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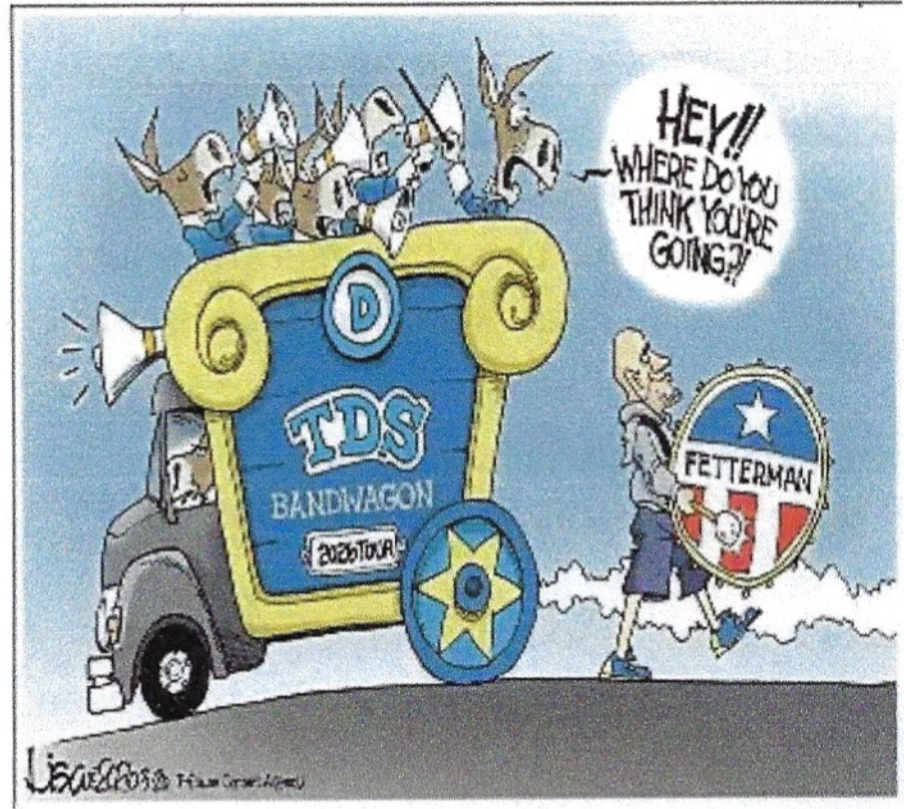
Illegal immigration gives Coloradans more sticker shock

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"The man who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it."



Woodrow Wilson, American president

Who knew it would cost taxpayers so much to provide health care to anyone who lands on the doorstep of Sanctuary Colorado? Evidently, our legislature hadn't a clue.

It turns out it not only costs a lot but in fact runs the tab a lot higher than lawmakers had anticipated. Many times more.

As reported in The Denver Gazette, a program enacted to provide health care to pregnant women and their kids who are in the country illegally has nearly tripled in cost in just a year. Its price tag for next year's state budget is more than six times the original estimate of what lawmakers had expected to spend.

The ironically named "Cover All Coloradans" program was passed into law at the Capitol in 2022 with unanimous support from ruling Democrats and the opposition of all Republicans. Implemented two years later, it now enrolls more than 30,000.

Originally projected to cost the 2025-26 state budget about \$27 million, it wound up costing nearly \$90 million in 2025-26 after enrollment mushroomed from around 5,000 to more than 24,000. With the latest enrollment heading into next year's budget, the price tag will top \$112 million. The total price is even higher, \$151 million, with the balance picked up by the feds.

As if there ever were a good time for a giveaway to illegal immigrants to turn into a runaway at taxpayers' expense — the timing right now couldn't be worse. Compounding the program's sticker shock, the latest revenue forecast for the state government is alarming.

Already way over budget in the current fiscal year, lawmakers face a \$1.5 billion deficit in next year's budget if they maintain their current spending levels, according to updated projections released last week by legislative budget staff.

In other words, tax revenue now forked over by Colorado taxpayers can't keep up with the legislature's voracious appetite for spending. It has lavished on a wide range of programs that have grown government. As noted in The Denver Gazette's report, the legislature and Polis administration have created dozens of new offices and departments costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars over the past eight years.

That's a disturbing development in its own right, one you'd think would prompt the Democratic majority at the Capitol to rein in spending.

And the first cuts should be to subsidies for those who aren't even supposed to be in the country at all — subsidies that have helped make Colorado a magnet for illegal immigration.

State Sen. Barb Kirkmeyer, R-Brighton, a budget hawk and legislative Joint Budget Committee dissident, put it in perspective. Cuts being recommended for Cover All Coloradans may not offset the entire deficit, she said, but they certainly are warranted given pending Medicaid cuts, "to U.S. citizens for kids that have intellectual and developmental disabilities."

It's another case of the legislative majority's fundamentally misplaced priorities.

"From the decisions we've been making, we have not cut enough, and we're still overspending," she said.

It seems her counterparts across the political aisle at the Capitol have been so busy playing doctor to the world, they have overlooked the voters who put them in office — and the taxpayers who have been stuck with the bill.