

From the President



Vanishing Amazon rainforests . . . American super-highway traffic jams . . . Drought-stricken African plains . . . The crowded chaos of a Middle Eastern street bazaar.

What's the connection between these places and between these challenges?

It's population and the impact it has on people and on the planet.

We live in unprecedented times. World population has doubled to over 6.2 billion since 1962.

The toll on people and on places? It's beyond calculation.

Thirty-four years ago, a tiny band of visionaries founded Zero Population Growth. It grew into America's largest grassroots population organization.

Much has changed since 1968 when our far-sighted founders acted on the stark challenge posed by explosive population growth. Back then, solutions were tougher to see and to understand.

Now we know for certain that population stabilization can be achieved through universal access to information, services, and education and through the full empowerment of women.

But something important has changed since ZPG's early days. And it's not good news. Back then, we had a bipartisan series of U.S. Presidents who saw the need for international voluntary family planning. They saw the connection between population growth and the twin plagues of extreme poverty and wholesale environmental destruction.

Now we have a President, George Bush, who just doesn't get the population connection.

On the very first business day of his Administration, Bush signed the Global Gag Rule—crippling family planning efforts in scores of countries with explosive population growth. Then, he strangled international family planning by blocking the release of vital funding for UNFPA—funds approved by a bipartisan majority in both Houses of Congress.

You and I understand the critical connection between family planning and a better, safer, less-crowded world. We get it. Public health professionals all over the world get it. But George Bush just doesn't get the population connection.

Effective family planning requires two key ingredients: information and money. The president chokes both when he panders to far right extremists.

These are harsh words. But the facts speak for themselves.

George Bush refuses to listen to family planning professionals. He refuses to heed the wishes of the America people, 90 percent of whom believe that citizens everywhere should have the right to freely decide family planning issues.

We must make President Bush—and the Congress and people everywhere—understand the clear connection between population growth and virtually every challenge facing our planet.

Recently, our national Board of Directors unanimously decided that "business as usual" wasn't going to enable us to achieve our mission of population stabilization. As part of that decision, they changed our name—to Population Connection.

Why? Because we must help people everywhere understand the connection between population and the environment, and reproductive rights, and social justice, and education, and so much more.

Our mission hasn't changed, even though our new name may take some getting used to.

As ZPG, it took us 34 years to recruit 70,000 members. That's simply not enough members if we're going to change the world by stabilizing population. And that is—and always has been—our mission.

ZPG's founders knew that you can't move forward by standing still.

Only time will tell if our new name will help people recognize the critical connection between population stabilization and a better, safer, and less-crowded world.

But we must be willing to embrace new ideas, new names, and new approaches if we're going to help create a better, safer, less-crowded world.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter H. Kostmayer". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Peter H. Kostmayer
President