

# NPG Negative Population Growth

## A Proposed National Population Policy

NPG believes that a national policy to turn U.S. population growth around is critically needed. (See the Position Papers and the FORUM series in the Publications List on our web site, [www.npg.org](http://www.npg.org).) In this paper, we offer a series of specific proposals as to how to accomplish that goal. We recognize the political resistances in the way of such policies, but still we think it useful to set forth our recommendations in one compact document, for the use of those who may come to share our concerns.

A population policy, for the United States or elsewhere, must come out of a consensus that the perils of not having a policy far outweigh the inconveniences of having one, but the federal government (and sometimes state and local governments) must take certain specific actions if such a consensus is to succeed. This paper will suggest what actions they will need to take.

The following three areas for action are presented in rough order of their urgency in arresting U.S. population growth.



### Immigration Policy

Immigration in its many forms has become the main driver of America's population growth. Newly arriving immigrants of all categories -- legal, quasi-legal and illegal -- now add at least 1.1 million to yearly U.S. population growth of 3.3 million. Net new arrivals and births to immigrants together total 2.1 million, nearly two thirds of all current population growth, and presaging more future growth from their second and later generation descendants. The total foreign-born population reached 35 million in 2005.

#### Plain Talk and Tough Strategies for Immigration Curbs

There are three interacting streams in today's mass immigration: illegal immigrants, legal immigrants and "quasi-legal" (or fictional "temporary") immigrants. All bring in people for extended or permanent stays, adding them to the nation's resource-consumptive population base. The new entrants compete for jobs, particularly with less skilled residents. All streams are now largely ungoverned by any effective numerical limits or rational comprehensive management.

NPG advocates complete elimination of illegal and quasi-legal immigration and reduction of current legal immigration by 80 percent.

#### Illegal Immigration: Raising the Costs and Risks

Illegal immigrants are those 500,000 to 600,000 aliens each year who sneak across America's borders, or use fraud to pass through our ports of entry, or acquire a temporary visitor visa and remain permanently.

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Assuming an aroused public can inspire our sluggish government with a will to enforce, there are many promising ideas already circulating among restrictionist legislators, enforcement professionals, and reform-minded citizen groups.

- Sustained, regular enforcement of existing rules and penalties would significantly curb illegal immigration.
- Mandatory imposition of fines and/or jail terms -- for illegal entry, illegal presence, document and visa fraud, and knowingly hiring illegal aliens -- would hasten the end of illegal immigration.
- More physical and technical barriers to entry, with sufficient manpower to maintain and police them.
- A streamlined process of deportation, which is now mired in interminable appeals.
- Regular verification of legal immigration status during transactions with government, banking, health care and real estate sectors to detect illegal aliens and ensure their removal.
- Sizable increases in the number of investigators, border patrol agents, federal attorneys, judges, and more detention space and personnel to make these steps work.
- Systematic enlistment of local and state law enforcement agencies to cooperate with the Federal government in identifying and turning over illegal aliens to the DHS (Department of Homeland Security).

All these tougher measures would conform to prevailing public opinion, as demonstrated in the rush of congressional bills now seeking them (See House Bill HR 4437 passed in December 2005) and in opinion polls. In a 2003 poll conducted for NPG, two-thirds or more of the respondents supported mandatory prison terms and fines for illegal immigration, detention of illegal aliens by state and local government, and strict application of fines or criminal penalties on employers who knowingly hire them.

### **Legal and Quasi-Legal Immigration: An 80 Percent Reduction**

Most of the official immigration numbers count annual grants of legal residency -- a little less than one million in 2004 -- rather than the real-world inflow of people.

And there are several million more in the pipeline for green cards, and the accompanying right to bring in families. Naturalization of the alien opens the door without limits to his spouse, children and parents, and, within limits, to his adult children and his siblings. "Chain migration" powers both illegal and legal immigration.

- To stop the chain migration snowball and immigrant-fed population growth, legal immigration should be cut to not more than 200,000 per year, a level supportive of eventual reduction of U.S. population. An 80 percent cut will mean eventually ending all family reunification.

The new ceiling of 200,000 admissions should be used to satisfy core U.S. national interests.

a) Humanitarian -- Up to 30,000 for permanent humanitarian admission of the most endangered refugees and asylees. All other humanitarian admissions would be for short terms only.

b) Work -- 110,000 for skilled professionals, technicians, artists and entrepreneurs and

their immediate families. There would be no admissions of semi-skilled or unskilled workers.

c) Special Needs -- Up to 10,000 slots to cover an array of special immigrant allocations, such as religious ministers, rare specialty workers, military recruits, and foreign employees of the U.S. government.

d) Existing so-called “temporary” visas for workers and professionals -- These now account for 220,000 “quasi-legal” immigrants a year. They should be abolished and skilled labor needs met under the 200,000 limit.

e) Transitioning Away from Family Reunification -- Family reunification should be phased out. Petitions of U.S. citizens for nuclear families approved before enactment would be honored. For five years thereafter 50,000 slots a year would be allotted for qualified spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens under strict eligibility rules. Afterward, the 50,000 numbers would be prorated among the three permanent categories.

Other steps to keep the numbers low are:

- An absolute ban on amnesties and Mariel-type mass “emergency” admissions.
- An end to citizenship by birth for “anchor babies” born here to illegal and temporary visa aliens, now seen as required by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Anchor babies born to illegal alien parents accounted for 380,000 births in 2004, nearly 40 percent of all births to immigrants. Bills regularly introduced in Congress would end automatic citizenship with a clarifying statute. If legislation fails, the constitution should be amended.

For further exploration of the necessity of these actions to halt and eventually reverse our U.S. population growth, please see our NPG Position Papers: *Zero Tolerance for Illegal Immigration: An Urgent Policy Need* and *Toward Negative Population Growth: Eighty Percent Fewer Legal and Quasi-Legal Immigrants*. Both papers are dated March 2006.

## **Lower Immigration: Good for the U.S. and for the World**

The United States should feel no shame or guilt for the needed steep reductions in immigration. The nation historically has been the most generous receiver of immigrants in the world. Now the U.S. needs to be generous to the world in other ways, by curbing its profligate consumption and waste emission.

For America to continue population growth through mass immigration will mean greater income inequality, pandemic environmental malaise, increased competition for energy and other resources, and ever more regimentation. The end of the migration option in the U.S. will have a negligible effect on the population growth of the poor countries.

## **Fertility**

Women in traditional societies have tended to regard the number of their children as either a matter of fate or of their husbands' preference. In industrial societies, rights and opportunities for women, and the cost of rearing and educating children, generate strong incentives for lower fertility. In the United States, fertility is presently the least important source of population growth. Fertility of the educated and prosperous is lower than for the poor and ill educated, but even so it is below replacement level for American Indians, non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks. Hispanics are far above

replacement level. That perhaps is associated with the recent arrival of many of them from high-fertility societies and with the very low work force participation rate of young Hispanic women. Fertility would not be a problem if they adopted the levels of the other groups, but this can only be accomplished through non-discriminatory policies. We must help the most fertile to become aware that high fertility has immense social consequences or, failing that, alter their personal calculation of the benefits and disadvantages of having many children.

Unlike migration, fertility in the United States is not determined by government policies, but governments can influence the decisions people make about having children. The key is to persuade women to stop at two. That would lead to a population turnaround in this century, even with annual net immigration of 200,000, since some women have no children, or one. Already, more than 70 percent of American women stop at two, or before. The problem is to convince the others. Once the political climate creates a role for government, political leaders can play a major role in that effort. It is an epochally important task if we are to maintain decent standards of living as we move from fossil fuels into renewable energy.

Various specific societal measures would help to discourage fertility above two children.

- Endorsement of the two-child family by political leaders.
- Education of parents and children in the immediate and long-term benefits of smaller families.
- Educational programs aimed at helping young women enter the work force with the job skills needed to make a decent living.
- Ensuring that birth control information and materials are universally available. That should include, as a last resort, the availability of abortion as embodied in *Roe vs. Wade*.
- Advocacy of abstinence by government, social and religious groups, on practical and moral grounds as appropriate, to discourage teen pregnancies.
- The elimination of tax benefits for children beyond the second child.
- Priority in public housing programs for families with fewer than three children.

Some counties in the United States have experimented with payments to young girls who avoid pregnancy. More Draconian methods have been tried in other countries, such as higher user fees for access to maternity care for women with several children, or priority access to good schools for small families, or limiting welfare payments to large families. These are available if the measures above are insufficient, but a guiding rule should be not to disadvantage the child, once born, in an effort to dissuade the mother.

## Assistance to Others

The terrorism we face today is in part a product of high fertility, unemployment and desperation in the Arab world. We cannot expect that a world divided between the prosperous and the desperate will be a peaceful one. That alone is sufficient reason to help poor countries to address the problem of overpopulation, of which most of their leaders are well aware. Beyond that, success in bringing birth rates down will mean more employment and better wages for the coming generations -- which will lessen the drive to migrate and thus eventually make our own immigration problems less serious.

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- We should stop playing domestic politics with our population assistance programs, and put them on a reliable and continuing footing.
- We need to change the priorities in our overseas aid programs to ensure that population programs abroad are funded at whatever level the recipient governments can effectively use.
- We should encourage changes that promote the status and self-esteem of women in less developed countries, which demonstrably leads to smaller families, healthier and better-educated children, and an escape from the poverty that stalks the poor countries.



Taken together the measures we recommend are designed to gradually halt and then reverse both U.S. and world population so that they can eventually be stabilized at a sustainable level. We judge that a sustainable population for the United States should not exceed 150 million, and should probably not exceed two billion for the world.



## About NPG

Negative Population Growth (NPG) is a national nonprofit membership organization with over 30,000 members nationwide. It was founded in 1972 to educate the American public and our political leaders about the devastating effects of overpopulation on our environment, resources, and standard of living. We believe that our nation is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long-range carrying capacity of its resources and environment.

NPG advocates gradually halting and then reversing our U.S. population growth so that, after an interim period of population reduction, our population can be stabilized at a level that would be sustainable indefinitely, and afford an adequate standard of living for all, in a healthy environment. We believe that in order to be sustainable indefinitely our population should not exceed 150 million, its size some two generations ago. We are convinced that goal could be reached within several generations by non-coercive tax incentives to encourage parents to have not more than two children, coupled with a substantial reduction in immigration.

## Statement of Purpose

Human population in the past century has grown to four times the total growth from the origin of the species until 1900.

Coupled with sharply rising levels of resource consumption and economic activity in the more prosperous nations, that growth has imposed unprecedented strains on the ecological systems that support us and other living things. It has led in many parts of the world to rising unemployment, intensifying water shortages, increasing competition for resources, and the specter of hunger. It is affecting the world's climate, and the consequences -- rising sea levels, more powerful hurricanes, heat waves, and more intense floods and droughts -- are becoming apparent. Population growth has depended on fossil fuels, which are running down. Future generations must depend increasingly on renewable energy, which is unlikely to be recoverable in amounts sufficient to support more than a fraction of current world populations.

U.S. population has also quadrupled since 1900. The U.S. and the world are in a condition of overshoot.

NPG (negative population growth) is the ideal of a turnaround in U.S. and world population growth until we approach less destructive and more tolerable levels, perhaps at numbers that were passed two or more generations ago.

Our objectives are to

- document the harm humans are inflicting on ourselves and our support systems and arrive at some rough idea of "optimum population" -- the human numbers that can live at a decent standard of living within the constraints of environmental sustainability.
- suggest the policies on migration and human fertility that would make it possible to come down to such numbers.
- persuade our government at all levels, and other governments afflicted by population growth, to pursue such policies. and
- dissuade them from the pursuit of policies and behavior that, intentionally or not, lead to population growth.

To those ends, we promote concepts such as "the two-child family", lowered rates of migration to the United States, and the development of conceptual systems such as the steady state economy. And we comment on the demographic implications of present and proposed policies and legislation.

NPG, Inc. is unique among national organizations in calling for a turnaround in population growth and describing the means to achieve it.

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This paper, as well as other NPG publications can be found on our internet website at <http://www.npg.org>.

NPG is a national membership organization founded in 1972. Annual dues are \$30 and are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. Please write or call for a list of available publications.

Negative Population Growth  
2861 Duke Street  
Suite 36  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
voice: 703-370-9510  
fax: 703-370-9514  
internet: [www.npg.org](http://www.npg.org)  
e-mail: [npg@npg.org](mailto:npg@npg.org)