



Trump cites 'ridiculous' costs of illegal immigration amid wall push

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President Trump on Sunday asserted that the U.S. has already incurred nearly \$19 billion in costs related to illegal immigration in 2019, and called it "ridiculous" that millions of immigrants are living in the U.S. illegally.

Trump claimed in a tweet that there are close to 26 million immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, casting doubt on the more commonly cited figure of 11 million.

The president typed "DHS" in his tweet, but did not provide a source for the figures he shared.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Asked about the tweet on CBS's "Face the Nation," acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney defended the president's broader point about the need for increased border security.

"I'm not exactly sure where the president got that number this morning, but I think what you see him trying to do is point out how silly this debate is," Mulvaney said. "This is not that much money in the greater scheme of things.

"I think he was trying to draw attention to the fact that while the Democrats are sitting here dug in ... that we're spending so much money on other things," he added. "It's really quite absurd."

Multiple news organizations have in recent months disputed Trump's claims about the costs associated with illegal immigration.

The Washington Post noted that the president has steadily increased the purported annual cost, stating on the campaign trail in 2015 that it was \$130 billion, tweeting in December 2018 that it was more than \$200 billion, and remarking at a White House event last month that the total was \$275 billion per year.

NBC News reported that a number of groups have cast doubt on Trump's figures.

The conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation estimated in 2013 the cost was roughly \$54 billion per year, while the nonpartisan Cato Institute approximated in 2017 that the cost was as much as \$15.6 billion annually.

News organizations have similarly pushed back on the president's assertions about the number of people living in the U.S. illegally.

The Associated Press reported last month that while Trump claimed there were as many as 30 million in the country illegally, the most recent data available from the nonpartisan Pew Research Center put the figure at 11.3 million as of 2016.

Mulvaney argued on "Face the Nation" that the 11 million figure was accurate "a couple years ago," but that the number of people coming across the border on a monthly basis means the figure could be as high as "30 or 40 million."

Trump's Sunday morning tweet was one of several he has shared in recent days expressing alarm about illegal immigration as he continues to push for funding for a wall along the southern border. The president on Friday signed legislation to temporarily reopen the government after he triggered a 35-day standoff over a demand for \$5.7 billion in funding for the wall.