



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 29, 2015

## Immigration Bills Stalled in Texas Legislature

With the last day of the current Texas legislative session scheduled to end on June 1, several immigration-related bills have largely stalled, unless their sponsors can quickly rally support for them. Among these is SB 1819, authored by Senator Donna Campbell (R-New Braunfels), which would repeal HB 140 — the measure enacted in 2001 that allows illegal aliens who have lived in Texas for at least three years to pay in-state tuition rates.



Under the 2001 law, students here illegally must pledge to apply for legal status as soon as they can under federal law in order to qualify for the lower rates.

The *Texas Tribune* reported on April 7 that the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition rates varies by school, but that on average students who paid out-of-state tuition pay about \$11,100 more than those qualifying for the in-state rates. For community colleges, the difference is about \$3,000.

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Current tuition for Texas A&M University, for example, is \$19,894 for nonresidents, but only \$7,990 for residents. With those qualifying for resident tuition saving \$11,904 a year, illegal aliens have considerable incentive to “pledge” to become legal as soon as possible. In the meantime, every taxpayer in Texas subsidizes their tuition, even those who cannot afford to send their own children to college.

In addition to the cost, the large number of illegal immigrants attending Texas colleges denies place for legal residents. During a hearing on the bill on April 6, Campbell noted that when HB 140 was passed back in 2001, it was expected that about 735 students would take advantage of it. However, that number has now increased to almost 25,000 students — making up two percent of the state’s college students. The ability to received in-state tuition rates has become a magnet that encourages illegal immigration, Campbell asserted.

Those 25,000 college spots taken up by illegals has made it more difficult for legal Texas citizens to attend the college of their choice.

“At the end of the day I think there are a finite number of slots in our universities and those should be reserved for Texas citizens,” Campbell was quoted as saying by the *Tribune*. “Nothing about my bill is intended to be a threat in any way. It’s just about where are we going to place our resources.”

Campbell also pointed out that Texas is one of only five states that allow illegal aliens to receive financial aid to attend college, which short-changes legal residents and citizens.

“It’s just bad policy that rewards illegal immigration in perpetuity,” said that senator.

A senate subcommittee voted along party lines on April 7 to send Campbell’s bill to the full Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee.

HB 140 was signed into law by then-Governor Rick Perry, and the issue of whether illegal aliens should be eligible for in-state tuition rates became an issue during the campaign for the 2012 Republican



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presidential nomination. Perry defended that policy in the Fox News/Google debate on September 22, 2011, after he was criticized by another candidate, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. Romney pointed out the obvious, stating, in part:

I don't see how it is that ... [to attend] four years of college, [you receive an] almost \$100,000 discount if you are an illegal alien go to the University of Texas.... That kind of magnet draws people into this country to get that education, to get the \$100,000 break.... It makes no sense at all.

Perry responded with bleeding heart rhetoric that seemed more characteristic of politicians from states with more liberal constituencies than Perry's:

If you say that we should not educate children who have come into our state for no other reason than they've been brought there by no fault of their own, I don't think you have a heart. We need to be educating these children, because they will become a drag on our society.... This was a state issue. Texans voted on it. And I still support it greatly.

Candidate Rick Santorum, the former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, joined Romney by saying:

Governor Perry, no one is suggesting up here that the students that are illegal in this country shouldn't be able to go to a college and university.... They can go. They just have to borrow money, find other sources to be able to go. And why should they be given preferential treatment as an illegal in this country?

Though critical of Perry's position on tuition, both Romney and Santorum missed the opportunity to make a case that those who are in our nation are not legally entitled to do anything except to board a bus back to the border and be deported.

Another immigration-related bill in the Texas legislature is SB 185, authored by Sen. Charles Perry (R-Lubbock). Informally referred to as the "Sanctuary cities" bill, SB 185 would cut off state funding for cities or governmental entities that adopt policies forbidding law enforcement officers from inquiring about the immigration status of people they detain or arrest.

Additionally, the bill would prohibit cities and other entities from preventing booking clerks, prosecuting attorneys, and other municipal officials from sharing information about suspects with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal, state, or local law enforcement agencies; or preventing federal immigration officers from entering municipal or county jails.

A third bill in the Texas legislature, SB 1252, authored by Sen. Bob Hall (R-Rockwall) addresses the creation of an interstate compact on border security would allow Texas and other states to enforce federal immigration laws — and possibly create their own border security force.

As with the other two bills, SB 1252 the prospects of bringing this bill up for a vote are uncertain.

Texas voters concerned about the Lone Star State's role in preventing illegal immigration should stay in contact with their state senator and representative to make their views known. In answer to this question posted on the Texas State Legislature's webpage, "How do I send e-mail to my representative or senator?" the following information is provided:

It is each legislator's prerogative to support feedback through e-mail. If a legislator chooses to do so, you can find an e-mail feedback form on the legislator's home page. You can find your representative on the [house website](#) and your senator on the [senate website](#).



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You can view bills, fiscal notes, and bill analyses by selecting the [bill lookup](#) link on the Texas Legislature Online home page.

*Photo: Texas state capitol*

*Warren Mass writes from Texas.*

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