The Phyllis Schlafly Report

How to Pay for the Wall

by John and Andy Schlafly

May 9, 2017

When President Trump signed a stopgap spending bill that funds the government for the next five months, the media trumpeted the news that the bill doesn't include money to begin building a wall on our southern border. Nancy Pelosi gloated that the omission was "a defeat for President Trump," and even some of his most ardent supporters expressed disappointment at the lack of progress on Trump's signature campaign issue.

The critics spoke too soon, because adequate funding sources are hiding in plain sight. And yes, Mexico will indirectly pay for it, just as President Trump promised.

"We'll build the wall," the president assured the 80,000 people who attended this year's convention of the National Rifle Association in Atlanta. "Don't even think about it. That's an easy one."

The positive reaction of NRA members was illustrated by Kathleen Mahn, a 45-year-old stay-at-home mom and fitness instructor from Peachtree City, Ga. "So far, I think he's done better than he's been given credit for in the media," she told USA Today after cheering Trump's remarks.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions dropped a clue in his Sunday morning TV appearance on April 23, telling George Stephanopoulos, "We're going to get paid for it one way or the other. There are a lot of ways we can find money to help pay for this.

"I know there's $4 billion a year in excess payments, according to the Department of the Treasury's own inspector general several years ago, that are going to payments to people — tax credits that they shouldn't get. Now, these are mostly Mexicans. And those kind of things add up — $4 billion a year for 10 years is $40 billion."

The attorney general was referring to a July 2011 report by the Treasury inspector general for tax administration (TIGTA) who said that individuals not authorized to work in the U.S. received $4.2 billion in refundable tax credits in 2009. Not all illegal

aliens are Mexicans, of course, but most of them either came from or passed through Mexico on their way to the United States.

Low-wage workers are eligible for both the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which requires a valid Social Security number, and the Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC), which does not. Illegal aliens have learned how to cheat the system by claiming the ACTC to receive a "refund" of up to $1,000 per child.

As a presidential candidate in 2015, Donald Trump cited the $4.2 billion figure as part of his plan to enforce U.S. immigration law. Even the leftwing Politifact had to admit that the inspector general's report "corroborates" Trump's claim that $4.2 billion a year can be saved by stopping those illegal refunds.

The potential for illegal refunds has existed since the tax credit was first enacted in 2001, but a new member of Congress is determined to end the ripoff. The first bill introduced by newly elected Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-GA), would close the loophole by simply requiring a valid Social Security number to claim the refundable credit.

Stanching the flow of illegal tax refunds would be enough to pay for the wall by itself, but even that's not the biggest source of indirect funding to build the wall. It would also relieve the burden that illegal aliens place on many other programs that make up our taxpayer-funded social safety net for low-income households.

Dr. Steven Camarota explained how this works in his April 27 testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The key point is that people who would be stopped by the border wall lack the skills or education that would permit them to earn enough to support themselves.

Based on data from the National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Camarota testified that the vast majority of illegal border-crossers never finished high school, a level of education that is far less than Americans as a whole or even immigrants as a whole. No matter how hard-working they may be, high-school dropouts just can't make it in America without relying on tax-funded programs for food, housing, and medical care.

Dr. Camarota also cited the monumental 2013 report by Robert Rector, who has long been the leading authority on the 72 means-tested programs which are collectively known as welfare. Rector calculated that the average illegal immigrant imposes a lifetime fiscal cost (benefits consumed minus taxes paid) of $74,722.

In other words, for every 100,000 people stopped by the wall on the southern border, our nation saves $7.5 billion in what we would otherwise have to shell out to support them and their families. With that staggering savings, the border wall would clearly pay for itself. It's the most cost-effective infrastructure we could build.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, The Conservative Case for Trump, *was published posthumously on September 6*.