



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 6, 2026

Far-left Think Tank: \$2K-plus to Deport an Illegal Is Too Much. Data: Illegals Cost Taxpayers \$150B Annually.

Open borders leftists are in a tizzy because Donald Trump's administration is spending more than \$2,300 apiece to deport illegal aliens.

That money would be better spent on more welfare and public-school teachers, the far-left Economic Policy Institute (EPI) says. But its report conveniently ignores one thing.

More than 60 percent of illegals collect some form of welfare, including food stamps, Medicaid, and other high-ticket items that assuredly cost well more than the pittance spent sending them back home where they belong.

As well, the cost of supporting illegals has surpassed \$150 billion *annually*. The \$269 billion price tag for deporting them is a one-time expense.



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Axios

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Trump deportations cost taxpayers \$2,358 each

Estimated cost per taxpayer for federal immigrant deportation and detention funding

U.S. average **\$2.4k**

\$1.5k \$2k \$2.5k \$3k \$3.5k

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Trump deportations cost taxpayers \$2,358 each

The projected \$268.9 billion could otherwise fund major safety-net programs.

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Too Much Spent to Deport Illegals

Leftist EPI has created a webpage to show the cost of deporting an illegal from each of the 50 states, then provide a list of the things the money could buy. Almost all of them involve more government spending and more welfare — some of it for illegals.

The \$2,358 per illegal amounts to about \$269 billion — money allotted in the Big Beautiful Bill and other legislation — a figure undoubtedly related to former President Joe Biden’s illegal importation of so many. That money could buy the following, [EPI assures readers](#):

931,963 School Teachers

OR

1,046,926 Firefighters

OR



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11,998,386 People on Medicaid

OR

5,055,947 Veterans' Medical Care

OR

6,725,420 Head Start Slots

OR

717,070 Registered Nurses

OR

118,285,865 SNAP Recipients

OR

9,764,700 Public Housing Units

OR

6,229,702 Parents with 12 weeks paid parental leave

Note that EPI didn't say how many police officers might be included in that figure.

The cost to deport an illegal varies. A pull-down menu permits a user to see what it costs to deport an illegal in his state, then in his city or county.

It costs about \$2,945 to deport an illegal from California, for a total of \$39.8 billion that could be spent on more welfare and government programs, some of which, again, would go to illegals. It costs \$1,297 to deport an illegal from West Virginia, and \$1,969 to deport one from North Dakota. Totals for those states are \$687 million and \$556.3 million, respectively.



Instead of spending

\$556,292,116

or **\$1,969** per taxpayer, on mass deportations,
North Dakota taxpayers could fund

2,368

School Teachers

OR

2,376

Firefighters

OR

17,638

People on Medicaid

OR

11,398

Veterans' Medical Care

OR

11,928

Head Start Slots

OR

1,799

Registered Nurses

OR

261,497

SNAP Recipients

OR

33,241

Public Housing Units

OR

14,034

**Parents with 12 weeks
paid parental leave**

An [EPI researcher spewed](#) the usual eyewash to Axios.

"I don't think people realize how much money is being spent on these mass deportations," said Gordon Lafer, a professor at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center and research associate at EPI:



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In almost every place in the country, there are a lot of people who are struggling to not be hungry, to have affordable housing, kids are in overcrowded classrooms, people don't have health insurance, and those are the things that matter most.

Instead, we're spending an unbelievable amount of money, chasing down, detaining, deporting people. ... It costs money that is desperately needed for other things in almost every community in the country.

Illegals Use Welfare

In February, the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) explained that illegals glom on to welfare as quickly as other immigrants. "Households headed by illegal immigrants ... have higher overall welfare use rates than the U.S.-born and the difference is statistically significant," [CIS reported](#):

We estimate that 60.7 percent of illegal immigrant households use one or more welfare programs, a large and statistically significant higher rate than the U.S.-born households. Turning to specific programs, we find that, relative to native-headed households, illegal-immigrant-headed households use the [Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)], School Lunch/Breakfast, [Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)], and Medicaid at statistically significant higher rates than the U.S.-born. ... [U]se of the welfare system by illegal-immigrant households is extremely common.



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Center for Immigration Studies ✓
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A new analysis of the 2024 Survey of Income and Program Participation finds that immigrant-headed households, both legal and illegal, are significantly more likely than U.S.-born households to receive welfare.



[cis.org](#)

Welfare Use by Immigrants and the U.S.-Born, 2024 | @CIS_org

Findings show that households headed by immigrants, also called the "foreign-born", are significantly more likely to receive benefits than ...

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While high welfare use might "seem implausible," CIS explained, myriad factors show how illegals ride the gravy train. More than 50 percent of illegal-alien homes have one or more anchor-baby citizens, and they "have the same welfare eligibility as any other U.S. citizen, including even public housing."

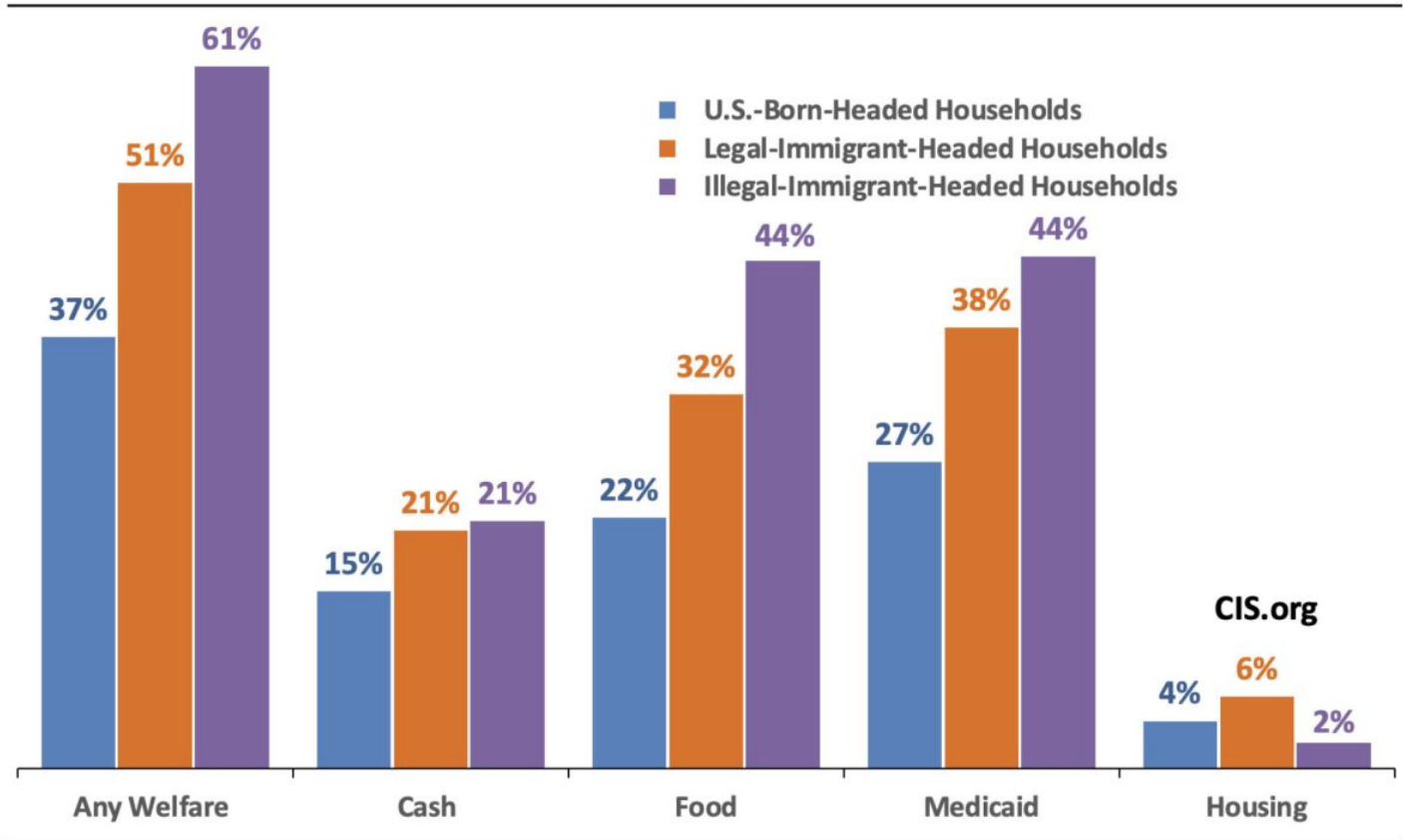
As well, states pay for illegal-alien healthcare. "14 states currently offer Medicaid to all low-income children, regardless of immigration status, and even more states provide it to all low-income pregnant women, again without regard to legal status," CIS continued.

[Anchor babies](#) are eligible for WIC, and all kids, citizen or not, get free school lunch and breakfast.



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Figure 2. More than half of both legal and illegal immigrant households use one or more welfare programs, significantly exceeding the U.S.-born rates.



Source: 2024 Survey of Income and Program Participation. See text for welfare programs included in each category.

“Six states ... offer [food stamps] to illegal immigrants under limited circumstances,” CIS reported:

Several million illegal immigrants have work authorization, which provides a Social Security number and with it EITC eligibility. ...

[R]esearch indicates that the overwhelming majority of illegal immigrants have no education beyond high school and, as a result, a very large share of illegal immigrants have incomes low enough to qualify for welfare.

Much More to Support Them Than to Deport Them

All that costs money, and it’s quite a bit more than a one-time \$2,358 bill to deport an illegal.

In 2023, the Federation for American Immigration Reform reported that illegals cost taxpayers \$150.7 billion annually. “Taxes paid by illegal aliens only cover around 17.2 percent of the costs they create for American citizens. ... For every dollar in taxes paid by illegal aliens, they and their dependents consume six dollars in benefits and services.” [FAIR continued](#):

- The largest component of the cost is K-12 education, which must be provided under a 1982 Supreme Court ruling, *Plyler v. Doe*. The annual K-12 education cost for illegal aliens (and their U.S.-born children) is \$78 billion, of which \$70.4 billion is borne by states and localities.



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- Health care for illegal aliens costs taxpayers about \$42.7 billion annually.
- A variety of food assistance and nutritional programs used by illegal aliens and their children cost taxpayers about \$13.5 billion annually.
- Combined federal, state, and local criminal justice costs associated with illegal immigration run about \$47 billion annually — not including the cost of damages to victims.



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