

One World Resources Group (OWRG)

You are the president and founding member of the One World Resources Group (OWRG), a grassroots environmental organization born in New England in 1972 at the dawn of the modern environmental movement. OWRG's founding principles were strong and steadfast, recognizing pressing environmental issues to be principally of global rather than local significance. Its mission is to educate and lend research and resources to some of the world's most dire environmental problems, including climate change, water and air pollution, and sprawl.



Today, your organization boasts a robust national membership, regional offices dot the country, and affiliate offices exist around the world. While OWRG does not enjoy the same membership numbers as some of the most recognizable global environmental organizations, donations are nevertheless healthy and some of the world's leading experts in environmental economics, public health, population studies, and environmental science sit on the board of trustees, contribute research, and publish studies under the OWRG banner.

Until recently, OWRG's focus on international participation in matters concerning environmental management has appeared sound and well accepted. In the past five years, however, the United States has pushed an increasingly "protectionist" agenda that suggests its attention to environmental issues may in fact stop at the country's borders. In addition, the downswing in the economy has turned many citizens' attentions inward. These trends have led to greater tension between your group and the American government, and you have also seen your membership numbers begin to drop. As the president of OWRG, you have many concerns, not the least of which is the vitality of your organization. However, your stance on global activism is tied to a firm conviction that the best interests of the United States on the environment cannot be met by ignoring global environmental concerns. As a result, you are faced with some important decisions—about the future of your organization, OWRG's stance on immigration and population, and global versus local environmental protection.



Because of OWRG's leadership and interest in the role of immigration on the environment, you have been invited to be on this Blue Ribbon Commission on Immigration-Related Costs & Benefits, set up by the President and Congress. Your organization has chosen you to be its representative, and together you have come up with the following main ideas to share during the meeting.

Immigration and the Environment

While many believe that the U.S. must take a stronger stance on its own environmental protection and natural resource management by securing its borders (or curbing immigration), OWRG research suggests differently. Specifically, you strongly believe that erecting fences around the U.S. does nothing to solve environmental problems. Rapid population growth and its effects on the environment are global problems. Moreover, American protectionism actually does more harm to the global environment—it forces impact and destruction on places that are more ecologically sensitive. For these reasons, you believe OWRG’s mission to address and attack global environmental issues should not change and U.S. immigration should not be reduced.

Immigration is also a symptom of environmental instability—many families migrate because environmental safety and natural resources are not available in their homelands, or because multinational businesses misuse, pollute, and destroy their natural resources. To refuse to allow immigration isn’t going to help solve environmental problems—rather, if someone claims to care about the environment, they should be working to limit the environmental impact of U.S. companies.



Despite the national trend of “securing the borders,” you believe that it would be unethical to protect U.S. environmental resources and achieve U.S. population stabilization at the expense of workers and their families from other nations who would not be allowed to move here to better their lives. In addition, your organization is concerned about the controversial aspects of taking a stand on reducing rapid population growth. However, it’s true that reducing rapid population growth on a global scale is an important environmental concern, and you might consider shifting some research and advocacy energy to this topic in the near future as a means to protect the global environment. To date, OWRG’s trustees have been hesitant to openly acknowledge that reducing rapid population growth is a goal for the organization—in hopes that other groups could tackle the issue and take the political “heat” for the connotation it carries.

Policy proposals

You are confident that your counterparts will bring strong arguments to the meeting regarding immigration control and protection of America's natural resources. Your conviction that these solutions are not in the best interest of global environmental protection lead you to propose that:

- the U.S. holds a series of roundtable meetings to discuss issues of rapid population growth and environmental protection with those countries that contribute the most to global population growth and the major private and public sector organizations that contribute research and funding to environmental management projects;
- the U.S. commits to a “slow-growth” plan for immigrants that provides pro-rated incentives for educational attainment, job placement, and family size; and
- the U.S. commits to increasing and sustaining the programmatic budget for the United States Agency for International Development's environmental programs in developing countries by \$50 million per year for 10 years. This additional funding will be used to address natural resource management, climate change, population, and public health projects in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Immigration is never an easy topic. However, more restrictive U.S. immigration policy might be both counterproductive and politically damaging, without having any positive net impact on global environmental protection. Perhaps the U.S. should consider an immigration incentive program that “rewards” immigrants based upon educational attainment levels, language capabilities, professional background, and overall family size. However, you wouldn't support any policy that led to discriminatory effects based on national origin, race, or culture—these incentives should not block certain groups who don't already meet the conditions for acceptance into the country.

Through investment in economic development programs in developing countries, more environmental rules for U.S. companies operating abroad, and a legalization process for undocumented workers, the U.S. is more likely to achieve a goal of better global environmental management without tarnishing its reputation as a country open to and welcoming of immigrants. Environmental protection and economic development go together. A richer country can afford to invest in more environmentally friendly manufacturing goods and services.

You are also open to exploring other ideas that would maximize the ability of new immigrants to integrate smoothly and productively into society.

