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Review of the Book *Unemployment Insurance: The Second Half-Century*

Abstract

[Excerpt] This extraordinary volume is one that all people interested in the unemployment insurance (UI) system will want to read. Although research on a wide variety of aspects of the UI system has been published in many articles and monographs in recent years, this volume represents an attempt to summarize what is known about many aspects of the subject in one place, to provide some new findings, and to speculate about future research and policy directions. The thirteen included papers, written by a mix of scholars and practitioners, are revisions of a set of papers that were originally presented at a 1986 conference.

Keywords

unemployment compensation, unemployment insurance, poverty, labor supply, financing, eligibility

Disciplines

Labor Economics | Labor Relations

Comments

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Economic and Social Security and Substandard Working Conditions

Unemployment Insurance: The Second Half-Century. Edited by W. Lee Hansen and James F. Byers. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. xvii, 485 pp. \$40.00 cloth, \$22.50 paper.

This extraordinary volume is one that all people interested in the unemployment insurance (UI) system will want to read. Although research on a wide variety of aspects of the UI system has been published in many articles and monographs in recent years, this volume represents an attempt to summarize what is known about many aspects of the subject in one place, to provide some new findings, and to speculate about future research and policy directions. The thirteen included papers, written by a mix of scholars and practitioners, are

revisions of a set of papers that were originally presented at a 1986 conference.

Eight papers in the volume discuss issues that have been of long-time concern to UI policymakers: the extent to which UI helps to stabilize income cyclically and reduce poverty (Wayne Vroman; Sheldon Danzinger and Peter Gottschalk), UI effects on labor supply (Gary Burtless), UI financing and layoffs (Robert Topel), incentives for noncompliance with eligibility criteria (Paul Burgess and Jerry Kingston), federal-state relations (Murray Rubin), administration simplifications of UI (Edwin Kehl), and lessons from European experiences (Beatrice Reubens). Three papers look at "new" directions for UI: its relationship with retraining programs (the editors), short-time compensation plans (Martin Morand), and the use of controlled experiments for policy purposes (Robert Spiegelman and Stephen Woodbury). Two papers on the history of the UI program in Wisconsin (Raymond Muntz and Clifford Miller) stress how the lessons of the past are relevant for contemporary policy debate. The book is "tied together" by a fine introduction by the editors that both summarizes all the other papers and presents an extensive research agenda for scholars and policymakers interested in UI.

This book is not only for specialists. The papers by scholars are written, for the most part, in a nontechnical fashion, and even those that report new econometric findings (such as Danzinger and Gottschalk's paper) are accessible to a wide range of readers.

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