

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS DID LAWN CARE FOR MITT ROMNEY

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Body

"I don't think I've ever hired an illegal in my life."

Mitt Romney on Tuesday, October 18th, 2011 in a Republican presidential primary debate

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THE RULING: MOSTLY FALSE

Mitt Romney's hiring decisions in lawn care continue to dog him.

The former Massachusetts governor, in an Oct. 18, 2011, Republican presidential debate, faced accusations from primary foe Rick Perry that he hired illegal immigrants to work at his home.

The two had this tense exchange:

Perry: "Mitt, you lose all of your standing, from my perspective, because you hired illegals in your home and you knew about it for a year. And the idea that you stand here before us and talk about that you're strong on immigration is on its face the height of hypocrisy."

Moderator Anderson Cooper: "Gov. Romney?"

Romney: "Rick, I don't think I've ever hired an illegal in my life. And so I'm afraid -- I'm looking forward to finding your facts on that, because that just doesn't --"

Then they proceeded to talk over each other, but Romney's claim was virtually the same as one we've checked before.

The first time Romney was running for president, in 2006, the Boston Globe broke a story about his hired help.

The Globe said Romney, for an entire decade, used a landscaping company that relied on illegal Guatemalan immigrants. Employees at the company, Community Lawn Service with a Heart, said its owner hadn't asked them to provide documents showing their immigration status.

The workers said they were paid \$9 to \$10 an hour, in cash, for working sometimes 11 hours a day.

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The newspaper sent a team of reporters to Guatemala after getting a tip that **Romney** had hired a landscaping company notorious for using **illegal immigrants**. They tracked down three former landscapers who claimed to have been in the United States illegally when they worked on **Romney's lawn**.

One of them, Rene Alvarez Rosales, said he worked for **Romney** eight years landscaping his **lawn**, occasionally getting a "buenos dias" from **Romney** himself. Others told the Globe of casual encounters with **Romney** over the years, during which he had never inquired about their status.

Romney's first response to reporters' questions about the matter: "Aw, geez."

Later, his campaign issued a statement that the governor knew nothing about the immigration status of the landscaping workers, and that his dealings were with owner of the company, a legal **immigrant** from Colombia. The owner told the Globe that **Romney** never asked him about the status of the workers.

When the Los Angeles Times followed up with another story, a **Romney** spokesman said, "Gov. **Romney** has no information or knowledge to corroborate the Globe's allegations. He hired a legitimate **lawn** service company and he knows the owner as a decent, hardworking person who is a legal resident."

When **Romney** said he "did not" have **illegal immigrants** working for him, we rated his statement Mostly False, given the credible evidence that undocumented **lawn care** laborers from Guatemala worked at his home for years, and his careful statements about his knowledge of their status.

In this case, his wording is slightly different, that he had not "ever hired an **illegal** in my life." It's clear from the Globe's reporting that he hired a landscaping company and that employed **illegal immigrants**. He has made the argument he hired the company, not the specific workers. Still, they were doing hired work on his property. We find his claim Mostly False.

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