



## Schwarzenegger "happy" illegal immigrants have access to health care, education

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California's most famous immigrant, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, spoke out on Friday against those who claimed that illegal aliens were to blame for California's budget crisis. Schwarzenegger's view on illegal immigration has leaned farther and farther to the left, coming full circle yesterday when he declared to The Sacramento Bee's editorial board that he's "happy" they have access to services like emergency health care and education.

Schwarzenegger, a Republican, hasn't always been an advocate of rights for illegals. In 1994, Proposition 187 made it to the ballot in California. Prop 187 was an initiative to make illegal aliens ineligible to receive public health and education services; Bill Clinton criticized it as a piece of "divisive" legislation motivated by "racial energy." It was approved by voters and eventually overturned in Federal court. Arnold Schwarzenegger, before the launch of his political career, voted for Prop 187.

Since his election as governor in 2003, Schwarzenegger has gone about carefully building an argument for granting citizenship to illegal Californians. A major challenge to his stance comes from his own party; on the federal level, Republicans advocate no tolerance for illegals. In 2006, the governor renounced his 1994 vote for Prop 187. In 2007, during a National Press Club speech, Schwarzenegger laid out his plan for California's illegal immigrants.

"One side says—send all illegal immigrants back and build a fence. The other side says—forget about it and give everyone amnesty...What about being realistic and actually solving the problem? There is a totally reasonable, centrist approach to the issue. It is this: secure our borders while at the same time recognizing economic and social reality by providing a guest worker program and a path to citizenship for those already here and meet a certain criteria. That is a mainstream solution."

The California budget crisis has put pressure on the state government to streamline essential programs and get rid of inessential ones. Direct or indirect aid for illegal immigrants has been a center of discussion now that Californians are working with a **\$25 billion deficit**. Instead of blaming the budget deficit on illegal immigration, Schwarzenegger has defended their presence as vital to the economy.

During **his interview with The Sacramento Bee**, Schwarzenegger warned against the political scapegoating of illegal immigrants in hard economic times. "I think it's an easy scapegoat for people to point the finger and say, 'Our budget is out of whack because of illegal immigrants.' It's not. Our budget is out of whack because we have self-inflicted wounds that the Legislature and this state has never really sat down and had the will to go and make the necessary changes that have to be made."

The cost of services to illegal immigrants - estimated at \$4-5 billion annually - is a "small percentage" of the deficit, the Governor added.

His changing position on illegal immigrants may have something to do with how he got his start in America. Schwarzenegger may have been an illegal immigrant at some point in the late 1960s or early 1970s due to **violations in the terms of his visa**.

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