethanol Tax Credit: An Analysis of Costs and Benefits analyzes the Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit that expired on December 31, 2011. She finds that without the tax credit, the net benefits will be \$168.1 billion in net present value from 2012 to 2022. The total costs will be \$116.8 billion, primarily imposed upon ethanol producers and farmers. The benefits, realized through improved environmental conditions and stabilized food prices, will save society a total of \$284.9 billion.

Sarah Weakley's *The Relevance of Regionalism in Washington, DC* describes the current inequality dynamics in the DC Metropolitan region, discusses current approaches to poverty reduction, and then recommends Regionalist policies as viable alternatives. Regionalist policies and successes provide relevant lessons for the DC Metropolitan region in particular as ways to alleviate the problems of inequality.

Jonathan Porat's *Deadlines and Comprehensive Regulations* empirically measures whether regulations with judicial deadlines are developed less comprehensively than regulations with statutory deadlines. He examines how the differences in the development of regulations with judicial deadlines should influence the way that the government analyzes proposals for regulatory reform.

Stephen Holt, Matt McCreary, and Lindsay Haslebacher co-authored *To Spend or Not To Spend? An Empirical Analysis of the Fundamental Role of State Governments in Economic Output*. The team uses an endogenous growth model to examine the fundamental relationship of state-level government spending and per capita GDP. Specifically, the analysis uses state-level data covering a six-year period controlling for state workforce characteristics, distribution of industrial activities, and tax revenue sources to develop a working model of state economies.

Mark Buckley, Keith Marfione, and Hannah Putman co-authored *Developing Safety Cultures in Amtrak and WMATA*. This extensive program evaluation illustrates case studies of Amtrak and WMATA and examines the strategies and promising practices that these organizations employed to improve their safety cultures.

Volume 19 also features four book reviews that illustrate the breadth of policy issues we face today. **Julie Allen** reviews Eli Pariser's *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*; **Brian Cahill** discusses Philip Joyce's *The Congressional Budget Office: Honest Numbers, Power, and Policymaking*; **Thomas Herndon** talks about James S. Russell's *The Agile City – Building Well-being and Wealth in an Era of Climate Change*, and **Lauren Rutledge** critiques Richard Rhodes' *The Twilight of the Bombs: Recent Challenges, New Dangers, and the Prospects for a World Without Nuclear Weapons*.

Lastly, we are happy to publish an interview with Andrew DiRosa MPA '02, Section Chief (Acting) of the Executive Intelligence Section of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. DiRosa's commitment to public service comes with an interesting twist: he was the Editor-in-Chief of *Policy Perspectives* during his time at the Trachtenberg School. We greatly appreciate his unique perspective and are excited to share his story.

We wish to thank the staff of Volume 19: Mara Andersen, Anne Berry, Tanner Daniel, Rebecca Dilday, Anderson Heiman, Kristin Hubing, Diane Mars, Alicia Mazzara, and Kelly McCoy for their dedication and exceptional work. In addition, we would like to thank Jennifer Covino for assisting with the book review edits. Special thanks are due to our faculty adviser and Trachtenberg School Director Kathy Newcomer. We would also like to thank the members of the wonderful GW administration and faculty who provided us with valuable support, guidance, and expertise during the intense editing process. We are proud to have contributed to this year's *Policy Perspectives* and hope it remains a meaningful platform for students to address the public policy and administration issues of our time.

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