



Fact-checking Trump's claim that illegal immigration costs US taxpayers \$113 billion annually

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Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's highly anticipated speech in Arizona was meant to finalize his immigration platform. However, he mentioned that the practice costs the US \$113 billion every year – a highly questionable figure.

Where does the \$113 billion statistic come from? The only source that uses this number is the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an inconspicuously-named conservative think tank.

Politics doesn't factor into this – Democrats can and have twisted numbers to the same extent as Republicans. However, what is interesting is that Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute found FAIR's research to be anything but, well, fair.

The executive summary from FAIR's 2013 study titled "*The Fiscal Burden of Illegal Immigration on United States Taxpayers*," claims that "*illegal immigration costs US taxpayers about \$113 billion a year at the federal, state and local level. The bulk of the costs – some \$84 billion – are absorbed by state and local governments.*"

Nowrasteh finds the very concept of the study to be troubling. He wrote, "*every human activity has both costs and benefits. People constantly weigh costs and benefits. If a given action's benefits outweigh its costs, that action is worth taking – but you have to analyze both the costs and benefits first before you can come to that conclusion. The FAIR report counts the costs alone.*"

Nowrasteh found that FAIR also failed to account for how much undocumented workers contribute to the economy by using the money they earn to purchase goods and services, which generate tax revenue.

In addition, the study that Trump cited also used bad numbers. As Nowrasteh pointed out, "*FAIR estimates that the number of undocumented children in Texas in 2005 was 61 percent greater than that estimated by Dr. Jeffrey Passel, the premier immigration demographer in the U.S. and supposed source for FAIR's claims.*"

It's interesting that Trump failed to account for the value that illegal immigration can provide to the US – particularly on the following day that allegations that his modeling agency used undocumented workers came to light.

It's especially interesting when Trump settled a lawsuit in 1999 over using undocumented Polish workers to demolish a building to make way for Trump Tower.