# Why Health Care Is So Costly

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While Americans without health insurance struggle with the problem of how to pay for medical care, Mexicans don't have that problem. They just ride in a Mexican ambulance across the border to a hospital in Arizona, New Mexico, California or Texas, and get free medical treatment.
The costs are currently paid by a combination of socking the taxpayers in those four border states plus inflating prices for patients who pay their own bills, insurance companies and Medicaid.

This ridiculous situation is caused by a combination of U.S. officials allowing the Mexican cars to cross our border plus the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, which mandates that U.S. hospitals with emergency-room services treat anyone who shows up for care including illegal aliens. This unfunded mandate was legislated by a Congress that closed its eyes to the costs.

We are not just talking about Mexicans who may have had an accident close to the border. We are talking about Mexicans with serious health problems who are deliberately sent to the United States after Mexican hospitals discover they can't pay for services and have no insurance.

Senators John McCain and John Kyl have proposed a solution for this dilemma: lighten the tax burden on their own state while shifting it to U.S. taxpayers nationwide. How parochial! They introduced a bill to hit the U.S. taxpayers for $200 million for medical treatment of illegal aliens.

A study made by the U.S.-Mexico Border Counties Coalition, an American lobbying group, found that U.S. hospitals in border states provide at least $200 million a year in uncompensated emergency care to illegal aliens. In the four border states, 77 hospitals now face a medical emergency.

Uncompensated care to illegal aliens in Arizona cost the Cochise County Health Department 30 percent of its annual budget, the Copper Queen Hospital in Bisbee $200,000 out of a net operating income of $300,000, the University Medical Center in Tucson $10 million, and the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Tucson $1 million in only the first quarter of last year. The Southeast Arizona Medical Center in Douglas is on the verge of bankruptcy and some emergency rooms and pre-natal units have closed because they can't afford to stay open.

Arizona hospitals have offered donated medical equipment and ambulances to Mexican medical facilities, but Mexican customs officials have not permitted much of it to enter Mexico. They apparently prefer to send their sick to U.S. hospitals rather than care for them in Mexico.

Other costs of dumping of Mexicans on U.S. hospitals include transporting the seriously ill by helicopter from small border hospitals to Tucson or Phoenix. This cost ranges from $7,000 to $20,000 a trip.

In San Antonio, University Health System officials have proposed a statewide quarter-cent sales tax to help hospitals pay for uninsured persons who show up at the door. During the last three years, Houston's Harris County Hospital District spent $330 million to treat and immunize illegal aliens, an amount estimated to be at least 20 percent of the indigent caseload.

In California, where the state budget crunch is forcing reductions in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, observers warn of an approaching catastrophe in the health-care system. Almost one in five Californians lacks health insurance, yet the law requires hospitals to continue to serve illegal aliens free.

These costs are especially onerous because hospitals are struggling with falling Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates and rising medical malpractice premiums, and most states are struggling with revenue shortfalls. Hospitals are often hit with providing follow-up care when an uninsured patient remains bedridden for months.

It's not just the border states. Florida hospitals last year spent $40.5 million providing care to uninsured aliens.

All this is in addition to the many illegal aliens who are injured in highway accidents when the trucks they are jammed into like sardines are driven recklessly by uninsured Mexican drivers trying to evade police. Such accidents have occurred as far away as Utah and Iowa.

Another area where the U.S. taxpayers are taken for chumps is food stamps given to illegal aliens. Coming from countries that have no respect for a rule of law, they don't understand that selling food stamps is a crime.

Food-stamp fraud among illegal aliens came to light in 1996 when Ohio authorities discovered that a Jordanian man and his uncle had deposited $24 million in purchased food stamps in the bank accounts associated with their chain of food and video stores. A ring of Somali asylum seekers netted $40,000 in food stamp fraud.

When are Americans going to wake up to the price we are paying because our government won't stop the invasion of illegal aliens?