



Illegal Aliens: Economic Consequences

Maywood, California, a small city in Los Angeles County numbering about 45,000 residents, is broke. Such are the city's dire straits that in June it fired all of its employees and turned police and fire protection over to the county. Officials, naturally, pinned the blame for the situation on decreasing property tax revenues and the national recession, and indeed, they may well provide a small reason the city went under.



But the real reason is this: illegal aliens. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported in its article on the subject, half the city's population is illegal and has been for some time. Such is its population of illegals that Maywood proudly declared itself a "sanctuary" city a few years ago. Now, apparently, no one, least of all the city's Hispanic leaders and activists, got the connection between the city's worsening plight and the mushrooming number of illegals.

In Santa Ana, 27 miles down Interstate 5, the school district has decided that every one of its 55,000 students will receive free breakfast and lunch regardless of whether they qualify for the program. At \$2 per meal, that's \$39.6 million annually to feed the school system's mostly Hispanic children before officials buy their first pencil. One can well imagine without looking too deeply that many of these students also are either illegal aliens or the U.S.-born children of illegal aliens.

Extrapolating these two examples across the nation paints a frightening picture: Illegal aliens are not only weakening the country financially, but are also often enticed to come here because of governmental social-welfare programs that should not even exist much less be available to illegal residents. The cost to American taxpayers is billions of dollars. And the federal government, which has responsibility for the nation's borders, literally does nothing about it. Its official policy is to deport only "criminal" aliens, which means the rest will stay and continue consuming resources via our social-welfare programs. One example: In September, Republicans narrowly defeated an insane plan to permit illegal-alien minors to stay in the country indefinitely if they meet a complex and unenforceable set of criteria. It is called the DREAM Act.

The Latest Reports

Finding good figures on what illegal aliens cost is difficult because public officials typically do not include everything the immigrants consume. In June, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) published a report on the cost of illegal immigration that does include everything. It demonstrates the staggering result of the federal government's paralysis on the border issue. According



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on November 10, 2010

to FAIR, illegal aliens cost American taxpayers \$113 billion annually. Broken down, the direct cost to the federal government is about \$29 billion, while the states pick up the remaining share of about \$84 billion. Illegals cost each household in America, meaning the households of citizens who pay taxes, \$1,117. The largest expense for illegals is educating their American-born children, some \$52 billion. Not surprisingly, the states with the highest number of illegals also pay the most to feed, educate, house, doctor, and jail them.

California's price tag for its 2.55 million illegals, FAIR reports, is \$21.8 billion annually. As FAIR concludes, the cost of illegals accounts for all of the budget deficits California and New York now face in 2011: "With many state budgets in deficit, policymakers have an obligation to look for ways to reduce the fiscal burden of illegal migration. California, facing a budget deficit of \$14.4 billion in 2010-2011, is hit with an estimated \$21.8 billion in annual expenditures on illegal aliens. New York's \$6.8 billion deficit is smaller than its \$9.5 billion in yearly illegal alien costs." Conclusion for these two states? Get rid of the illegals, the deficits disappear.

Why did Arizonans pass their controversial law that permitted police to check the immigration status of those with whom they have a lawful contact? It wasn't just because illegals murder ranchers and are conducting what amounts to open warfare on these beleaguered Southwestern Americans. They are breaking the state financially. According to FAIR, illegals cost Arizonans \$2.57 billion annually.

To some, these estimates might seem high, but that is because FAIR calculates the cost by including every program for which illegals are eligible, and importantly, includes the cost of their U.S.-born children. Most calculations leave them out because those children are, they say, U.S. citizens. "We include these U.S. citizen children of illegal aliens because the fiscal outlays for them are a direct result of the illegal migration that led to their U.S. birth," FAIR reports. "We do so as well in the assumption that if the parents leave voluntarily or involuntarily they will take these children with them. The birth of these children and their subsequent medical care represent a large share of the estimated Medicaid and Child Health Insurance Program expenditures associated with illegal aliens."

As well, FAIR also includes, for instance, the cost that states create by giving aliens in-state college tuition or other forms of tuition assistance. About 60,000 illegals attend college in the 11 states that offer in-state tuition rates, at a cost of \$244 million annually.

California: A Case Study

With the most illegal aliens, California is an excellent example of the distorted picture created when legislators and the media misreport the truth. Last year, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that illegals cost the state about \$4 billion to \$6 billion annually in three major areas: education, healthcare, and crime.

According to the *Times*, illegals in the public school system cost just \$2.3 billion. But the paper likely didn't count the U.S.-born children of illegals, also known as anchor babies. The real cost of illegals in California's public school system, kindergarten through high school, FAIR reports, is \$11.1 billion annually.

The *Times* claimed that 19,000 illegals in the state's justice system cost taxpayers \$834 million. Not so, according to FAIR. The real figure is about \$3.2 billion.

The newspaper's estimate for healthcare was even further off: "The expected state tab for healthcare in fiscal 2009-10 is \$703 million for as many as 780,000 illegal immigrants." Possibly, the paper is claiming that only 780,000 of California's 2.55 million illegals partake of state healthcare programs and



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on November 10, 2010

use state healthcare facilities. Even then, the figure would be way off. According to FAIR, medical care for illegals costs Californians nearly \$3 billion annually.

Granted, the *Times* figures are older, but an article published this year would likely show the same major discrepancies.

Figures from L.A. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich sharpen FAIR's point. According to Antonovich, "In July 2010, \$52 million in welfare benefits (\$22 million CalWORKs + \$30 million in Food Stamps) were issued to parents who reside in the United States illegally and collect benefits for their native-born children in Los Angeles County — representing an increase of \$3.7 million from July 2009. This amounts to approximately 23 percent of all CalWORKs and Food Stamp issuances in the County. In 2009, CalWORKs and Food Stamp issuances to illegals totaled nearly \$570 million. Based on the monthly figures in 2010, the total cost for the year will exceed \$600 million."

According to Eric Ruark, the lead researcher on the FAIR study, the explanation for the discrepancy between what FAIR and the *Times* reported, and likely figures most other sources would report, is that public officials "don't want to count the real costs."?

The Myth of Their Contributions

The FAIR report is an extensive tour through the ledgers of federal and state governments. The states combined spend about \$50 billion annually educating illegal aliens or the children of illegals. The states spend \$8.7 billion policing and jailing them. The states pay \$1 billion annually for illegal-alien mothers to give birth. Those children are, of course, "citizens" who enter the public schools. Uncompensated emergency medical care the states provide to illegals costs the taxpayers \$7.5 billion.

Reports from local news media explain the problem. In 2009, readers of the *Miami Herald* learned this:

Last year, undocumented immigrants visited Jackson [Hospital] 77,415 times, costing the system \$38 million in unpaid care. So far this year, 54,858 visits have cost \$33 million. That is less than 10 percent of the \$500 million the system spends on charity care each year, but more than half of the \$56 million that Jackson expects to lose this fiscal year.... To get some of that money, Jackson submitted 2,908 claims in 2008 for \$23.4 million. It was reimbursed \$543,621.31. [That is a 2.3 percent rate of reimbursement.]

In 2010, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* disclosed a classic case of "patient dumping," FAIR reports:

Mrs. Kim is 4-foot-8, speaks no English, and has been in America, illegally, for a decade. She has arthritic knees and can no longer stand. She needs a nursing home. But none will take her. Because of her illegal status, she is ineligible for Medicaid, which pays the bill for two out of every three nursing-home residents.

Without Medicaid, and with no means of her own, she became Abington's [hospital] problem.... On March 12, after 80 days, the charges — the sticker price that few pay — were \$444,208.63. The true cost of her care, said Louis Incognito, Abington's reimbursement director, was \$1,200 a day — \$96,000, and rising.

And in January, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* divulged the cost of providing kidney care to just a handful of illegal aliens:

Six months after the *Review-Journal* revealed that 80 illegal immigrants with failing kidneys were running up about \$2 million a month in bills for dialysis and other medical treatment at the only publicly supported hospital in Las Vegas, the situation for both patients and taxpayers only



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on November 10, 2010

continues to worsen.... With four new illegal immigrants now having their dialysis done at UMC's emergency room — and monthly visits jumping from 216 in August to 243 currently — the billed charges for the 84 illegal immigrants are now at about \$2.4 million a month — or \$28 million a year.

Medicaid for the U.S.-born children of illegals costs \$1.8 billion. The total the states pay to provide medical care for illegal aliens? \$10.8 billion.

Illegals contribute virtually nothing to offset this astronomical expense. Their \$9.5 billion contribution in federal taxes brings the federal bill for illegals down to about \$20 billion, and their paltry \$4 billion to state coffers lowers that bill to \$80 billion. In short, even counting tax revenues federal and state treasuries receive from illegals, the cost remains at least \$100 billion annually. And this cost does not count the added expense of American workers thrown onto unemployment and welfare rolls because illegal aliens take their jobs by working for lower wages. Nor does it account for the diminution of wages among American workers because illegal aliens compete for jobs and, again, are paid less (see sidebar, page 20).

As Maywood Goes, ?So Goes the Country

Maywood, California, then, with an estimated illegal population of 22,500, about half the city's population, is a microcosm of what happens when illegals become dominant in a city. This dominance did not occur through military conquest; in fact, illegal aliens were actually invited to come (Maywood, recall, is a "sanctuary" city) and then given access to public schools and other social-welfare programs. The illegals' dominance in Maywood increased too as a result of the flight of many American citizens.

That, of course, has meant more than financial costs to the city. Because of the staggering number of illegals, police caught a disproportionate share of them in parking violations and police roadblocks. So the city, the Los Angeles Times reported in 2006, simply stopped certain police procedures:

First, the city eliminated the Police Department's traffic division after complaints that officers unfairly targeted illegal immigrants. Then it made it much more difficult for police to tow cars whose owners didn't have driver's licenses, a practice that affected mostly undocumented people who could not obtain licenses.

In January, the City Council passed a resolution opposing a proposed federal law that would criminalize illegal immigration and make local police departments enforce [federal] immigration law. Now, some in the community are pushing to rename one of the city's elementary schools after former Mexican President Benito Juarez and debating measures to improve the lives of illegal immigrants.

Oddly, "Latino" activists complained that police were profiling Hispanics, according to La Prensa of San Diego.

"We are outraged and demand an immediate investigation into growing reports that local law enforcement in Maywood, California appear to be preying on Latino drivers," said Hector Flores, LULAC National President. "These motorists are being regularly stopped at checkpoints under the guise of traffic safety and losing their vehicles through tactics that smack of nothing less than shameless profiteering at the expense of the poor."

As VDare.com observed, one wonders how much profiling the police could have done, inasmuch as nearly 44,000 of the city's 45,000 residents are Hispanic.

No wonder the city is broke. Given California's Grecian fiscal condition, the state is headed in the same



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on November 10, 2010

direction, as are others groaning under the weight of illegal aliens who force the states to cough up \$80 billion a year to care for them.

R. Cort Kirkwood is a longtime contributor to The New American. He has been writing about American politics and culture for more than 25 years and has won numerous awards for his writing, design, and artwork.

— Photo: AP Images

Related article:

[Lower Wages and Unemployed Americans](#)



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.