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**Hearing on S. 424**  
**U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**June 3, 2009**

**No New Categories of Immigration Should Be Considered  
Until Overall Green Card Numbers Are Dramatically Reduced**

(To Meet Goals of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform and of  
President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development)

**Testimony by Roy Beck, Founder & CEO**  
**NumbersUSA Education & Research Foundation**

I thank the Committee for the opportunity for NumbersUSA to testify about S. 424 and its proposal to create a new – numerically unlimited – category of immigration.

**Principles for Considering Immigration Legislation**

First, a word about how NumbersUSA analyzes immigration policy.

I am an author and former newspaper reporter who founded NumbersUSA as a non-profit, non-partisan organization in 1996 to carry out the immigration recommendations of two national commissions. We now have 900,000 on-line activist members who support that mission.

The two commissions were:

- President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development. It recommended that annual green card numbers be cut low enough to allow the U.S. population to stabilize. Environmental sustainability in this country was seen as impossible if Congress continued to force massive U.S. population growth through immigration.<sup>1</sup>

- The bi-partisan U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (chaired by Barbara Jordan). It recommended deep cuts in immigration to remove the economic injustice that current immigration numbers impose on the most vulnerable members of our national community.<sup>2</sup>

NumbersUSA examines every immigration proposal on the basis of how it would advance or impede the numerical recommendations of the two Clinton-era commissions.

These commissions recognized that immigration policy has been assembled piecemeal without thought to how the total number of green cards affects the overall national community.

Thus, a bill like S. 424 will tend to be examined entirely outside its environmental impact in a time of grave environmental concerns – and outside its economic impact despite our 9% unemployment rate.

But nearly every new adult permanently added to the U.S. population through immigration legislation would be a potential competitor to unemployed and underemployed American workers. And every new immigrant increases the total U.S. carbon footprint and ecological footprint (and, because of increased consumption once they arrive here, increases the global footprints, as well).

Every piece of our complex immigration policy caters to a particular special interest. But the combined effect of all those pieces on our nation's population growth has profound consequences for the entire national community in terms of the public infrastructure deficit, economic disparities and stewardship over our natural resources.

In many ways, it would make more sense for S. 424 to be reviewed by the Senate committees on Energy and Natural Resources, or on Environment and Public Works, or on Health, Education and Labor. The giant population increases caused by immigration policies have enormous implications for the ability of those committees to reach their goals.

I hope the Judiciary Committee will consider all those implications every time it looks at immigration legislation in this Congress.

## Getting From One Million To 250,000

All of the long-term population growth in the United States since 1972 has been due to federal immigration policies. So when we talk about the challenges of population growth in this country, we are almost always talking about the challenges of federal immigration policy.

In 1972, Americans chose to reduce the U.S. fertility rate to below the replacement level of 2.1.<sup>3</sup> It has been just below that level ever since. Yet, U.S. population growth doesn't reflect that at all:

- The 1990s saw the largest U.S. population boom in our nation's history – much higher than the famous baby boom of the 1950s.<sup>4</sup>
- The fevered U.S. population growth remains similar in this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>
- Even the annual number of births is setting all-time records.<sup>6</sup>

There is only one reason why U.S. population trends are the opposite of those recommended by President Clinton's sustainability commission. And that reason is that Congress has repeatedly overridden the American people's choice of a stabilizing future and forced massive population growth through a quadrupling of annual green cards since 1965.

Every time U.S. citizens deal with extra costs, congestion, sprawl or other deterioration in quality of life due to explosive population growth, they can thank one Congress after another that has either raised immigration numbers or maintained the new higher levels.

Yet, I'm not aware of a single Congress that stated a goal of increasing U.S. population growth, let alone stated why individual Americans' lives would be improved by such forced growth. For the most part, the explosive increases are the result of carelessness and unintended consequences while Congress does the bidding of one special interest group after another.

The most recent official numerical results of Congress' piecemeal approach to immigration policies are these:

- 1,107,126 green cards issued to immigrants (2008)<sup>7</sup>
- 725,000 illegal foreign workers and dependents (as an annual average 2000-2007)<sup>8</sup>
- 1,015,000 annual births to legal and illegal immigrants (2005)<sup>9</sup>

Let's do a comparison on the number over which you have the most control: annual green cards.

Until the first Earth Day in 1970, legal immigration had run about 250,000 a year on average. The most recent average during the 1950s and 1960s was just above that number.<sup>10</sup>

But a succession of congressional actions raised the 250,000 green cards to a million-a-year level by 1990, and it has been there ever since.<sup>11</sup>

In order to meet the sustainability commission's recommendations of moving toward a stabilized U.S. population, green card numbers would have to be cut back to that traditional level – between 250,000 and 300,000.

Even with that kind of cut, the Census Bureau projects that our population will still increase by around 50 million more people by 2050 (instead of the 130 million if we maintain current immigration levels).<sup>12</sup>

One example of the impact of 130 million more people is our efforts to increase electricity generation from wind. The Department of Energy has announced \$93 million in Stimulus money for wind-power development. DOE has a very ambitious goal of wind producing 20% of electricity demand by 2030, after a lot more investment than this initial \$93 million. Unfortunately, immigration-driven population growth will add more new electricity demand during that time than all the new wind power added.<sup>13</sup>

### **A Matter of Profound Environmental Importance for Posterity**

Like nearly all of the sustainability issues this Congress will address, the setting of green card numbers is not primarily for those of us living in the next decade. Rather, it is for our children and grandchildren later this century – and for the generations of Americans who will inherit our country long after we are gone.

This was clear in the instructions to President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, which was established to find ways "*to bring people together to meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing the future.*"

It determined that however immigration policy might be serving some narrow interests of the present, the resulting population growth was severely endangering the future.

Addressing this specific issue, the Population and Consumption Task Force of the sustainability council concluded:

*“As a matter of public debate, immigration is a sensitive and explosive issue, and both legal and illegal immigration must be addressed with great sensitivity and care in order to advance the debate.*

*“We acknowledge these impediments to easy and informal dialogue, and we urge that participants take appropriate care so that a reasoned discussion of immigration and the American future can begin.*

*“We believe that reducing current immigration levels is a necessary part of working toward sustainability in the United States.”<sup>14</sup>*

### **New Categories Require Multiple Off-Sets**

In a nutshell, our concern about S. 424 is that it represents another piecemeal congressional act that would increase the numbers of green cards each year with no regard for the resulting increase in population pressures and costs throughout our society.

That is exactly opposite the direction that Congress should be moving in immigration policy.

Immigration-driven U.S. population growth is making the really difficult tasks of meeting carbon goals, energy goals, infrastructure goals and economic goals close to impossible without fundamentally slashing the American standard of living.

If Congress were in the midst of moving annual immigration toward the 250,000 goal, there might be room for considering bills like S. 424 if each of the new green cards created in a bill was accompanied by a “multiple off-set” that not only would make up for the new green cards but would advance the overall reduction goal.

That is, a bill should provide for cutting three green cards from other categories for each new one issued under the bill.

Unfortunately, though, I have seen no sign that Congress is considering reductions in green cards this year – despite there being 14 million Americans looking for jobs and unable to find one. Rather, news stories are full of quotes from Members of Congress and others talking of giant increases in the number of green cards to be issued over the next few years – quite apart from S. 424.

NumbersUSA and the 900,000 Americans we represent urge you to view S. 424 the way that two national commissions have recommended all immigration legislation be viewed: as a piece of the larger fabric of our national community. By adding green cards without reducing others, S. 424 directly contradicts the recommendations of President Clinton's sustainability commission and of the late Barbara Jordan's immigration commission.

Given the larger context of current immigration levels, passing S. 424 would be irresponsible to the environment, to future generations and to the most economically vulnerable members of our national community.

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<sup>1</sup> The President's Council on Sustainable Development. <http://clinton4.nara.gov/PCSD/Publications/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> The United States Commission on Immigration Reform. <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/>

<sup>3</sup> 1972 Data from National Center of Health Statistics. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United States' Total Fertility Rate is expected to be 2.05 by 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Perry, Marc and Paul Mackun. "Population Change and Distribution: 1990 to 2000." United States Census Bureau. April, 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-2.pdf>. The United States' population grew by 32.7 million people during the 1990s, far surpassing the population increase (28 million) of the "Baby Boom" era (1950-1960).

<sup>5</sup> United States Census Bureau. National Population Projections (Released 14 August 2008). <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/2008projections.html>. According to the Census Bureau, the United States' population will reach 310.2 million by the year 2010, an increase of 28.8 million.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, Brady, Joyce Martin, and Stephanie Ventura. "National Vital Statistics Report: Births: Preliminary Data for 2007." National Center for Health Statistics. Vol. 57, No. 12. 18 March 2009. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57\\_12.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_12.pdf). The number of births recorded in the United States rose to 4,317,119 (2007) – a 1% increase over 2006. The figure for 2007 represents the highest number of births ever registered in the United States.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Homeland Security. "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2008." <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/LPR08.shtm>.

<sup>8</sup> Camarota, Steven. "Immigrants in the United States, 2007: A profile of America's Foreign-Born Population." Center for Immigration Studies Backgrounder. November, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the United States Census Bureau.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Homeland Security. "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2008." <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/LPR08.shtm>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> United States Census Bureau. National Population Projections (Released 14 August 2008). <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/2008projections.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Energy. "Secretary Chu Announces \$93 Million from Recovery Act to Support Wind Energy Projects." Press Release. 29 April 2009. <http://www.energy.gov/news2009/7358.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> President's Council on Sustainable Development. Introduction to Task Force Report on Population and Consumption. [http://clinton4.nara.gov/PCSD/Publications/TF\\_Reports/pop-intr.html](http://clinton4.nara.gov/PCSD/Publications/TF_Reports/pop-intr.html).