

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Trump's border wall could pay for itself. Here's how

Steven Camarota

March 26, 2018

I am the author of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) report cited by the president showing that a border wall could pay for itself.

The Arizona Republic, which itself has published articles about my research in the past, did not contact me for comment. Instead, they wrote a story quoting several critics of my report, even publishing a ridiculous smear of my organization.

How we calculated our costs

I certainly continue to stand by the report. The analysis simply takes the likely educational attainment of the average illegal border crosser, based on Census Bureau data, and combines it with fiscal estimates from the National Academies of Sciences for immigrants by education level at arrival.

More than half of illegal border crossers have not even graduated high school. Persons with lower levels of education generally earn modest wages, make modest tax contributions, and create significant fiscal costs.

Based on their education, the average net fiscal drain (taxes paid minus services used) of illegal crossers is about \$75,000 during their lifetimes, excluding costs for their children. Each 100,000 illegal immigrants stopped at the border saves taxpayers \$7.5 billion at all levels of government. The cost includes things like non-cash welfare, emergency medical care, policing and infrastructure maintenance.

The cost of illegal crosses is huge

Randy Capps' quotation in *The Republic* article that many illegal immigrants overstay temporary visas does not change the fact that in 2017, more than 300,000 people were apprehended at the southern border. The Institute for Defense Analyses has estimated 170,000 illegal immigrants successfully cross the border annually. Stopping even a modest share over the next decade could offset the costs of a wall.

Capps concedes that if illegals were not here, we would not spend money on them. But then he argues we would just spend the money anyway. Maybe. But there is a world of difference in the minds of most Americans between spending on legal residents versus illegal immigrants.

As for the criticisms from the CATO institute, I wrote a long response when it first came out. As I wrote back then, CATO does not explain their analysis and they exclude state and local costs. Even so, their analysis stills shows that the cost of illegal crossers are enormous.

Our research is not based on hate

The Republic also quotes the controversial Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) that blacklists CIS as a “hate group.” Even a quick review of CIS's work shows how crazy this smear is. CIS has testified before Congress more than 100 times in the last 20 years.

Our research has been cited by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Supreme Court, the National Academies of Sciences and the Justice Department. We’ve done extensive contract work for both the Census Bureau and the Justice Department.

CIS’s chairman is Peter Nunez, the first Hispanic American U.S. Attorney in San Diego. Our board also includes T. Willard Fair, president of the Miami Urban League; and Jan Ting, the first Asian American to run for the U.S. Senate in Delaware. That *The Republic* would repeat the SPLC’s smear is irresponsible.

There is no question that an enormous number of people continue to cross the border illegally; and reducing this number would save taxpayers a lot of money.