

# Voices for Children tallies up taxes paid by immigrants

— The Associated Press —

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico Voices for Children said Thursday that illegal immigrants in New Mexico pay an estimated \$1.25 million to \$1.81 million more in taxes than they use in services.

The group, which advocates for policies to improve the well-being of children and families, said people cannot avoid taxes. Anyone buying goods in New Mexico pays sales taxes, and people living in the state pay property taxes, even if indirectly in their rent.

However, federal law prohibits illegal

immigrants from receiving government services or payments except for emergency medical care and primary and secondary education.

They are not eligible for non-emergency medical care, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, food stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, housing assistance or child care subsidies.

Voices for Children estimated taxes by using a formula developed by the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, or ITEP, combining national estimates of the average income of undocumented workers with New Mexico tax rates.

The study said most unauthorized immigrants have been in the country fewer than 10 years.

Estimates of taxes paid by more recent arrivals are slightly higher because they have fewer children — so population figures translate into more families, more households and thus more property taxes paid.

The organization produced two sets of figures — one using the Immigration and Naturalization Service's estimate of 40,000 undocumented immigrants in the state and the other using an estimate of 55,000 from the nonprofit Pew Hispanic Center.

Voices for Children said that under the INS population estimate and average family size of 2.3, undocumented immigrants in New Mexico pay about \$47 million in taxes. Using the Pew population, undocumented immigrants pay an estimated \$64.7 million in taxes.

But calculating that most undocumented workers have been in the country less than a decade, the organization estimated \$50.3 million in sales and property taxes under the INS population figure and \$69.26 million under the Pew population calculation.

Voices for Children said the average undocumented immigrant family pays

about \$2,485 in sales and property taxes. The total would rise to \$2,907 if income taxes are added in.

However, it's believed income taxes aren't withheld from paychecks of all undocumented workers or are not necessarily paid to the government. ITEP and other analysts halve the income tax estimates.

Voices for Children also looked at public education, which it said is the largest cost from undocumented immigrants.

State and local governments pay \$7,331 per student in kindergarten through high school.