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Comparing California, Texas priorities

By Chuck DeVore 5 P.M. FEB. 8, 2014 Updated 2:39 P.M. FEB. 7, 2014

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A few days ago, I testified before the California Legislature about Texas successful criminal justice reforms. The crime rate in Texas has dropped to 1968 levels while the state recently closed three prisons. In California, where crime rates are still high, and without such reductions, Texas lawmakers have consciously sought to reduce crime by shifting resources from merely locking criminals up to instead, when appropriate, offering treatment, rehabilitation, and victim restitution.

Properly allocating limited taxpayer resources is a challenge. In California's case, in the area of criminal justice, it would mean, among other things, beefing up treatment and monitoring of parolees at the local level. Local success in rehabilitation saves the state from paying to imprison nonviolent offenders, preventing many of them from becoming hardened criminals.

Beyond its troubled corrections system, how is California's government doing? Most Californians have reconciled living in a state that taxes more, spends more, and controls more than is the norm across the nation. "It's the price we pay to live in paradise," they rationalize. But are Californians really better off with bigger government?

Texas and California are more alike than either state would care to admit: diverse, vast, and blessed with natural resources. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the equivalent of 1.76 million people worked full-time for state and local governments in California in 2011. That's about one government worker for every 21 Californians. But the Lone Star State employs one government worker for every 18 Texans. While



Texas has more government workers, California spends more on government — about 44 percent more as a share of the private economy than Texas, while taxing about 42 percent more state income. California pays its government workers far more and provides them with far more costly benefits. California also spends a lot more on welfare.

California and Texas also have widely different spending priorities. There are 12 million more Californians than Texans, but Texas employs more educators, 888,000, compared to California's 865,000. In fact, only 49 percent of California's state and local workers are in education vs. 61 percent in Texas. This may help explain the U.S. Department of Education's recent estimate that 88 percent of Texas high school students graduate vs. 78 percent in California. As for police, fire and corrections employees, Texas has more per capita in every category than does California.

While California skimps on teachers, police and parole officers, it splurges on regulators and bureaucrats. Some 12 percent of California's bureaucracy is engaged in the business of minding your business or in administrative overhead, twice the percentage in Texas. California employs 60 percent more regulators and bureaucrats per capita than Texas. An official study found that the cost of California's myriady regulations came to \$134,000 per year for the average small business. Statewide regulatory compliance costs were estimated at four times the amount spent every year in the general budget. Add this to California's tax burden and is it any wonder that Texas is the No. 1 state of destination for Californians leaving the state?

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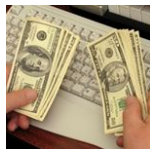
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Chuck DeVore · Follow · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Occidental Petroleum, a native California company and #125 on the Fortune 500, is going to Texas: "California ...suffers from severe regulatory constraints" <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-14/occidental-petroleum-to-separate-california-business.html>

Reply · Like · Follow Post · February 14 at 9:41am



Tom Tanton · Top Commenter

will the last person leaving Cali turn the lights off? oh, wait regulatory mis-management by the bureaucrats already done that, so never mind...

Reply · Like · February 14 at 9:44am



Susan Gate · Top Commenter · Edison High School, Huntington Beach, California

I think it should be pretty conclusive by now.. CA is a beautiful state that once was a thriving dynamic state... and it is now a Detroit wannabe... thanks Progressive.. you did that.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 12 at 1:42am



Susan Gate · Top Commenter · Edison High School, Huntington Beach, California

CA also scored number one in something.. the greatest net loss of businesses in 2012... 73,000 net loss of businesses... Mass was second with a net loss of 5,500... wow what a record.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 12 at 1:15am



Chuck DeVore · [Follow](#) · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Well now. Texas just surpassed California as top tech exporter for the first time. From the article: "Texas has 22 percent of the nation's technology manufacturing jobs. ...Matthew Kazmierczak... attributed the shift to rising manufacturing costs in California and Texas' business-friendly atmosphere." <http://traiblazersblog.dallasnews.com/2014/02/texas-surpasses-california-as-top-tech-exporter.html/>

[Reply](#) · [2](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 11 at 4:18pm



Larry Weisenthal · Top Commenter · Huntington Beach, California

Please be intellectually honest in acknowledging that the most important driver in "rising manufacturing costs in California" is worker/employer cost of living/doing business as a result of much higher costs in residential and commercial real estate in California, coupled with road congestion and the nation's longest commuting times. Trying to credit "business-friendly atmosphere," as the chief driver for the cited manufacturing shifts is like a rooster taking credit for the sunrise. California is a victim of its own success. It was a magnet for just too many people and now there is the same sort of "correction" going on as periodically occurs in many other sectors of the economy, from equities to commodities, only in this case it's population distribution.

Some of the details in the article you link that you chose not to cite were the fact that most of the tech exports went to Mexico, with cross border distribution channels being more advantageous from Texas and also a shift in business strategies of tech firms in favor of centering R&D and software engineering in California and farming out production to low wage/low cost of living states. This goes hand in glove with the 10 to 1 ratio of venture capital investment favoring California over Texas.

- Larry Weisenthal/Huntington Beach CA

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · February 11 at 5:22pm



Chuck DeVore · [Follow](#) · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Larry Weisenthal Gov. Jerry Brown made a conscious decision during his first time as governor to stop building roads. "Don't build it and they won't come" was his idea. It didn't work. When you amp up regulations and welfare you get less spending on infrastructure. It's a fact. Look at road miles constructed as a metric of per capita growth.

[Reply](#) · [1](#) · [Like](#) · February 11 at 7:53pm



Larry Weisenthal · Top Commenter · Huntington Beach, California

Hi Chuck, That's a fair criticism. But it's news which is now more than 35 years old. I presume that you are referring to the great 85 freeway controversy/debacle (choose one), during the first double term of the Brown governorships. Yeah, he was younger and he made a mistake. I made mistakes at that age and, I'd wager, so did most people -- even those in careers not as challenging as governance of world class economies.

What's more directly relevant to the current (circa 2014) discussion is the history of road construction where I live -- Orange County CA. Us Orange Countians have actually voted to raise our own taxes, for the purpose of building ever more roads. 25 years ago, I endured heavy traffic on the 405 South to drive to my job in Irvine. After years of construction, we had new lanes and easier commutes. Which ... [See More](#)

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · February 12 at 12:47am

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Robert Mitchell · Top Commenter · El Cajon, California

Here's a thought to consider: drive through any subdivision of single-family homes built before 1970. Often a single car garage, usually 3 bedrooms maximum and often only one bathroom. Typically between 900-1200 square feet, but often designed with a floor plan that allowed for additions later on as the family moved up the income ladder. Today's new subdivisions are typically 2000-3500 square feet with 3 or 4 car garages, for crying out loud! And people wonder why the only "starter" home anyone can afford is a condo???

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · February 11 at 9:27am



Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

Of 100 U.S. real estate markets, CA contains by far the least affordable middle class housing market (San Francisco). PLUS the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th. San Diego is #5 -- with affordable middle class homes averaging 1,056 sq. ft. <http://riderrants.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-us-least-affordable-housing-market>

[Reply](#) · [1](#) · [Like](#) · February 11 at 10:07am



Susan Gate · Top Commenter · Edison High School, Huntington Beach, California

You can get that home in San Antonio TX for around \$150,000 or less.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · February 12 at 1:20am



Steve Hart · Top Commenter · San Diego State University

Susan Gate Only problem Suzie is that when you go to bed; then wake up in the morning you're not in California you are in Texas. I mean if price is what drives you, buy a mansion in Sudan for about \$100--it's a libertarian paradise, no laws, no taxes.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · February 12 at 12:01pm



Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

California ranks 48th worst for credit card debt and 49th worst for percentage of home ownership.

<http://riderrants.blogspot.com/2013/02/more-dismal-california-economic-rankings.html>

Reply · 1 · Like · Follow Post · February 10 at 8:55pm



Larry Weisenthal · Top Commenter · Huntington Beach, California

Hi Chuck; just saw your characterization of my comments as "outrageous misstatements." Actually...no; it's you who is playing a selective statistics game, and you are making misleading conclusions in the process. I'm going to bed now, but I'll reply in detail tomorrow. Cheers! Larry Weisenthal/Huntington Beach CA

Reply · Like · Follow Post · February 10 at 1:17am



Chuck DeVore · Follow · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Here's the link to the American Lung Association compilation of U.S. EPA metro area air pollution as a helpful aid in refuting your statement "Texas is the most polluted state in the nation": <http://www.stateoftheair.org/2013/city-rankings/most-polluted-cities.html>.

Reply · 1 · Like · February 10 at 7:04am



Larry Weisenthal · Top Commenter · Huntington Beach, California

Hi Chuck,

I was responding to your thesis that Texas is the land of milk and honey, while California is going down the tubes, as a direct result of ostensibly misguided policies relating to taxation and regulation. My point was that Texas and California are two huge states with an enormous amount of both population and geographical diversities, and it is possible to make almost any point one wishes to make, concerning which of these states is currently doing the right versus wrong things in governance, based on selective citation of statistics, commonly known as cherry picking.

Your last two responses to me currently make my point. With regard to air pollution, specifically, the two factors which most influence air pollution are (1) the amount of pollutants released into the air and (2) the degree to which the air is trapped... [See More](#)

Reply · Like · February 10 at 3:44pm



Chuck DeVore · Follow · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Larry Weisenthal Mr. Romney has little to no regular income, you know that -- the wealthy can structure their income so as to avoid California's nation-high income tax. Ever hear of double tax free municipal bonds?

As for pollution, way to change the definition! You initially wrote that "Texas is the most polluted state in the nation" but the U.S. EPA and the American Lung Association disagree with you, so you shifted the semantics. I get it.

You wrote above that "Texas has very lax air quality regulations..." this is wholly untrue. In fact, Texas uses the Flexible Permitting System to provide more planning flexibility to emission sites, rather than limits on specific pieces of equipment, as is done in California. EPA sued Texas, then recently backed off in the face of evidence that Texas has been able to improve its air quality in the most efficient manner possible -- hence Texas metro areas being far cleaner than California metro areas, according to the objective data.

Reply · 1 · Like · Edited · February 10 at 5:34pm

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Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

Chuck DeVore, you're not being fair. You keep citing facts and objective sources. How on earth are the frothing Texas critics here supposed to respond to THAT??

Reply · 5 · Like · Follow Post · Edited · February 9 at 7:10pm



Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

For my readers -- both the article AND the comments are illuminating. The cabal of progressives denigrating Texas lack sources or reason -- and have no response to author Chuck DeVore's carefully researched facts with sources.

Reply · 2 · Like · February 9 at 7:14pm



Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

According to recent U.S. census figures, the 2009 median household income in California is significantly higher than Texas.

CA -- \$58,931
TX -- \$48,259 -- 18.1% less than CA

But, ADJUSTED FOR THE COST OF LIVING, the Texas median household income is significantly higher than California.

TX -- \$53,009
CA -- \$44,456 -- 16.1% less than TX
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household_income_in_the_United_States#Median_income

Reply · 2 · Like · February 9 at 7:14pm



Richard Rider · Top Commenter · Works at Chairman, San Diego Tax Fighters

FROM: *Jerry L. Dixon* -- Austin has been growing like crazy. I lived there in 1970 when it had only 250,000 people and now the metro is almost 2 million. And it's the 2nd safest major city in the US. says FBI report.

<http://www.kvue.com/news/local/Crime-stats-reveal-positive-and-negative-trends-226156811.html>

Reply · 2 · Like · February 9 at 7:22pm

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Tye Johnson · Top Commenter

A couple of things to note about the "Texas Public Policy Foundation": This is another one of Koch funded organization that push for billionaire Koch friendly stalking horses. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured people and children in the nation while at the same time having some of the most polluted cities in the world. That's what these sycophants are arguing for while

hiding the sources of their funding.

Reply · 1 · Like · Follow Post · February 9 at 11:28am



Chuck DeVore · Follow · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

Tye, how does your attack based on association change fact? As I wrote above regarding your specious claim of Texas cities being polluted, none other than the U.S. EPA disputes your assertion: of the 25 worst metro areas for ozone or particle pollution, California has 19, Texas only 3.

Reply · 3 · Like · February 9 at 12:44pm



Susan Gate · Top Commenter · Edison High School, Huntington Beach, California

California had the greatest number of uninsured residents of any state, seven million, and the seventh largest percentage of uninsured under 65 in the country. Many of the state's uninsured are employed, however the percentage of residents who receive coverage through their jobs has declined dramatically, dropping from 63% in 1988 to 54% in 2012. While public insurance has mostly offset this gap, one in five remains uninsured.

Read more: <http://www.chcf.org/publications/2013/12/californias-uninsured#ixzz2t5gp9hsg>

Reply · Like · February 12 at 1:31am



Steve Hart · Top Commenter · San Diego State University

While you are comparifyin' and prioritilating you might wanna take a look see if how Texas, short on cash, is turning paved roads back into gravel and dirt. Nothing says "we care" like seeing the main road to town and vital services turned back into dirt cow paths. Texas is a pure example of America under GOP rule--nightmarescape.

Reply · Like · Follow Post · February 9 at 11:06am



Chuck DeVore · Follow · Top Commenter · Vice President for Policy at Texas Public Policy Foundation · 438 subscribers

In some parts of Texas, the heavy use of rural county roads by oil field trucks has torn up the asphalt. Gravel withstands the pounding better. That said, Texas highways are far better rated than are California highways, which rank the 4th-worst in the nation. See: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/03/2013-highway-report_n_3542458.html

Reply · 1 · Like · February 9 at 1:30pm



Steve Hart · Top Commenter · San Diego State University

Sure Chucky, and up is down and the sky isn't and the GOP cares.

Reply · Like · February 9 at 2:42pm



Steve Hart · Top Commenter · San Diego State University

You work for the Kochs. Your posts are a joke.

Reply · Like · February 9 at 4:39pm

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