



Illegal Immigration Tax Burdens Would Cover Border Wall Costs, Expert Says

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Immigration experts and those on the left and the right agree that illegal aliens cost U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars. One expert reports that if border walls stopped a small fraction of those expected to illegally cross in the next 10 years, the savings would cover the price of construction.

The director of research at the Center of Immigration Studies ([CIS](#)), Steven A. Camarota, [found](#) that illegal aliens on an average cost U.S. taxpayers approximately \$74,722 during their lifetime. This calculation does not include the costs of any of their children born in the U.S.

The expert asserts, “If a border wall stopped between 160,000 and 200,000 illegal crossers – 9 to 12 percent of those expected to successfully cross in the next decade – the fiscal savings would equal the \$12 to \$15 billion cost of the wall.” The average fiscal drain of a legal or illegal immigrant who did not graduate high school is \$173,375 during their lifetime, according to the report.

The cost, if you include the U.S.-born descendants of illegal immigrants, swells to \$94,391 for each person who crossed the border illegally. Camarota reports that looking at 2015 figures that reveal 170,000 illegal aliens crossed the border without going through a port of entry when multiplied over a decade, would equal 1.7 million new illegal crossings. The CIS research director says that if border walls stopped 9 to 12 percent of these illegal border crossers, the border wall barricades would pay for themselves. If border barriers stopped half of these individuals, it would save U.S. citizens \$64 billion.

The financial analysis was done by taking the likely education level of the illegal immigrants and the economic estimates by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

(NAS) for those individuals, and the taxes these illegal immigrants pay versus what they cost taxpayers.

Camarota says experts agree that most illegal aliens have not completed high school or only have a high school education.

It is important to note that “aliens join the illegal population primarily by overstaying a temporary visa,” he says. “A southern border wall would not address this part of the illegal flow.”

Moreover, a large burden of the cost is borne at the state and local level, not the federal level.

But the cost to U.S. taxpayers is much higher. Camarota says the NAS calculation looks at the “net present value” (NPV). When looking at the long-term costs using illegal alien education levels, the “actual net lifetime fiscal cost” is a possible \$140,000 to \$150,000 each if you do not use an NPV calculation, he writes.

“The drain for an illegal immigrant dropout is \$117,236, and the drain for a legal immigrant without a high school diploma is \$211,711,”the report claims.

Even those who criticize these financial calculations, like two researchers at the CATO Institute, Alex Nowrasteh, and David Bier, agree that illegal aliens cost taxpayers at least \$43,444, or as Camarota notes, \$4.3 billion per 100,000. Camarota also counters that “Cato recalculated the education level of illegal immigrants in order to reduce their costs, but they do not explain how they did this.” Cato reported they “look[ed] at the ages and education of new immigrants from Mexico and Central America who comprise virtually all unlawful immigrants who enter as border crossers.” Camarota bucks “They do not define what they mean by ‘new’.” Camarota was unable to replicate the CATO numbers using the March 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS).