

Editor's Choice



An LGBT activist walks past anti-gay rights protesters holding placards, after a ruling by Kenya's high court to uphold a law banning gay sex, outside the Milimani high Court in Nairobi



A fan reacts in the Jurassic Park fan zone prior to Game 6 of the NBA Finals between the Toronto Raptors and the Golden State Warriors, televised live from Oakland, in Toronto



Formula One F1 - Monaco Grand Prix - Circuit de Monaco, Monte Carlo, Monaco - 2019 Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton on a motorbike in the fan zone REUTERS/Gonzalo Fuentes TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Police remove a climate change demonstrator during a march supported by Extinction Rebellion in London, Britain REUTERS/Toby Melville TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



People sit next to posters and signs placed following protests against the proposed extradition bill, in Hong Kong, China



Palestinian musicians perform to celebrate the breaking of the fast during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, in the walled Old City of East Jerusalem



Old Guard soldiers take part in "Flags-In", an annual event where a small American flag is placed in front of more than 240,000 headstones of U.S. service members buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, U.S.,



72nd Cannes Film Festival - Screening of the film "Mektoub My Love: Intermezzo" in competition - Red Carpet Arrivals - Cannes, France, 2019. Director Abdellatif Kechiche reacts. REUTERS/Regis Duvignau TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Experts: The Cost To Taxpayers Is In The Billions Most Illegal Immigrants In The U.S. Receive Government Benefits



OVERVIEW

Majority of illegal immigrants in US receiving taxpayer-funded government benefits

Central American migrants are arriving by the thousands without a penny to their name. How are they getting by?

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court considers whether to count self-identified illegal immigrants in the 2020 census. Cities worry adding the citizenship question could undercount 6.5 million people. Their argument, however, isn't just about political power but billions of dollars in federal funds states expect. The case underscores what experts say is a growing cost to taxpayers from the surge of Central American families and unaccompanied minors.

"We're talking about billions of dollars in taxpayer benefits over the next few years," said Dan Stein, director of the right-leaning think tank, Federation for American Immigration Reform. "The payout for the taxpayer is enormous and income to the Treasury is miniscule."

A FAIR study in 2017 found illegal immigrants are a net consumer of taxpayer benefits worth more than \$100 billion a year, not including the cost of enforcing

the border.



While federal benefits are supposed to be off limits, in practice many are not. More than 25,000 undocumented workers receive subsidized housing, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Children receive free education and most qualify for English lessons and free school breakfast and lunch.

Illegal immigrants do not qualify for Obamacare but under federal law, hospitals and clinics are required to provide urgent medical care without regard to legal status. Pregnant women are entitled to prenatal and postpartum care under the Women, Infants and Children program. Infant delivery costs are paid for by Medicaid. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found a federal-state immigrant insurance program cost \$2 billion a year in emergency treatment, not including the \$1.24 billion in infant delivery expenses.

Illegal immigrants are not entitled to food stamps, but families with U.S.-born children are. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, 31% of such families use the SNAP program and more than 50% of Central American families in the U.S. use at least one welfare program.

This is especially true of asylum seekers said Art Arthur, a former immigration judge now with the Center for Immigration Studies, an immigration think tank. Arthur said because there is a three to five year lag time between apprehension and court appearance, young asylum seekers put down roots, allowing many to access programs they are initially unaware or afraid to use.



"You're going to buy a house, get a job, have kids," he said. "So their entire life changes, and that means their claim changes. Because of a lack of a bright line for immigration judges, appeals are endless and people don't leave." Recognizing that many illegal workers fill jobs communities need, 26 states offer them *state-funded* benefits. New York state offers up to \$300 a month in cash assistance. Eleven states offer free

or subsidized medical and hospital care. California offers food stamps, legal services and benefits for those over 65 or disabled. Gov. Gavin Newsom recently asked for an extra \$50 million from lawmakers to serve the state's illegal immigrant population.

Such sanctuary states and immigrant-friendly cities are an obvious draw, but others say it is all about finding work not using benefits.

The Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2018 found Central American families may struggle financially in the U.S. but they work (76%) at high rates than native-born Americans (73%).



"At the end of the day people are going to go where their jobs are, not necessarily where the services are," said Ali Noorani, director of the National Immigration Forum. "So yes, 26 states may provide state-funded access to public benefits. But if those states don't have a growing economy and don't have jobs that are open immigrants, much as anybody else, they're not going to see them."

Up to 70% of immigrants apprehended at the border this fiscal year are families or unaccompanied minors claiming asylum. Unlike other border crossers, after six months asylum seekers qualify for work permits and most taxpayer subsidies. But because most are unskilled and uneducated, they earn minimum wage or less.

Almost half, according to the census survey, never finished high school. They

earn 40% less than U.S.-born workers and about 50% of families live in poverty, requiring community support for food and cash for necessities. Some have sponsors, but most are usually immediate families that are not much better off. "There is a cost for communities for sure," Sen. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., said last week outside a Salvation Army shelter in Yuma. "Whether it is in uncompensated care in hospitals or the education system in different ways. It has never really been measured, but it is very real."



Advocates for illegal immigrants argue most studies are flawed because they do not account for their economic contribution to the economy as a whole. Not just because they perform jobs Americans won't, but studies don't account for their lower wage differential that produces cost savings to U.S. consumers.

"We need an immigration system that treats the American taxpayer fairly," Noorani said. "Right now, our immigration system doesn't treat the American taxpayer fairly and I would argue it really treats nobody fairly. At the federal level, what the Congress and the president need to do is work together to create an immigration system that is fair to the taxpayer and 10 or 11 million people who are undocumented."

U.S. officials expect a million additional illegal immigrants this fiscal year, as the Border Patrol is currently apprehending up to 4,000 a day. Most will claim asylum, entitling them to government benefits. (Courtesy <https://www.foxnews.com>)

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AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott signed a new law Monday that clears up which CBD products are legal in Texas and will also allow local farmers to grow hemp as a crop.

The law, which received bipartisan support in the state Legislature, goes into effect immediately. It will allow Texas to set up a federally approved program for farmers to grow hemp as an industrial crop, including procedures for sampling, inspection and testing.



This includes cannabidiol, or CBD, products. While Texans have found oils, tinctures and other CBD goods on store shelves for years, those that contained even trace amounts of THC were technically illegal here.

Abbott, a Republican, did not sign the hemp bill publicly nor did his office return a request for comment on the new law.

"I am excited that we have taken one more step towards giving producers in Texas the opportunity to grow hemp," Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said in a statement.



Gov. Greg Abbott Signs Law Legalizing Hemp Production, CBD Products Sales In Texas



In 2015, Gov. Greg Abbott signed the first bill allowing any growing or sale of marijuana in Texas. The Texas Compassionate Use Act legalized the selling of a specific kind of cannabis oil derived from marijuana plants for a very small group of customers: epilepsy patients whose symptoms have not responded to federally approved medication.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

"This will be another tool for farmers that are looking to diversify their farming operations."

The federal government removed hemp from its list of controlled substances, a move the Lone Star State replicated in April. But unlike the 42 other states who had already opted into industrial hemp production, Texas had not, a decision farmers said was holding them back from tapping into a lucrative and popular crop.

In fact, until Abbott signed the hemp bill into law Monday, state law still defined marijuana and hemp as the same, rendering both broadly illegal in Texas.

Heather Fazio, director of Texans for Responsible Marijuana Policy, called the bill's signing into law "a big step for Texans and one we can all be proud of."

"The Texas Legislature got at least one thing right this session when they legalized hemp. Finally, Texas farmers are no longer cut out of this lucrative agricultural market.

Plus, Texans are now free to use CBD without fear of arrest," Fazio said in a statement.



Cannabis laws were a major issue during the 2019 legislative session that wrapped up May 27. While a bill to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana failed, lawmakers approved an effort to slightly expand who can access medical cannabis under the state's Compassionate Use Act.

The governor has until Sunday, June 16, to make a decision. (Courtesy https://www.dallasnews.com)

Related What new marijuana laws might pass in Texas this year?



What bills are on the table?

Texans for Responsible Marijuana Policy, a coalition that includes NORML and a couple of dozen other groups, is prioritizing two bills this year: one that would decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana and another to legalize marijuana for medical use.

Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso, is sponsoring the decriminalization bill for the third time. In 2016, more than 66,000 Texans were arrested for marijuana possession, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Moody hopes to cut that number down by replacing the criminal penalty for possession of an ounce or less of marijuana with a fine.

"It's fiscally responsible," Moody said of his bill, adding that "we're being smarter on crime, not saddling young people with criminal histories that are going to take them out of the workforce."

Sen. José Menéndez is again sponsoring legislation to expand the state's so-called Compassionate Use Law.

Currently, only Texans diagnosed with "intractable epilepsy" are allowed to use cannabis that contains low levels of the psychoactive ingredient tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC. Menéndez's bill would dramatically expand this law by legalizing medical marijuana for Texans with certain other debilitating conditions, including cancer, glaucoma, HIV, Alzheimer's, PTSD, autism or chronic pain, nausea and muscle spasms.



"Patients should not be arrested for using a medicine that is legal in every state that borders Texas, including conservative states like Oklahoma and Arkansas," Menéndez, D-San Antonio, said in a recent statement. "The Legislature must act and provide medical freedom to those who need it the most."

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