

Perry seeks reimbursement for detained immigrants

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press Writer © 2010 The Associated Press

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SAN ANTONIO — Gov. Rick Perry called on the federal government Wednesday to reimburse Texas in full for holding illegal immigrants in state prisons, reviving a symbolic message of border security woes made by other governors in previous years.

Among those governors was Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who as Arizona's chief executive sent Washington invoices for imprisoning immigrants convicted of state crimes. Perry said he would begin doing the same.

"It makes a great deal of sense to me to remind (Napolitano) of her interest in that four years ago, and let's see what we can do about it now," Perry said.

At a campaign stop in San Antonio, Perry said Texas spends \$13.5 million each month holding illegal immigrants who are either serving their sentences or awaiting deportation. He said an estimated 9,000 illegal immigrants are in Texas Department of Criminal Justice custody.

In 2005, Perry was among 14 state governors who asked Congress to provide \$750 million for the Justice Department's State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, which provides states partial reimbursement for locking up convicted illegal immigrants.

A year later, nine governors urged President George W. Bush to reimburse states in full; that time, Perry wasn't among them. Asked why he wasn't among those governors then but was seeking reimbursement now, Perry said he didn't know why that was the case in 2006.

"But we know now that the need is greater than it's ever been before," he said.

Perry spokeswoman Catherine Frazier said later that Perry has signed several letters urging Washington for better funding.

Perry faces a re-election challenge from U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison in the March 2 primary. Hutchison spokesman Joe Pounder said in a statement that Perry's record on illegal immigration "amounts to little more than publicity stunts, mismanaging border security funds and opposing commonsense initiatives to secure the border."
