

Cost of Educating Illegal Aliens in Texas Government Schools Tops \$100 Billion

Introduction

During the Biden Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection averaged [184,103 encounters per month](#) with illegal aliens along the United States' Southwest Land Border. Border encounters peaked during 2022-23 when they averaged 213,379 per month. During this time, over 8.8 million illegal aliens entered the United States. An estimated 1.8 million made it through without contact, bringing the **total of illegal entries to as many as 10.6 million.**

When Donald Trump took office in late January of 2025, everything changed. Most aliens from around the world stopped trying to come here illegally. Since February of 2025, President Trump's first full month in office, southwest border encounters with illegal aliens have averaged only 10,823 per month. In Trump's first nine months in office, there were only 97,404 encounters, fewer than any single month of the Biden Administration prior to the November 2024 election.

While illegal entries have greatly declined there are still many ongoing costs, the largest of which is educating illegal aliens in Texas government schools. As the chart below shows, it has cost Texans more than \$111 billion since the 1992-2023 school year to educate illegal aliens in Texas government schools. For the recently completed 2024-

2025 school year, we estimate the cost to have been just over \$10 billion.

Estimated Cost of Educating Illegal Aliens in Texas Government Schools		
School Years	Illegal Aliens Enrolled Per Year (avg.)	Cost Per Period
1992-93 to 1999-00	142,588	\$6,206,633,716
2001-02 to 2009-10	225,404	\$20,493,859,083
2010-11 to 2019-20	314,856	\$40,110,099,058
2020-21 to 2024-25	502,890	\$44,409,853,784
Total Cost		\$111,220,445,642

Why Texans Have to Bear the Cost of Educating Illegal Immigration

Texans have not always been on the hook for these costs. In 1975, the Texas Legislature changed Texas law to allow only “children who are citizens of the United States or legally admitted aliens” to attend government schools at no cost ([125](#)). A 1980 survey found that 45 percent of “Texas school districts with enrollments of 10,000 or more did not admit undocumented alien children even on a tuition basis.” At least one district, the Tyler Independent School District, charged \$1,000 for illegal aliens to attend school in its district.

This system changed in 1982 when the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the Texas law in a 5-4 decision. The court's decision, *Plyler v. Doe*, was in response to a class action law-

suit [filed on behalf](#) of “school-age children of Mexican origin residing in Texas who could not establish that they had been legally admitted into the United States.” The five justices in the majority held that the Texas law “violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.” In his dissent, Chief Justice Burger wrote, “the Constitution does not ... vest in this Court the authority to strike down laws because they do not meet our standards of desirable social policy, ‘wisdom,’ or ‘common sense.’”

Estimating the Cost of Educating Illegal Aliens

Neither the state of Texas or school districts track the number of illegal aliens attending public schools, so the best we can do is estimate the cost of educating them.

The estimates above are based on the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students enrolled in Texas schools, which the Texas Education Agency does report. From school years 1992-1993 through 2019-2020, we estimate that one-third of ESL students are illegal aliens. From 2020-21 through 2024-25, we estimate that 40% of ESL students are illegal aliens. The increase is because as illegal immigration rapidly increased during the Biden Administration, a greater percentage of non-English speaking students will be illegal aliens rather than, say, children born in America of illegal alien parents.

It is possible that this cost will decrease

over time as illegal immigration slows. For example, students enrolled in ESL program declined slightly in 2024-2025. This decline could continue if voluntary and forced deportations increase over the next few years. With an average annual cost of more than \$9 billion over the last four years, the decline will have to be significant and ongoing before Texans experience much relief. To alleviate some of these costs, Texas should:

- Require proof of citizenship status for students and parents of students
- Require Texas school districts to count and report all non-citizen students and all children of noncitizens
- Challenge Plyler v. Doe by placing a moratorium on enrollment of new and/or all illegal aliens in government schools until the U.S. government reimburses the costs

Conclusion

Texas taxpayers have carried the financial burden of illegal entries for decades, spending more than **\$111 billion** since 1992 and over **\$10 billion** last year alone on educating illegal aliens in government schools. Even with illegal entries declining under President Trump, the long-term costs created by years of open border policies remain. To regain control of these expenses, Texas must demand transparency, accurate reporting, and the courage to challenge policies like Plyler v. Doe that created this burden. Texas must take action to protect taxpayers, restore accountability, and bring sanity back to our government education system.

HUFFINES

LIBERTY FOUNDATION

The Huffines Liberty Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan research institute.

Our mission is to advance the cause of liberty, prosperity, and virtue in the State of Texas by educating citizens so they may hold their elected officials accountable.

We look beyond the obvious and develop researched solutions based upon the common sense liberty principles of individual rights, fiscal restraint, personal responsibility, limited government, and social conservatism.

The Huffines Liberty Foundation encourages and educates citizens so they are better informed to tackle the toughest challenges.