

Report: Illegal Immigration Could Cost Taxpayers Trillions

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Future costs for illegal immigrants in the United States will reach a half a trillion dollars, a Heritage Foundation researcher said Wednesday at congressional hearing in San Diego.

The influx of illegal immigrants has effectively "imported about 10 million high school dropouts into the United States," said Robert Rector, a senior research fellow in welfare and family issues for the Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

Rector testified before the House Judiciary Committee, which convened at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot for one in a series of hearings on illegal immigration this month.

The hearings are a rebuttal to a Senate bill that House members believe will result in amnesty for illegal immigrants.

The topic of the discussion was the fiscal impacts of illegal immigration.

The National Academy of Sciences estimated that each immigrant will result in a \$100,000 net annual cost to taxpayers.

Rector said once illegal immigrants become citizens they can bring family members into the country, straining education and health care budgets.

"This Senate bill will become the largest expansion of the welfare system in 30 years and it's the wrong thing to do," he said.

Wayne Cornelius, director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at UC San Diego, said tighter border security would not stop or even discourage migrants from crossing into the country.

"Even if they are caught, they try again until they are successful," Cornelius told the committee. "Our research shows that 92 to 97 percent of them succeed on the first or second try."

According to Cornelius, his research team interviewed 1,300 migrants over the last 18 months.

Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., the committee's chairman, said hospitals in the Southwestern United States are losing \$190 million annually per year for uncompensated health care from illegal immigrants.

Nineteen percent of federal inmates are not citizens, he said.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich said "illegal immigration tears at the moral and economic fabric of the country."

"The fiscal drain is catastrophic," Antonovich said.

According to Antonovich, 12 percent of the 10.2 million residents of Los Angeles County are illegal immigrants.

Thirty percent of public health patients in the county are illegal immigrants, he testified.

The hearing is one in a series being held nationwide at a time when the Senate and House of Representatives are deadlocked over competing immigration legislation.

House Republicans beginning with Sensenbrenner argue that the Senate bill, which provides a pathway to eventual legalized status for some illegal immigrants, amounts to an amnesty.

Democrats have dismissed the series of hearings as an election-year ploy not intended to produce genuine reform.

Rep. Howard Berman, D-Van Nuys, questioned the rationale for the hearings.

"These hearings are a con job on the American people," Berman said. "They want to avoid a conference (committee) because the bill splits their party and it is an election year."

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Vista, said the hearings, 19 of which are scheduled this month, are "not a waste of time."

Issa said the House and Senate are deadlocked between stronger enforcement and amnesty. Issa said he believes the House will not get to a conference with the Senate on the issue before the November election.

The We Are America/Somos America Alliance said in a statement yesterday that Wednesday's hearing would only "further delay a meaningful solution to the nation's immigration crisis."

"Immigrants contribute to and participate in our society," it read.

The group said the House Judiciary Committee hearings "are intended to associate immigrants with terrorists and present this hard-working community as a drain on our society's resources."

Another Judiciary Committee hearing on immigration was held early last month at an Imperial Beach U.S. Border Patrol station. The next is scheduled to be held in Santee on

Saturday.

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