

Volunteer Labor Supply and Liability of Volunteers

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(ABSTRACT)

This paper examines factors affecting volunteer labor supply with two specific goals: (1) a reassessment of the model and empirical process outlined by Paul Menchik and Burton Weisbrod using a larger data set from a more recent time period; and (2) an exploration of how volunteer labor supply is affected by liability exposure of volunteers, a factor which Menchik and Weisbrod did not address.

Data from a nationwide 1992 poll on volunteering conducted by the Gallup Organization and Independent Sector is applied to the quantitative approach which Menchik and Weisbrod used on data from 1977. Tobit regression analysis finds significance in some variables in the Menchik and Weisbrod model -- including variables relating to gender, offspring, education, religiosity, and parental attitudes to giving.

Volunteer liability exposure has been a subject of debate in the U.S. Congress and other public policy arenas, and the Volunteer Liability Protection Act became law in 1997. The volunteer liability factor is measured in two ways -- using the variability of certain legal protections for line volunteers among state laws and using per capita tort filings per state as a "litigiousness index." The "litigiousness index" variable demonstrated value in predicting volunteer labor supply, which suggests that potential volunteers respond to a more generalized rather than activity-specific threat of lawsuits. Individuals' information searches probably do not go as far as to examine legal provisions affecting their specific activities.

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