

## **Texas AG claims immigrants cost the state 'billions.' He's flat-out wrong.**

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*Studies have repeatedly found that immigrants pay taxes and contribute heavily to the country's revenue.*

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton complained to Fox News on Sunday that immigrants are costing his state and the country "billions of dollars" because of their use of public benefits.

"If we're going to invite people in, we ought to make sure that they can take care of themselves," he said.

Paxton's comments follow President Joe Biden's decision to halt the public charge rule in addition to court actions against the policy.

On March 26, Paxton led 13 other state attorneys general in filing a lawsuit with the Supreme Court to take over the defense of the public charge rule and prevent a lower judge from throwing it out. The Republican attorneys had asked to take over the defense of the rule with the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit previously, after the Biden administration chose to drop the matter, but were rejected.

The public charge rule, first formalized in May 1999 by the Immigration and Nationalization Service, affected immigrants applying for legal permanent residence (a green card) or for a visa to enter the United States. The Trump administration announced a new rule in 2019, expanding on the previous one, which stated that a noncitizen would be "inadmissible" to the United States or not qualified for legal permanent residency if they were considered likely to use public benefits such as public housing, Medicaid, or food assistance.

"I am tired of seeing our taxpayer paying for people to come into the country and immediately go onto welfare and various other things," Donald Trump said in August 2019 upon announcing an expansion to that policy. "So I think we're doing it right."

In October 2019, a federal judge temporarily blocked the public charge rule from taking effect. Then, in January 2020, Trump asked the Supreme Court to intervene, after which the conservative majority ruled in favor of allowing the rule to be implemented.

The Biden administration announced it would no longer implement the rule on March 9. The same day, the Supreme Court dropped two appeals to uphold the rule filed by the Trump administration.

Paxton has been leading the charge to have the rule reinstated ever since.

"Texas taxpayers are forced to pay hundreds of millions of dollars every year to sustain the services our state must provide to illegal aliens. Without the public-charge rule, our Medicaid budget and other vital services will explode and be spread too thin, costing taxpayers millions more and reducing the quality of service we can provide," the Texas attorney general said on March 30.

Studies show that this is false.

A 2019 New American Economy Research Fund report found that "the total annual income of workers affected by the public charge rule is more than \$53.6 billion."

"Should they leave the United States, our economy would suffer an indirect economic loss of more than \$37.4 billion. The total cost to the U.S. economy could therefore amount to more than \$91.0 billion," the report stated.

And a 2018 policy brief from the libertarian think tank the Cato Institute even noted, "Overall, immigrants are less likely to consume welfare benefits and, when they do, they generally consume a lower dollar value of benefits than native-born Americans."

The institute noted that immigrants in 2016 used an average per capita value of \$3,718 in public benefits, which is 39% less compared to native-born Americans, who used an average per capita of \$6,081.

Studies also specifically refute Paxton's claims that undocumented people are draining tax dollars through public benefits.

A May 2020 cost-benefit assessment of undocumented immigrants in Texas by Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy estimated that the revenue Texas received from undocumented immigrants was more than the benefits that the state provided them. In fiscal year 2018, the state's net gain was around \$420.9 million.

"This means that for every dollar spent on public services for undocumented immigrants, they provide \$1.21 in fiscal revenue for the state of Texas," the report said.

Furthermore, a 2017 Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy report found that noncitizens paid an estimated \$11.74 billion annually to state and local economies, but are ineligible for several federal or state programs.