



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on July 13, 2011

Report: Illegals Cost Calif. Hospitals \$1.25 Billion Annually

California hospitals provide about \$1.25 billion annually in uncompensated care for illegal aliens, a new report from the California Hospital Association says, with \$26 million in Ventura County alone. That grim news appears in the Ventura County Star.

The cost of providing health care to border jumpers is a growing concern in the medical profession and among taxpayers and immigration patriots. And given that not just illegal adults but their many offspring demand free medical care, the burden isn't getting smaller.



[According to](#) the [Federation for American Immigration Reform \(FAIR\)](#), Americans nationwide coughed up nearly \$11 billion in 2010 to provide medical care for illegal aliens and their children.

The Data

[According to](#) the *Star*, "eight general care hospitals in Ventura County charge a total of more than \$260 million a year on care for uninsured or under-insured patients that isn't compensated, according to data provided by hospital officials."

Though "no specific numbers" are available on how much of that uncompensated care goes to illegal aliens, the paper reports, "California Hospital Association leaders estimate about 10 percent of a hospital's uncovered costs come from people without legal status in the United States." The *Star* adds,

"If they don't have Social Security or photo identification or a Mexican consulate card, if they don't have any of those, we estimate they are undocumented," said Jan Emerson-Shea, vice president of external affairs with the California Hospital Association.

She characterized the \$1.25 billion calculation for 2010 as imperfect, offering certainty only on what direction the number is headed.

"It absolutely is growing," she said.

Yes it is, the *Star* verifies. The figure for uncompensated care has grown from \$1.05 billion in 2007. As well, Californians kick in \$1.3 billion from their [Medi-Cal](#) program to pay for illegals.

The cost is high, the CHA president [told the paper](#), because federal law requires a hospital to treat anyone who walks through the front door. "Yet federal support for hospitals providing these services to the undocumented population is virtually nonexistent," Richard Umbdenstock, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association, told the paper. "Many hospitals have had to curtail services, delay implementing services or close beds."

As well, [the paper notes](#), the federal legislation that provided \$250 million annually to pay hospitals for



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the medical costs associated with the federal government's failure to secure the borders expired in 2008 .

Immigration patriot Rep. [Dana Rohrabacher](#) (R-Calif.) says the time [has come](#) to crack down on border jumping:

"When you see \$5 aspirin, it's not \$5 aspirin, it's not corruption, it's the hospital trying to take care of the illegal alien who didn't have insurance," Rohrabacher said.

He contends the answer isn't in providing more money for hospitals, but rather in reducing the illegal immigrant population. Rohrabacher unsuccessfully sponsored legislation in 2004 that would have required hospitals receiving federal money to care for illegal immigrants to report those patients to immigration authorities. It's a caveat in which he still believes.

"As long as we're providing benefits, more and more of them will come to get the benefits. You can't blame them for that," he said, then assessing the financial impacts of illegal immigration. "It's bankrupting our country."

Unsurprisingly, hospital lobbyists don't think much of Rohrabacher's legislation, the paper reports. They say it isn't their "job to be pseudo border patrol agents."

As well, [the Star says](#), an official in Ventura County does not believe CHA's figure (that illegals account for just 10 percent of uncompensated care):

Dr. Robert Gonzalez, director of the Ventura County Health Care Agency, estimated total uncompensated care for the county hospital system at about \$114 million in the 2009-10 fiscal year. He said the 10 percent calculation is far too low, noting a state-funding formula calculates the percentage at nearly 18 percent — or about \$20 million of care for the undocumented.

If 18 percent is correct, that would mean Ventura County's uncompensated care bill for illegals is \$46.8 million, nearly double [what CHA reports](#), based on \$260 million in uncompensated care for all patients.

Other Figures

[According to](#) FAIR, the cost of uncompensated hospital care for illegals greatly exceeds what the paper reported.

In 2010 for instance, Californians paid \$292.6 million to cover illegal-alien emergency births, and \$2.19 billion for uncompensated emergency care. The latter figure is \$940 million more and 75 percent higher than CHA's figure of \$1.25 billion for uncompensated hospital care.

As well, CHA does not account for the U.S.-born children of illegals. These "anchor babies" are eligible for free medical care and many other services. [Medicaid provided \\$322.9 million](#) for U.S.-born children of illegals in California, while the [State Children's Health Insurance Program](#) paid \$111.5 million.

The cost of providing just health care to illegals in California for 2010 [was at least \\$2.92 billion](#).

One reason? [Reports FAIR](#), "[i]n California over half of the illegal alien population has no insurance, with the Urban Institute finding that in Los Angeles County illegal alien adults were almost four times more likely than native-born adults to be uninsured."

The total cost of illegals to Californians, including education and crime, [FAIR says](#), is \$21.77 billion.

Photo: Community Memorial Hospital, Ventura, California



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