



## HOUSTON CHRONICLE

# Perry is right about educating illegal immigrants

By RONALD L. TROWBRIDGE

Updated 08:32 p.m., Thursday, October 13, 2011

## Opinion

Ronald Reagan once said, "Don't be afraid to see what you see." On the matter of in-state tuition to illegal immigrants, Gov. [Rick Perry](#) is not afraid to see what is.

And what Perry sees is that it is to our state's economic advantage to educate illegal immigrants.

Daniel Griswold, an immigration expert at [Cato Institute](#), writes, "In 1997, the [National Research Council](#) published a major study on immigration. It found that an immigrant with a college education is a huge net plus for the United States."

Griswold continues, "Titled 'The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration,' the NRC study was originally requested by the [Commission on Immigration Reform](#). A distinguished team of economists examined all major facets of immigration, including its annual and future fiscal impact."

This powerful finding resulted: "Immigrants and their descendants represent a net fiscal gain for the United States. The typical immigrant and all of his or

her descendants represent a positive \$80,000 fiscal gain to the government. An immigrant with more than a high school education (plus descendants) represents a \$198,000 fiscal gain, one with a high school diploma a \$51,000 gain, and one with less than a high school education a \$13,000 loss."

Let us look at costs, using Texas A&M University as a representative example. In-state tuition there is \$8,418, out-of-state tuition \$23,808 - a yearly subsidy to illegal immigrants of \$15,390. The total for four years is \$61,560, plus a 5 percent annual increase in tuition - for a grand total subsidy of \$66,951.

Subtracting \$66,951 from the \$198,000 fiscal gain that the NRC study documented leaves a net gain of \$131,049.

Elsewhere, Perry has said that a suggested construction of a border fence is "a cop-out"; it would be like constructing a wall from "Bangor, Maine, to Miami Beach, Florida."

The GAO has reported that building a border fence would cost \$30 billion and take 10 to 15 years to complete. The Bush administration estimated that it would cost a few hundred billion dollars to secure tightly the 2,000-mile southern border.

Another often heard suggestion is to have Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) find and deport all illegal immigrants.

But that's not even close to possible. There are 12 million such immigrants in the U.S. Last year, ICE deported a record-high 393,289. To find and deport 12 million would require that the ICE staff be increased by 31 times.

E-Verification has been suggested. But E-Verify lists are fraught with inaccuracies and incomplete data. The Wall Street Journal reports that "with all the inaccuracies in the database, up to 1.3 million U.S. citizens and legal workers will be mistakenly flagged for problems if E-Verify passes."

And the Journal adds, "A 2009 report for the Department of Homeland Security found that 54 percent of undocumented workers would slip through the E-Verify net, partly because illegal (immigrants) use stolen documents."

With all of the above solutions staggeringly expensive, what's left to approach 12 million illegal immigrants?

A partial solution would be granting pathways to citizenship for screened applicants. Doing little or nothing to 12 million illegal immigrants means that most will remain in the shadows - which amounts to amnesty by default.

Wouldn't it be better to grant pathways for selected individuals, requiring them to pay fines and to be put on tax rolls?

Perry has been courageous and honest on immigration.

"Courage," said C. S. Lewis, "is the most difficult virtue because it is all virtues at the testing point."

*Trowbridge worked for President Reagan, then later became chief of staff to Chief Justice Warren Burger. He lives in Conroe.*