



The Daily Dish

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Education experts are [hesitant](#) to call liberal plans for free college a “silver bullet” for higher education. One problem is that it may not be tuition alone that acts as a cost barrier for students. For example, tuition at University of California- Berkeley is \$13,878, the costs of attending can be \$20,000 higher when one accounts for books, housing, and other needs. Also, according to one expert, “The paradox of free college is that the institutions may have to limit the number of spots or reduce quality.”

Lawmakers are [questioning](#) the EPA’s use of “secret science” to justify the high costs of regulations. The Secret Science Reform Act of 2015 will make public the raw data that the agency uses to draw conclusions on the impacts of regulations. The House has already passed a similar version and the Senate’s bill has made its way out of committee. Since 2009, the EPA has issued nearly [\\$300 billion in regulatory costs](#), with [no sign of slowing](#).

Eakinomics: The Economy and the Election

The New York Times has a [story](#) with a relatively rosy bottom line regarding the impact of the economy on the election. Recall that economic growth and unemployment are important for electoral outcomes, but in a very particular way. Specifically, what matters most are the economic conditions roughly 6 months prior to the election. And the economic conditions that are most important are changes in unemployment and incomes; that is growth is the electoral key.

On this front the recovery record is not particularly strong. The most recent year-over-year growth rate — from the first quarter of 2014 to the first quarter of 2015 — is 2.9 percent. For the economy to be accelerating going in to the 2016 cycle, growth will have to be higher. Over the entire period since 1950, 64 percent of the year-over-year observations during expansions exceeded 2.9 percent. In this recovery, only 10 percent — 2 quarters — have exceeded that pace. Not promising.

Moreover, there is always the potential for bad news. While many economists are [confident](#) the U.S. can survive global stresses, keeping growth going is very different from upshifting to a faster pace of growth. The global landscape is littered with weaknesses in China, Europe, Japan, Brazil, Russia, and elsewhere in the emerging world. And there is the potential for strong financial shocks emanating from China and Puerto Rico. More importantly, the genuine bad news comes from those events that cannot be anticipated at this time.

Economic conditions will matter in 2016. It is far from obvious, however, whether it will be a good news story or not. And it is even less obvious who a strong economy would favor.

From the Forum

[Week in Regulation](#) by Sam Batkins, AAF Director of Regulatory Policy

Fact of the Day

The U.S. maintains a comparatively uncompetitive tax code. Worse, recent policy proposals that ignore this reality will further harm U.S. competitiveness and could put 42,000 U.S. jobs at risk.