



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on September 23, 2011

Rick Perry Defends Govt Subsidies for Illegal Immigrants

Texas Governor Rick Perry defended his policy of allowing illegal immigrants to obtain in-state tuition for Texas state colleges in the Fox News/Google debate September 22.

Perry faced withering criticism from former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who [said](#) of the Perry-backed Texas policy of granting in-state tuition to illegal immigrants:



It's an argument I just can't follow. I've got to be honest with you, I don't see how it is that a state like Texas to go to the University of Texas, if you're an illegal alien, you get an in-state tuition discount. You know how much that is? That's \$22,000 a year. Four years of college, almost \$100,000 discount if you are an illegal alien go to the University of Texas. If you are a United States citizen from any one of the other 49 states, you have to pay \$100,000 more. That doesn't make sense to me. That kind of magnet draws people into this country to get that education, to get the \$100,000 break. It makes no sense.... We have to turn off the magnet of extraordinary government benefits like a \$100,000 tax credit or, excuse me, discount for going to the University of Texas. That shouldn't be allowed. It makes no sense at all.

The [Texas subsidy for in-state residents at the University of Texas at Austin](#) is indeed about \$22,000 per year compared with non-residents. Perry responded to Romney by [stating](#).

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. I think that's what Texans wanted to do. Out of 181 members of the Texas legislature, when this issue came up, only four dissenting votes. This was a state issue. Texans voted on it. And I still support it greatly.

Former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania Rick Santorum entered the discussion, [stressing](#) that the



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objection most people had to Perry's policy was not that children of illegal aliens should not be enabled to enroll in U.S. colleges, but rather that they ought not to be subsidized by the government:

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. I think you are sort of making this leap that, unless we subsidize this, the taxpayers subsidize it, they won't be able to go.... The point is, why are we subsidizing?

Not that they can't go. 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? That's what we're saying.

After Santorum's response, Perry did not challenge the assertion that Texas policy was to subsidize illegal aliens over residents of the other 50 states. Instead, he changed the subject and challenged the idea that he was soft on border security by talking about how he could make the U.S.-Mexican border secure without a border wall.

During the debate, former New Mexican Governor Gary Johnson had [the best line of the evening](#) with, "My next-door neighbor's two dogs have created more shovel-ready jobs than this current administration," though the line [had already been used](#) by radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh. The libertarian-leaning Johnson, who has struggled in the polls, had been excluded from most of the previous debates. Johnson's supporters have noted that his polling numbers are no lower than some of the other candidates who have not been excluded from debates, such as former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, Rick Santorum, and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

All of the candidates were asked who among their rivals would make an acceptable running mate, and Santorum, Cain, and Perry all mentioned Newt Gingrich as an acceptable pick. Huntsman and Perry also mentioned businessman Herman Cain. Governor Gary Johnson picked Representative Ron Paul of Texas. Paul did not return the compliment, demurring on a VP pick because of his top-tier status. "In national polls, it seems like I'm in third place now." Gingrich, Romney, Huntsman, and Minnesota Congressman Michele Bachmann demurred along with Paul on mentioning a rival as an acceptable VP pick.

Photo: Texas Gov. Rick Perry makes a statement during the Republican presidential debate on Sept. 22, 2011 in Orlando, Fla: AP Images



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