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Breaking the Piggy Bank: How Illegal Immigration is Sending Schools Into the Red



BREAKING THE PIGGY BANK

*How Illegal Immigration is Sending Schools **Into the Red***

With states straining under gaping budget shortfalls, public schools throughout the country are facing some of the most significant decreases in state education funding in decades. In some states, drastic cuts mean lay-offs for teachers, larger class sizes, fewer textbooks, and eliminating sports, language programs, and after-school activities. Nearly two-thirds of the states have cut back or proposed reductions in support for child care and early childhood programs. Some are even shortening the school week from five days to four.

While these massive budget deficits cannot be attributed to any single source, the enormous impact of large-scale illegal immigration cannot be ignored. The total K-12 school expenditure for illegal immigrants costs the states \$7.4 billion annually¹—enough to buy a computer for every junior high student nationwide.

With state budgets in crisis and children taking the hit, communities' limited tax dollars are being diverted to accommodate mass illegal immigration. In some states, the amount of money spent to educate illegal alien children accounts for a substantial portion of the state budget shortfall; in New Jersey, for instance, it accounts for 28 percent of the total state budget deficit.

The data presented here provide yet one more illustration of the costs of turning a blind eye to illegal immigration and should provide further impetus for states to demand that the federal government finally take effective and decisive action to restore integrity to our nation's immigration laws.²

Providing K-12 Education to Illegal Immigrants: Costs to States

ESTIMATED COSTS TO EDUCATE ILLEGAL ALIENS

Alabama	\$21,263,314
Alaska	\$6,010,000

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Alaska	\$6,919,000
Arizona	\$186,962,600
Arkansas	\$22,389,557
California	\$2,191,769,800
Colorado	\$140,636,571
Connecticut	\$59,771,957
Delaware	\$13,058,571
DC	\$11,117,700
Florida	\$308,793,100
Georgia	\$230,628,514
Hawaii	\$2,052,286
Idaho	\$15,869,071
Illinois	\$484,228,800
Indiana	\$50,857,714
Iowa	\$24,755,657
Kansas	\$46,485,686
Kentucky	\$13,956,643
Louisiana	\$4,560,286
Maryland	\$68,032,800
Massachusetts	\$119,775,386
Michigan	\$89,210,000
Minnesota	\$67,791,429
Mississippi	\$6,303,314
Missouri	\$21,389,343
Nebraska	\$25,204,457
Nevada	\$91,419,429
New Jersey	\$358,989,243
New Mexico	\$35,698,929
New York	\$756,594,771
North Carolina	\$195,685,286
Ohio	\$44,408,571
Oklahoma	\$38,998,143
Oregon	\$101,107,286
Pennsylvania	\$59,844,400
Rhode Island	\$22,387,200
South Carolina	\$34,678,286
Tennessee	\$38,911,400
Texas	\$1,028,626,971
Utah	\$44,710,143

Texas	\$1,028,626,971
Utah	\$44,718,143
Virginia	\$110,726,471
Washington	\$136,264,229
Wisconsin	\$50,292,943
Other States ⁸	\$7,568,000

Total \$7,390,703,257

The 1.1 million school-aged illegal immigrants residing in the United States³ can be divided among the states using government estimates of the illegal alien population.⁴ Using each state's per-pupil expenditure reported by the U.S. Department of Education,⁵ cost estimates for educating illegal immigrants in each state follow.

(Note that these costs are based only on average per-pupil costs and do not account for the substantial additional costs of providing English as a second language/bilingual education/Limited English Proficient programs.)

It is reasonable to ask whether the costs of educating illegal alien students is offset by the taxes paid by their parents, but study after study shows that immigrants cost taxpayers more in public services use than they pay in to the system via taxes.⁶ This is particularly true of illegal immigrants, who are disproportionately low-skilled and thus low-earning.

A look at the top ten highest state expenditures provides an alarming illustration of the trade-offs for accommodating large-scale illegal immigration:⁷

In California, the \$2.2 billion spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Pay the salaries of 41,764 teachers, or 14 percent of California's teachers. As many as 3,000 teachers across California have received layoff notices from school districts coping with tight budgets this year, and schools are threatened with a \$1.5 billion cut for next year.
- Pay for California's class sizes to remain capped at 20 students for a year, with \$300 million to spare. The state's class-size reduction initiative—credited with improving reading scores—may be forced to be modified as part of a larger budget-cutting measure.
- Buy books, computers, and other instructional equipment for 346,689 classrooms, 79 percent of all the classrooms in California.
- Fully fund the state's free lunch program for poor students for almost two years.

In Texas, the \$1 billion spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Provide a full-time pre-kindergarten teacher for every elementary class in Texas for seven years. To save costs, some districts are providing only one teacher for every two pre-kindergarten classes and adding teacher aides instead.
- Provide health insurance to every child in Texas for three and a half years. State budget cuts are expected to trim tens of thousands from the Children's Health Insurance Program, and already, 22 percent of Texas's children lack health insurance, the highest percentage in the nation.

In New York, the \$756 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

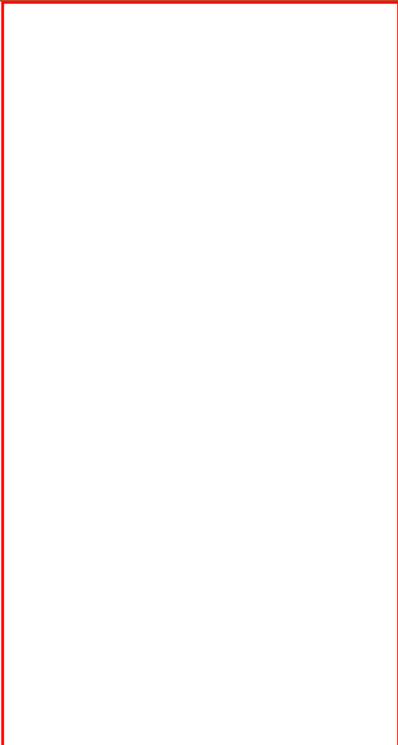
- Eliminate the need to slash \$6 million from a state children's health program, with \$750 million to spare.
- Put a computer on the desk of every high school student in the state.

In Illinois, the \$484 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Eliminate the need for plans to deny financial aid to 34,000 college students, and grant aid to an additional 399,120 students.
- Provide health care benefits to every person below the poverty line in Illinois, for two years.

In New Jersey, the \$359 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Pay the salaries of 6,910 teachers, or seven percent of New Jersey's teachers.
- Expand pre-schools to increase enrollment by 23,652 children, which would allow the state to achieve its court-mandated preschool enrollment in poor school districts.



In Florida, the \$309 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Eliminate the need to cut \$120 million from K-12 schools, with \$190 million to spare.
- Fund the state summer school program for underachieving and gifted students for six years. The program is currently facing cuts due to state budget shortfalls.

In Georgia, the \$231 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Eliminate the need to cut \$14 million from the state school budget and \$35 million from the state university system, with \$181 million to spare.
- Pay the salaries of 5,473 teachers or six percent of all Georgia teachers. About 1,600 teachers and 250 administrators have been cut this year.
- Fund foreign language instruction in 2,830 elementary schools, through a pilot program targeted for elimination in state budget cuts.

In North Carolina, the \$196 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Cover the cost of textbooks for all schools in the state for two years.
- Fund "School Technology," a program to provide a technology facilitator for all eighth graders, for almost seven years.

In Arizona, the \$187 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Eliminate the need to reduce school spending by \$100 million and the need to cut \$37 million from funding to universities, as well as replace a \$42 million cut made earlier.
- Eliminate the need to raise in-state tuition by \$1,000 a year in the state university system, with \$150 million to spare.

In Colorado, the \$141 million spent educating illegal immigrants for one year could:

- Buy books, computers, and other instructional materials for every K-12 student in Colorado.
- Eliminate the need for Denver's school districts to cut \$70 million from their budgets—and give them an extra \$70 million. Denver districts are closing schools, eliminating jobs, increasing class size, and reducing summer school and after-school programs to make up for cash shortfalls.

Implications for the Move to Give In-State Tuition Rates to Illegal Aliens

POTENTIAL COSTS OF PROVIDING IN-STATE TUITION TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (TOP TEN STATES)

California	\$133,486,714	—	\$173,532,729
Texas	\$48,146,250	—	\$62,590,125
Florida	\$22,480,307	—	\$29,224,399
New York	\$17,331,557	—	\$22,531,024
Arizona	\$14,484,000	—	\$18,829,200
Illinois	\$14,046,171	—	\$18,260,023
North Carolina	\$13,032,443	—	\$16,942,176
Georgia	\$10,186,714	—	\$13,242,729
Washington	\$7,922,000	—	\$10,298,600
Colorado	\$6,991,200	—	\$9,088,560
New Jersey	\$6,178,529	—	\$8,032,087
Nevada	\$5,616,321	—	\$7,301,218
Virginia	\$5,574,507	—	\$7,246,859
Massachusetts	\$4,601,679	—	\$5,982,182
Oregon	\$4,250,571	—	\$5,525,743

Efforts are underway in several states and in Congress to allow illegal aliens to pay steeply discounted in-state tuition at public colleges and universities—rates not available to American citizens from other states. As state universities across the country increasingly limit enrollment, increasing the intake of illegal aliens into these schools will mean fewer opportunities and less aid for U.S. citizens and legal immigrants. It will also mean a higher cost to the state taxpayers; out-of-state tuition is typically two to 3.5 times higher than in-state tuition.⁹

In 2000, about 126,000 illegal immigrants under 21 were enrolled in college, according to research from the Congressional Research Service.¹⁰ At non-resident tuition rates, they would be paying between \$503 million and \$655 million annually. If they were made eligible for in-state tuition discounts, they would be paying only \$155 million to \$201 million—leaving taxpayers to make up the difference of \$349 million to \$454 million.¹¹

These costs, distributed to each state according to their proportion of the illegal immigrant population,¹² follow for the 15 states with the highest potential expenditures:¹³

It should be noted that three bills to give illegal aliens in-state tuition rates currently in Congress—the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act, S. 1291) and the Educational Excellence for All Learners Act (S.8) in the Senate and the Student Adjustment Act (H.R. 1684) in the House—could carry additional substantial costs as well. According to the Congressional Budget Office, making illegal alien students eligible for federal Pell grants, as proposed in the DREAM Act, would cost \$195 million in 2003 and \$362 million over the 2003-2006 period.¹⁴

Conclusion

As states cut school funding left and right, all of our children—native-born and immigrants alike—are receiving a poorer education as a result of the federal government passing its immigration law enforcement failures on to the states. The implications for the coming generations of workers, our future economy, and our long-term competitiveness in the world cannot be ignored.

If the federal government remains unwilling to undertake serious enforcement of the United States' immigration laws, it will eventually be forced to provide massive federal education funds to the states. A far more logical and cost-effective alternative—and one with considerable pay-offs in other areas as well—would be to substantially reduce illegal immigration.

Without a serious commitment to do just that, the open borders and lax enforcement that allow millions of illegal aliens to enter the U.S. each year—and to obtain driver's licenses and other official identification documents with

virtually no fear of the law—will continue to undermine the will of the American people, suck dry our communities financial resources, and imperil our children's future.

Notes

1. The population estimate is for children enrolled in grades K-12. However the per student expenditures used to calculate the total costs were for primary and secondary schools (grades 1-12).
2. Education is only one of the significant costs to states resulting from mass illegal immigration. There are countless others—health care, housing assistance, nutrition programs, incarceration of criminal aliens, to name just a few.
3. Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel, "U.S. Immigration—Trends and Implications for Schools," Immigration Studies Program, The Urban Institute, 2003.
4. "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990-2000," Office of Policy Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, January 2003.
5. "Table 169, Current Expenditure Per Pupil in Fall Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by State: 1969-70 to 1999-00," *Digest of Education Statistics 2002*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.
6. See, for example, *The Net National Costs of Immigration*, Donald Huddle, Rice University, 1997.
7. These calculations are based on cost reports from news accounts and state departments of education. Full documentation is available from FAIR.
8. Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming were calculated together, because the INS estimates their data as a group. In order to estimate their cost, the average expenditure per student was calculated.
9. Andorra Bruno and Jeffrey J. Kuenzi, "Unauthorized Alien Students: Issues and Legislation," Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, May 16, 2003.
10. Ibid.
11. To estimate the resident versus non-resident tuition costs, the 2002-2003 tuition for each state (except for Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, and Wyoming, for which national averages were used) was multiplied by the range of 50,000-65,000 illegal immigrants who would qualify for in-state tuition, as estimated by the Urban Institute. Sources: "National Comparison of Tuition and Required Fees 1998-99 through 2002-03," Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, December 2002; "Student Charges and Financial Aid 2002-2003," American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, February 2003; Andorra Bruno and Jeffrey J. Kuenzi, "Unauthorized Alien Students: Issues and Legislation," Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, May 16, 2003.
12. The number of illegal immigrant students was distributed to each state based on the INS estimate of illegal immigrants per state: "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990-2000," Office of Policy Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, January 2003.
13. Because the cost difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition varies by state, the states with the top cost burdens here vary somewhat from the top most burdened states for K-12 education.
14. "Cost Estimate for S.1291 Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act," Congressional Budget Office, July 26, 2002.

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