

Washington must get serious about water security in the Southwest

By Laura McSwain
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THE most promising and relevant point in Alan Halaly's report on the governors' gathering in Washington, D.C., was the call for increased state and federal

NEVADA VIEWS

investment in water infrastructure (Jan. 21 Review-Journal). Nothing could be more important to our national water security.

What is too often left out of the Southern Nevada Water Authority narrative — especially when urging people to stop using water outdoors — is the larger context. Southern Nevada was an oasis, and it is being degraded by policies designed to advance growth at significant, and now visible, environmental cost.

Much of the West's settlement and expansion was possible because the federal government built systems to capture, store and deliver water. The Bureau of Reclamation's original mission was to develop water resources to sustain communities and economies in the arid West. Since the 1990s, that mission has steadily shifted toward managing scarcity and rationing what was once treated as a dependable supply.

This is not a new warning. As far

back as 1883, John Wesley Powell cautioned Congress: "Gentlemen, you are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights, for there is not sufficient water to supply the land." We are now living with that inheritance.

At the same time, we watch flooding events, natural runoff and two major rivers send vast amounts of water out to the ocean uncaptured, even as residents are told to accept restrictions and higher costs in the name of "conservation." These bureaucratic demands for sacrifice are justified as necessary to preserve room for continued growth, data centers, lithium mining and other industrial demands.

But shifting the burden onto households while expanding high-demand development is not a solution. It is a recipe for deeper conflict and a warning sign. Even if all states agree to cuts, is conservation alone enough to secure water for national priorities, or does it simply ration what remains while postponing the real work of building supply and resilience? It also raises an uncomfortable question of affordability, as households are asked to pay more and do with less, while the cost of administering scarcity continues to grow.

It is time for the federal government to come to the table and do

what it is tasked to do: protect the long-term stability of the country and the natural systems that sustain it. National security begins with water security. That responsibility includes enforcing the 1922 Colorado River Compact and water laws that made settlement, investment and reliance in the West possible in the first place. If we are serious about sustainability in the West, we must invest, seriously and immediately, in the infrastructure and planning needed to secure water currently being wasted during flood events and flowing into the ocean without capture.

Nevada is uniquely positioned to contribute significantly to national priorities aligned with the Genesis Mission on AI and energy innovation, including in critical minerals, geothermal resources and Nevada-based expertise emerging from our universities, research institutions and water recycling and reuse innovation. But none of that is possible without first securing water. Future growth depends on a federal water-security initiative that treats water as the foundational asset it is for the economy, the environment and the people who live here.

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VICTOR JOECKS
COMMENTARY

Dems face a doom spiral

PRESIDENT Donald Trump isn't just deporting illegal immigrants. He's deporting the people Democrats depend on to offset their demographic challenges.

The Census Bureau recently released updated population figures through last June. The country grew slightly, but that growth wasn't equally distributed. Many red states, such as South Carolina, Idaho and Texas, grew significantly. In one year, each of those states saw its population increase by more than 1 percent.

Blue states aren't keeping up. California, Illinois and New York now have fewer people than in 2020. In contrast, Florida's population is up around 9 percent.

There's an important takeaway here. Blue states typically implement many leftist ideas. They have high taxes and regulations that strangle construction. They have woke schools that teach students to hate America. They force female athletes to compete against boys.

As a result, millions of people have moved out.

There's another important takeaway. After the decennial census, states gain or lose congressional seats based on population. Those adjustments change the Electoral College. States receive electoral votes based on how many House and Senate members they have.

The forecast from the American Redistricting Project shows Democrats losing nine seats in reliable blue states. Two swing states, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, would each lose a seat. Those 11 seats would go to states that Trump won in 2024. A different projection from Jonathan Cervas at Carnegie Mellon University has solid red and lean-red states gaining 13 seats.

If these projections hold, the GOP presidential candidate in 2032 could lose Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Nevada and win the presidency. The Democrat candidate would have to win those swing states and either Arizona or Georgia.

Liberals could help mitigate this by having more babies. Blue states can't make adults stay, but newborns don't have a choice. That's unlikely to happen. The Institute for Family Studies found that in 2023 the 10 states with the highest fertility rates were deep-red states. The 10 states with the lowest fertility rates were deep-blue states. Further, conservative women have more kids.

This trend is unlikely to reverse. Just 25 percent of women who voted for Kamala Harris said they wanted children, a recent New York Times poll found. Among Trump voters it was 43 percent. Both numbers skew low because the response group includes adults 45 and older.

You can see the progressive dilemma. People are fleeing the misery caused by their policies, while its adherents reproduce at low levels. Democrats could try better governance. Building more homes and providing affordable energy and safe streets don't have to be only Republican positions.

Instead, the left is relying on immigrants, both legal and illegal, to prop up dwindling population numbers. The decennial census currently counts illegal immigrants within a state's borders. No, that doesn't make sense. But it may not continue. Missouri recently filed a lawsuit contending that "Missouri and other states will be collectively robbed of 11 congressional seats and electoral votes" if illegal aliens are counted in the 2030 census. If the census stops counting illegals, it'd mostly be blue states losing House members. Texas would drop a couple of seats.

Regardless, those who are deported definitely won't count in the census.

There isn't a simple way out of this for Democrats. As residents flee, these blue states will likely become more heavily Democrat. That will lead to more aggressive leftist policies, which will cause more residents to leave and further reduce birth rates. These factors will move blue states even further left — and so on. The Democrats have entered a demographic doom spiral.

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Ben Golbeck. The Associated Press

Immigration enforcement controversies are hurting President Donald Trump and Republicans with Hispanic voters.

The GOP's Hispanic headache

Republicans are losing ground they made up in the past election

IT was only one state senate race in Texas. Low-turnout, off-cycle elections are seldom good predictors of larger trends. And the Democrats had a better candidate: a working-class aircraft mechanic running against a hardline MAGA



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ideologue heartily endorsed by President Donald Trump.

Still, Democrat Taylor Rehmet won by 14 points in a district Trump had carried by 17 — a 31-point swing. The stunning outcome sent tremors of trepidation, even terror, rippling through Republican ranks. There are many reasons for their distress, but here's a major one: plunging support among Latino voters, who played a critical role in giving Trump a second term.

In 2024, 46 percent of Latinos voted Republican, according to national exit polls, up from 32 percent in 2020 and 28 percent in 2016. In Texas, Trump drew 55 percent of the Latino vote — the best showing ever for a Republican.

But in the state senate race, that trend shifted sharply. "Hispanic voters, according to the exit polls, were voting 9 to 1 for the Democrats," said Bud Kennedy, a political columnist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, to local station KVUE. "All you heard about last year, when Hispanic voters, men in particular, voted for Trump — all that is completely gone away. They were all solidly Democrat."

"Whatever it is, the GOP was making recently among Latinos in Texas has begun to really revert," said Jason Villalba, a former GOP

state lawmaker who now leads the Texas Hispanic Policy Foundation, to The Wall Street Journal. "That will have implications around Texas and around the country."

For years, Democrats assumed Latinos would vote like Black Americans, the party's most loyal group. But in some ways, they more closely resemble other immigrant groups, whose voting patterns are more fluid.

Many Latinos backed Trump because they were disillusioned with the Democrats' failure to restrain prices, and they're now abandoning Republicans for exactly the same reason. In a Pew poll last November, 70 percent of Latinos said they disapproved of the way Trump is handling his job, with 55 percent feeling that disapproval "very strongly." And 61 percent said Trump's policies "have made economic conditions worse."

"This rising discontent showed up clearly last November in the New Jersey governor's race, won easily by Democrat Mikie Sherrill.

"The Democratic Party clawed back much of the ground it had lost with Hispanic voters in the 2024 presidential race," reported The New York Times in November. "The outcome suggests that President Trump's surge of support among Hispanic voters last year may have been fleeting, or at least not transferable to other candidates in his party."

All voters are affected by inflation, political scientist Matthew Wilson at Southern Methodist University told Axios, but the Latin electorate is "especially attuned to cost of living and economy issues. They're disproportionately affected by working class discontent, so there's more swing in the electorate."

This economic anxiety has been badly aggravated by Trump's increasingly visible, and violent,

crusade against immigrants. Many Latinos backed Trump's promotion of secure borders that, he told them, enhanced their safety by keeping out rapists and drug dealers.

But today, reports Pew, two out of three Latinos disapprove of the administration's approach to immigration. Many victims of Trump's policies are not criminals, or faceless "others," but their friends and neighbors — even themselves.

The Associated Press visited a swing congressional district in northeast Colorado that is about 40 percent Hispanic. "In more than two dozen interviews across the district, every voter who identified as Hispanic spoke of being offended by Trump's immigration crackdown," reported The AP. "Many — U.S. citizens all — feared for their own safety."

As one of them, 30-year-old Jennifer Hernandez, put it: "I don't know if, just because of my last name or how I look, they might go after me."

The BBC heard similar sentiments from Oscar Sarmiento, a Houston electrician, who said, "There's a lot of people who are good people. Law-abiding immigrants. ... They want to be in the U.S. and contributing. They're following the rules. Like grandmas, moms, aunts and uncles. Leave those people alone."

"The broader Hispanic community certainly feels let down," Javier Palomarez, president of the Hispanic Business Council, told Politico. "We didn't get what we thought we were going to get."

For too long, the Democrats took Latino voters for granted. Now Republicans are making the same mistake. They paid for it in Texas, and they could pay again in November.

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