

Hispanic/Latino Immigration: A Key to Kentucky's Economic Vitality

The Crisis of the Developed World

There are only three developed countries now with population growth; Australia, Canada, and the United States and only because they are "Settler Nations" that allow immigration. If not for immigration the United States, like Europe and Japan would be experiencing significant population decline. Ben Wattenberg, American Enterprise Institute states, "If America doesn't continue to take in immigrants, it won't continue to grow in the long run. ...American needs to keep growing, and we can fruitfully use both high- and low-skill immigrants.

Kentucky's officially counted Hispanic/Latino population from the 2000 Census totaled 59,955 or 1.5% of total population. The 1990 official count of Hispanics/Latinos was 21,984 so the growth was 37,955 or 172.6% between 1990 and 2000. The newly released 2006 American Community Survey, ACS, estimates the 2006 Hispanic/Latino population in Kentucky at 85,938, an increase of 43.3% since 2000. The undercounted Hispanic/Latino population would significantly increase the Hispanic/Latino population in Kentucky and many think the undocumented Hispanic/Latino population is significantly larger, and would increase the Hispanic/Latino population, probably by 2 to 3 times, more than the official Hispanic/Latino count.

An Aging United States Workforce

America's large workforce age population has moved from a young workforce to an older workforce as the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964 have moved from their 20's and 30's in 1985, 20 years ago to their 40's and 50's in 2005. In January, 2006 the first Baby Boomer turned 60 and will be followed by other Baby Boomers for the next 20 years. Does an aging United State population understand the importance of diversity and immigration for their future well-being?

The young adult workforce did not leave but never existed as the Baby Boom was replaced by the Baby Bust of 1965 to 1976. Similar trends took place across the United States. Kentucky is one of the least likely states in the nation for a woman to have a baby. With a total fertility rate, tfr, of 1.95 Kentucky is below the national total fertility rate of 2.04 and both are below the replacement level of 2.10. Only one state East of the Mississippi River has a replacement total fertility rate, Georgia at 2.12, and all other states will decline in population without internal/domestic or international migration.

Kentucky's competitive future with a declining young adult population will be determined by its investment in a diverse population and its immigrant population. The educational levels of our minority and immigrant population vary significantly, from highly educated to less educated. Kentucky must increase the educational level of those "at risk" educationally for its own competitiveness. Quality schools serving the growing minority population and programs serving the Limited English Proficient students are critical to economic prosperity of our state.

The Value of a Growing Minority and Immigrant Population

Minority and Immigrant populations will enhance urban living and repopulate rural area. The benefits of diverse cultures can revitalize our state. We need to bring our undocumented Hispanic/Latino population out of the shadows. We need to ensure all Hispanic/Latino children are enrolled in school. We need to develop programs that help foreign born children raised in the United States qualify for professional jobs when they complete their education, nurses, physical therapist, etc.

We need to provide documents, green cards, guest worker ID's and Driver's License, etc. that help document our Hispanic/Latino population. Kentucky can address the future and grow or live in the past and decline. The United States will solve the problem of undocumented immigration by the real solution of increasing the level of legal immigration.

We need to hire the Minutemen, not to build walls on the Mexican border but to open up Lemonade Stands and hand out free Lemonade and balloons to get Hispanics to come across the border. Mexico is now at an official tfr of 2.4 and some suggest it is already at only 2.1, replacement level only, with Mexico's child population projected to decline between now and 2025 and even greater decline by 2050. Mexico population of young adults now accounts for their growth and by 2025 it will be their middle aging population, a prescription for economic growth and less need to immigrate to the United States.

A New Future of the World: The Wake Up Call

We all hear about the World's exploding population but what we know is totally wrong! The United States Census Bureau projects the World's population will grow from the 2000 population count of 6,073,229,544 to 9,404,251,020 by 2050, an increase of 3,331,021,476 or 54.8% more people. However, only 10% of the population growth will be under age 25 with 90% being ages 25 and over and 65% being ages 45 and over. The World is experiencing a longevity crisis, not a fertility crisis. The battle for a young workforce will be a worldwide reality and the United States is winning the battle for a young workforce as the only developed country with any real population growth, totally due to immigration. Tear down those walls, build Lemonade stands, keep the United States great!

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