



RomneyCare Subsidizes Healthcare for Illegal Immigrants

The Massachusetts healthcare program yielded costs of more than \$400 million last year and covered more than one million hospital and health clinic visits, but details on the number of illegal patients receiving medical care are not available, as the state does not record that specific data.

The Health Safety Net is funded through a blend of state money and hospital and insurer fees, and is redistributed to providers, which file claims for patients under the program. In building on a previous plan, Massachusetts established the Health Safety Net as an anchor for all state residents "who do not have access to affordable health coverage." People of any income level with "large medical bills that they cannot pay are also eligible" and "citizenship or immigration status does not affect your eligibility," [notes](#) MassResources.org, an online information center for Massachusetts residents.



After being asked about the law, the Romney campaign diverted all questions to the state's former Health and Human Services Secretary, Tim Murphy. "Our view when we signed the law was that all benefits would be for people in the commonwealth who were here legally," declared Murphy, claiming that certain regulations under the program were drafted after the Governor left office.

However, state officials who contributed to the drafting process said it was broadly recognized that some patients would receive medical care even if they entered the country illegally. Officials explained that the law prevents illegal immigrants from receiving certain benefits (it is unavailable only to people who "moved into the commonwealth for the sole purpose of securing health insurance" or who are eligible for other insurance plans) but it does not bar them from all medical care through the Health Safety Net.

Governor Romney's healthcare law attracted bitter scrutiny during the 2008 presidential election, and it continues to be fiercely targeted by opposing GOP presidential candidates, many of whom brand the law as a state-run model of ObamaCare. Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich were particularly critical of RomneyCare during last week's GOP debate in Las Vegas.

Although Romney insists that he would repeal ObamaCare if he were President, Santorum [stated](#) that the Governor has no "credibility" on the issue, and he has "no track record" that can justify his reproach of the President's healthcare overhaul. Gingrich echoed Santorum, conceding that RomneyCare is not ObamaCare per se, but it is clearly a "big government" plan, and "a heck of a lot more than [Romney's]



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on October 25, 2011

campaign is admitting."

But the most popular exchange of last week's CNN debate — at least, based on its degree of media coverage — was a contentious dialogue between Romney and Texas Governor Rick Perry over the subject of illegal immigration. Although Perry's track record on illegal immigration is anything but stellar, he [assailed](#) Romney on the issue: "Mitt, you lose all of your standing, in my perspective, because you hired illegals in your home.... The idea that you stand here before us ... is on its face, the height of hypocrisy."

However, many observers note that Perry's charges against Romney, particularly over illegal immigration, have little merit, as the Texas Governor's declarations are often neutralized by his own hypocrisy on the issue. For instance, Perry championed a Texas-based DREAM Act, which grants in-state tuition to children of illegal immigrants; and despite his "reformed" conservative views, Perry still contends that educating young people, even if they are illegal aliens, is a profound benefit for America, as it fosters a "more productive" society.

"If you say that we should not educate children who have come into our state for no other reason than they have been brought there by no fault of their own, I don't think you have a heart," Perry [insisted](#) during September's Fox News-Google debate, a statement that drew heated criticism from other GOP candidates and many conservatives.

During the CNN debate, the Texas Governor explained that the "huge number of illegals" who cross our southern border are "coming here because there is a magnet. And the magnet is called jobs." Romney promptly [countered](#) Perry, honing in on the Texas Governor's support of the DREAM Act:

You put in place a magnet — you talk about magnets — you put in place a magnet to draw illegals into the state, which is giving \$100,000 of tuition credit to illegals that come into this country. And then you have states, the big states of illegal immigrants are California and Florida. Over the last 10 years, they've had no increase in illegal immigration. Texas has had 60 percent increase in illegal immigrants.

But because of recent developments, Romney's commentary during last week's debate — that "it makes no sense" to grant illegal students a discount on state-funded education — is now stirring heavy criticism. After all, constitutionalists are asking, if taxpayers should not fund illegal immigrants' education, why should they fund illegal immigrants' healthcare?

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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