



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on September 5, 2011

Rick Perry Proposed Bi-National Health Insurance with Mexico

As media attention intensifies about Texas Governor Rick Perry's run for the presidential nomination, an activist in Tyler, Texas, was prompted to say "More checking under the hood needed before we buy the car," according to the Dallas Morning News (DMN).



The article focused on Perry's comments at a Border Summit speech in south Texas (8-22-01), days before the 9-11 attacks, about bi-national health insurance Texas-funded coverage for both U.S. and Mexican border residents. The governor's statement favored a study, required by the Legislature, about "the feasibility of bi-national health insurance.

The *DMN* continued, "Katherine Cesinger, spokeswoman for Perry's campaign, downplayed the topic of bi-national health insurance. 'A bill was passed by the Legislature that authorized a study to look into this issue, which ultimately concluded there were numerous barriers to accomplishing that idea, and the Legislature took no further action on this concept,' she said." However, in spite of the Legislature's failure to act, Perry made clear his willingness to funnel Texas assets to Mexico. He stated in his [Summit speech](#),

There are other challenges that require a unified approach, especially in the area of health care. A lack of preventative medicine means conditions that could have been eliminated through childhood immunizations show up in disturbing numbers later in life. Limited availability of medical specialists means conditions like heart disease and diabetes go untreated at alarming rates. In Texas, we recently placed a strong emphasis on preventative care when we expanded access to Medicaid for more low-income children by making the Medicaid enrollment process simpler. We allocated an additional \$4 billion to the Medicaid program, and more than \$900 million to the Children's Health Insurance Program. I urged legislators to pass a telemedicine pilot program that will enable, through technology, a sick border resident of limited financial means to receive care from a specialist hundreds of miles away. But the effort to combat disease and illness requires greater cooperative efforts between our two nations. It is a simple truth that disease knows no boundaries. An outbreak of drug-resistant tuberculosis, for example, endangers citizens of both our nations. We have much to gain if we work together to expand preventative care, and treat maladies unique to this region.

Legislation authored by border legislators Pat Haggerty and Eddie Lucio establishes an important study that will look at the feasibility of bi-national health insurance. This study recognizes that the Mexican and U.S. sides of the border compose one region, and we must address health care problems throughout that region. That's why I am also excited that Texas Secretary of State Henry



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Cuellar is working on an initiative that could extend the benefits of telemedicine to individuals living on the Mexican side of the border.

Perry has consistently positioned himself as a social and fiscal conservative, but the above comments reveal a different record. Indeed, four years later, Perry noted his approval of a bigger example of socialized medicine when he [embraced Hillary Clintons national health care](#) plan.

And Perrys comments at the Border Summit included more than the sharing of Texas resources for health care. He used the opportunity to continue promoting his signature transportation project, the Trans Texas Corridor (TTC) stating,

Critical to our future is meeting our border infrastructure needs. We must get traffic moving along the border so that businesses along the border and thousands of miles away can deliver products on time, and continue to grow. Companies from Spokane, Washington to Concord, New Hampshire depend on Texas highways and Texas bridges to move their products south. Seventy percent of all U.S.-Mexico truck traffic goes to, or through, the Lone Star state [sic]. Fifteen of our twenty-seven border crossings with Mexico are located in Texas. Fifty-four percent of all U.S.-Mexico trade crosses just between Brownsville and Laredo. This year the Texas legislature appropriated approximately \$1 billion more in transportation funding. But more can be done.

Texans dont want more. Perrys promotion of said infrastructure, the TTC, is still a very sore subject among Texans. Although statewide protests eventually forced him to take a lower profile on the corridor project, he demonstrated his continued disregard for Texans in a 2009 statement, "The fact of the matter is that [we don't really care](#) what name they attach to building infrastructure in the state of Texas. The key is that we have to go forward and build the infrastructure."

Repeating the NAFTA mantra of moving people and goods that characterized his speeches for much of the last decade regarding the TTC, Perry added

The fruits of NAFTA have just begun to ripen. At the same time, we must not allow the roots of the tree to become poisoned. The NAFTA agreement not only signaled a new era of economic possibility, but a new era of bi-national cooperation. That is why it is wrong, and inherently detrimental to our relationship with Mexico for the U.S. Congress to pursue a protectionist policy that forbids Mexican trucks from U.S. roadways. It is bad public policy, and it violates the terms of the NAFTA agreement we agreed to. Mexican trucks that meet our safety standards should be given the same access to U.S. roads as our Canadian neighbors to the north.

President Foxs vision for an open border is a vision I embrace, as long as we demonstrate the will to address the obstacles to it. An open border means poverty has given way to opportunity, and Mexicos citizens do not feel compelled to cross the border to find that opportunity.

Perry has never rescinded his commitment to NAFTA, nor to the transfer of Texas resources to Mexico. Responsible voters would do well to engage in some serious tire-kicking when it comes to Rick Perry.

Photo: Texas Gov. Rick Perry prepares to deliver remarks as he announces details of a state transportation plan on Jan. 28, 2002, in Austin, Texas.: AP Images



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