



Heritage Scholar Challenges Critics on Immigration Costs

By: David Yonkman – May 6, 2013

The chief architect of a new Heritage Foundation study on the cost of an immigration bill currently in the Senate challenged critics who question how he arrived at his conclusions.

"I would stake my entire career on those numbers," Robert Rector, the conservative think tank's senior research fellow in domestic policy studies, told Newsmax. "If it's false, then I do not know what I'm doing."

Rector's figures, which claim that the true cost of the so-called Gang of Eight's immigration reforms will come to \$6.3 trillion over the next 50 years, have come under fire from groups including both the libertarian Cato Institute and Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform.

Rector found that the typical unlawful immigrant is 34 years old and has a 10th-grade education. His family already receives \$14,287 in government benefits over the amount of taxes he pays.

He said that "fiscal deficit" would jump to an estimated \$30,000 per household once they become eligible for programs such as welfare and Obamacare after 10 years under the Senate bill.

"At that point, the costs simply explode," Rector said, adding that he believes \$6.3 trillion is a low estimate. "This is what the typical immigrant household would look like if they were granted amnesty."

But others say his methodology is flawed because it inflates the costs of government benefits against economic growth and tax revenue after those 10 years.

"Immigration is one of those things where you're literally adding factors of production — laborers — to the economy," Alex Nowrasteh, immigration policy analyst with the Cato Institute, told Newsmax. "They didn't assume the [Gross Domestic Product] would continue to grow as the result of immigration."

And Josh Culling of Americans for Tax Reform said in a statement, "This static analysis takes into account none of the universally accepted economic benefits of immigration, choosing only to focus on costs.

"But the cost estimates are unfairly inflated," Culling said. "The authors count overall household costs, which often includes benefits paid to native-born, low-income American spouses and children of immigrants. Those costs would exist regardless of the

immigration status of one's partner; this is an indictment of our current welfare state, not proposed immigration reforms."

Rector told Newsmax after the press conference that he stands by his methodology, which he drew from the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Academy of Sciences.

The study could have a significant impact this week as the Senate Judiciary Committee is set to mark up the 844-page immigration reform bill written by a bipartisan group of eight senators.

During Congress' last immigration debate, in 2007, a Heritage report said the bill under consideration at the time would cost \$2.6 trillion. The conclusion was criticized, but carried weight with Republicans and the bill was defeated.

As currently written, millions of illegal immigrants would receive provisional legal status almost immediately under the bill. They then would receive permanent legal status after a period of 10 years. They would be eligible for citizenship after an estimated wait of 13-and-a-half years.

"After amnesty, the typical unlawful immigrant will receive government benefits for 50 years, meaning his household would receive \$592,000 more in government benefits during his lifetime than he would pay in taxes," Heritage concludes.

"We shouldn't repeat past mistakes with a bill that promises amnesty with no real solutions," Heritage Foundation President Jim DeMint said.

The average illegal immigrant would draw more than \$3 in Social Security and Medicare for every dollar paid into Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes, the study said.