

Illegal Aliens, Endless Health Care Bills

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Immigration: An illegal alien just completed 12 surgeries and a record 374-day stay in a Fresno hospital. For him, it was "free" health care. But for taxpayers, the hospital and patients who ultimately pay, it's another big bill.

Marco Antonio Fuentes had high praise the staff at Community Regional Medical Center who heroically saved his life after he came down with necrotic pancreatitis, a condition that destroyed his intestines. A medical team there rebuilt his gastrointestinal tract, monitored his progress and provided the best of care to him for more than a year.

And the cost? Somewhere in the millions, by all estimates. As an illegal immigrant, he didn't have to pay a thing. The taxpayers, the charity unit and the other patients will have to foot that bill. Fuentes didn't have a word of thanks for them.

Fuentes knew enough to recognize that health care is "free" to all illegals in the U.S. and, like millions of other illegals, already considers it an entitlement.

That's in part because the U.S. government signals it will tolerate illegal immigration, subsidize health care and educate children no matter what the voters say.

The vast influx of illegals without health care is one reason Community Regional is a "safety hospital."

That means it takes all comers — more than 1,000 a year, at a cost of \$100 million — due to a 1986 judicial ruling that requires hospitals to take all visits to an emergency room, no matter how trivial their ailments or, in Fuentes' case, how complicated and costly.

Not surprisingly, under this no-pay setup the entire San Joaquin Valley has a severe doctor shortage.

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The Fresno Bee reports that Fuentes had no insurance and his care came from the hospital's charity fund — whose largest component is "uncompensated" care.

Ultimately, taxpayers pay for this. Worse still, insured patients will in the end subsidize Fuentes' care — starting with that \$400 they get charged for an aspirin.

Since Mexico encourages Fuentes and others to come here illegally, Fuentes' bill should be sent there. But which political leader would insist on such accountability? More to the point, who has the political will to enforce America's borders for America's taxpayers?