

Economics professor Peter Philips is a labor economist specializing in the construction labor market. He is the nation's recognized expert on the economics of prevailing wage laws that regulate the payment of wages on public construction and one of the foremost experts on the construction labor market.

Research

Regarding prevailing wage laws that regulate the payment of wages on public construction, in the last year, along with former students JaeWhan Kim and Kuo-Liang Chang, Philips published "The Effect of Prevailing Wage Regulations on Contractor Bid Participation and Behavior: A Comparison of Palo Alto, California with Four Nearby Prevailing Wage Municipalities," the first study to examine the effect of prevailing wage laws on contractor bidding behavior. With two other former students, Kevin Duncan and Mark Prus, Philips also published "Using Stochastic Frontier Regression to Estimate the Construction Cost Inefficiency of Prevailing Wage Laws," the first ever use of an advanced statistical technique to measure the efficiency effects of prevailing wage laws. This research informs a national and state level debate regarding the wisdom and usefulness of these long-standing regulations. Philips' work in this area also relates to aspects of the current immigration and guest worker proposals as he explained on NPR's Marketplace this April (find under Publications).

But Philips continues to research widely in the area of construction economics including publishing in 2012 with former student Sheng Li: Sheng Li and Peter Philips. (Find article under Publications) <http://www.springerlink.com/content/am7876807r119787/>

Philips' general study of the construction labor market relates to among other things, the paradox of construction labor shortages in the gradual upturn of the Great Recession while in the midst of the worst construction unemployment in 75 years. Philips is interviewed regularly regarding his views of the construction economy's problems and prospects (Find articles under Publications).

In the summers, Philips is a volunteer back country ranger in the Grand Tetons National Park and this love of the outdoors has led Philips to be an economic advisor to the Snowboard industry, annually giving talks to snowboard manufacturers and retailers. Philips' talk to this industry in Sun Valley this year focused on the dire prospects facing this industry (Find article under Publications).

Philip's love of the outdoors and expertise in construction also led him to publish on the web a policy paper on the California Environmental Quality Act that is the subject of considerable policy debate in California currently. Philips argues that this law has not hampered California economic growth since its enactment in 1970 while it has helped clean up California's environment. http://econ.utah.edu/publications/2013_01.pdf (Find article under Publications)

Publications

"Construction Procurement Auctions: Do Entrant Bidders Employ More Aggressive Strategies than Incumbent Bidders?," Review of Industrial Organization Volume 40, Number 3, 191-205. Published, 04/06/2012.

"Building trades here make \$37 million bet on a brighter future," David Nicklaus, Business Section, St. Louis Post Dispatch. 12/09/2012.

"Coalition forms to defend Calif. environmental law," Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 03/12/2013.

"Report: CEQA Helping, Not Hindering Renewable Development," KCET. 03/14/2013.

"Is Snowboarding a Dying Form of Fun?," Twin Falls Times-News. 03/21/2013.

"Construction Firms Say Labor is Harder to Come By," US News and World Report. 03/22/2013

"Screening for Safety: Assessing a Contractor's Safety Performance," Ashley Johnson, Associate Editor, Safety and Health, National Safety Council. 04/2013.

"Confused by immigration politics? Explaining the 'prevailing wage'," David Weinstein, Marketplace. 04/01/2013.