

PolitiFact to Florida Republicans: You're \$3.8 billion figure that illegal immigration is costing Florida is bogus

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Florida GOP lawmakers are talking about introducing an Arizona like tough bill on illegal immigration later this year.

House Republicans William Snyder from Stuart and Ritch Workman from Brevard County say they'll introduce a bill in the Legislature this November that will deal with what they say is the \$3 billion plus costs that undocumented immigrants take from Florida taxpayers.

As **PolitiFact** tells us on Monday, the source those lawmakers and candidates are getting is actually \$3.8 billion, that comes from a 2009 report called "[The Costs of Illegal Immigration to Floridians](#)," published by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR).

But in a lengthy and detailed analysis, **PolitiFact's Christina Silva** investigates FAIR's claim, and finds it wanting (Silva incidentally classifies the Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy studies as a liberal policy group, which it may very well be. But we've never known Cato to want to be labeled anything other than libertarian):

"I would take FAIR's numbers with a big shaker of salt," said Daniel Griswold, director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, a liberal Washington, D.C., policy group. "The organization exists to portray immigrants in a bad light."

Still, even if FAIR's math passed muster, the report's findings would not validate Workman's claim.

FAIR concludes the bulk of state expenses related to illegal immigrants, or \$3.4 billion, is spent on educating the children of illegal immigrants, including children who were born here and thus are U.S. citizens.

Only \$380 million was spent on uncompensated medical care and incarceration, a far cry from Workman's \$3.5 billion claim, a seemingly impossible figure, acknowledged FAIR.

"The magnitude of the fiscal cost estimate would require the inclusion of the educational costs," said Martin, who wrote the FAIR report.

That \$3.8 billion figure has been tossed out at debates such as in the Republican race for House District 57 in Hillsborough County.

Over the weekend, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush co-penned an op-ed in the Washington Post with Harvard Professor Robert Putnam called *A Better Welcome for our Nation's Immigrants* that appears to have enraged some in the right, such as one blogger who said that the reason that Jeb and George W. Bush have not been as "tough" as they should be is because they're grooming [Jeb's boy, Jorge, or George P. the III](#), to be able to run for the presidency.

Bush and Putnam say that Americans are more hostile to immigrants than ever before, and they advocate:

- Provide low-cost English classes, in cooperation with local civic and religious groups, where immigrants build personal ties with co-ethnics and native-born Americans. These connections foster assimilation and help newcomers navigate our complex institutions.
- Invest in public education, including civics education and higher education. During the first half of the 20th century, schools were critical to preparing children of immigrants for success and fostering a shared national identity.
- Assist communities experiencing rapid increases in immigration, which is traumatic for those arriving here and for receiving communities. Schools and hospitals bear disproportionate costs of immigration, while the economic and fiscal benefits from immigration accrue nationally.

Assimilation does not mean immigrants shed ethnic identities. Our national experience with hyphenated identities shows that good Americans can retain a strong sense of ethnic identity.