

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

**Though the election** is now over, Americans are still ruminating over the “great divide” between the conservative “red” and progressive “blue” regions. Indeed, it has become conventional wisdom that this division will dog American politics for decades to come.

But a careful look at the 2004 election results, along with underlying population shifts in battleground states, suggests this schism may be more fluid than assumed. Indeed, Karl Rove wannabes would be well advised to pay less attention to the red-blue divide and more to differences between stagnating “Old America” voters and those transforming the fast growing “New America” states.

The Old America states, which traverse most of the Great Plains, Midwest, New England and the Northeast megalopolis, are generally older and whiter, except for cities with large black minorities. New America states, mostly in the Sun Belt, are absorbing residents at three times the pace of their Old America counterparts, with gains largely consisting of young people, empty-nest retirees and new immigrant minorities – especially Hispanics. And while the political and cultural predilections of Old America are fairly predictable, New America’s politics are up for grabs.

Among the 23 solid Republican states – those in which Bush beat Kerry by more than

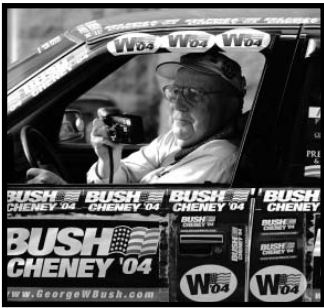
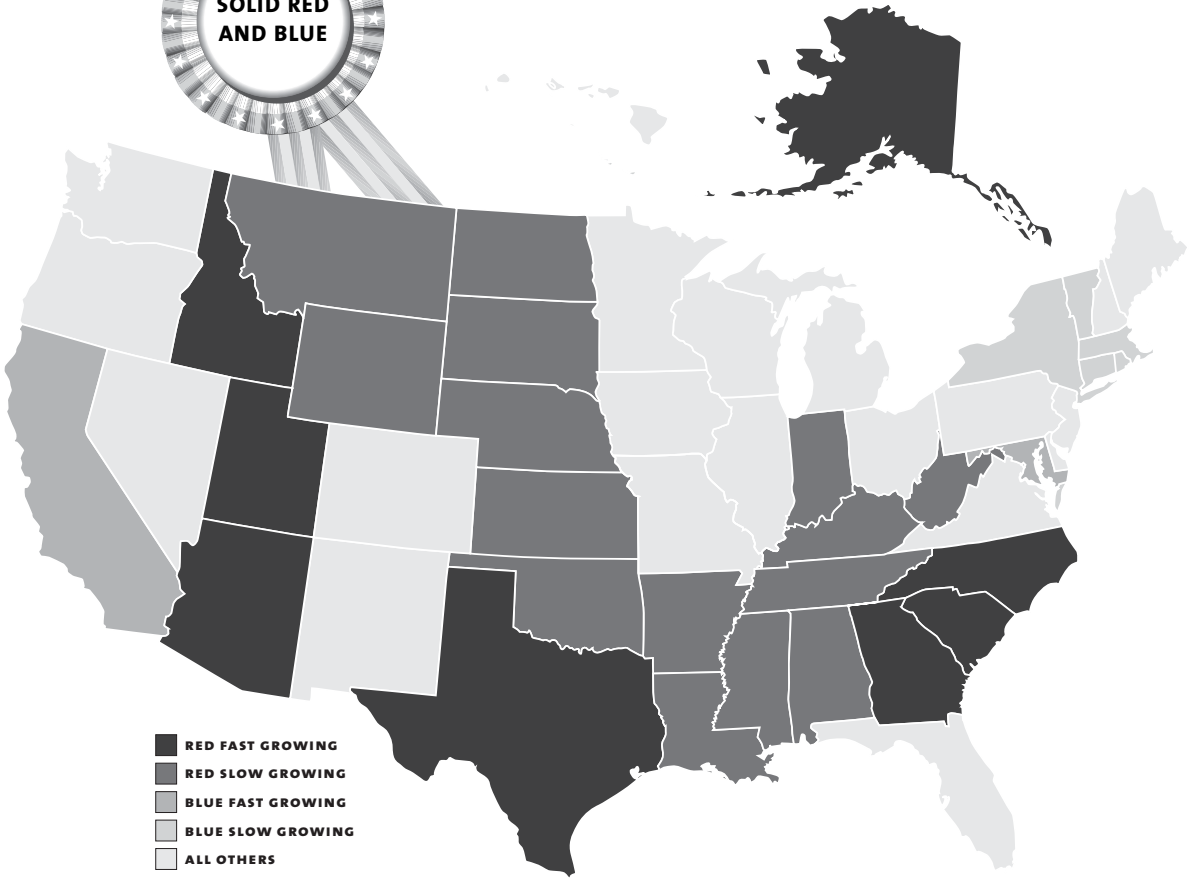
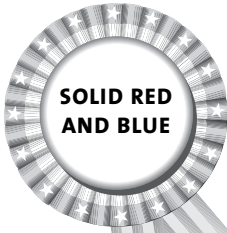


10 points – eight are in New America and represent 94 electoral votes. These include migration magnets Georgia, Texas, Arizona and both Carolinas. By contrast only two fast-growing states (California and Maryland) are solidly blue.

The key to future election victories plainly lies in the battleground states of New America. The 2004 results identified 10 such states, largely in the West and Southeast, which represent 88 electoral votes. Republicans took five of these states, including the biggest prize: Florida. But the Democrats could have won the presidency if they had taken three of the smaller states (Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico), where the vote was close and where two groups that favor Democrats, Hispanics and Gen Xers, are a significant part of recent growth. Moreover, because their new residents are in search of a fresh start, the pandering formulas that have sustained political coalitions (liberal and conservative) in Old America are not likely to work here.

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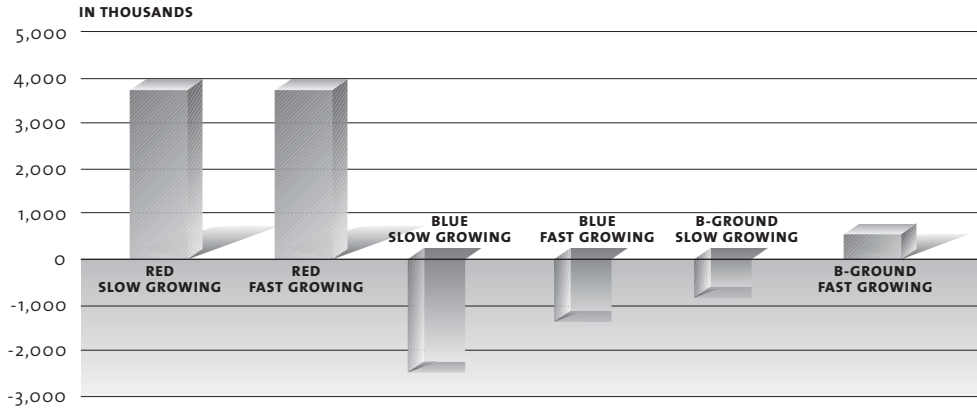
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; MIKE SIMONS/GETTY IMAGES; ©ALEX MAJOLI/MAGNUM PHOTOS; AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; ELSA/GETTY IMAGES; CHARTS BY BRUCE SANDERS



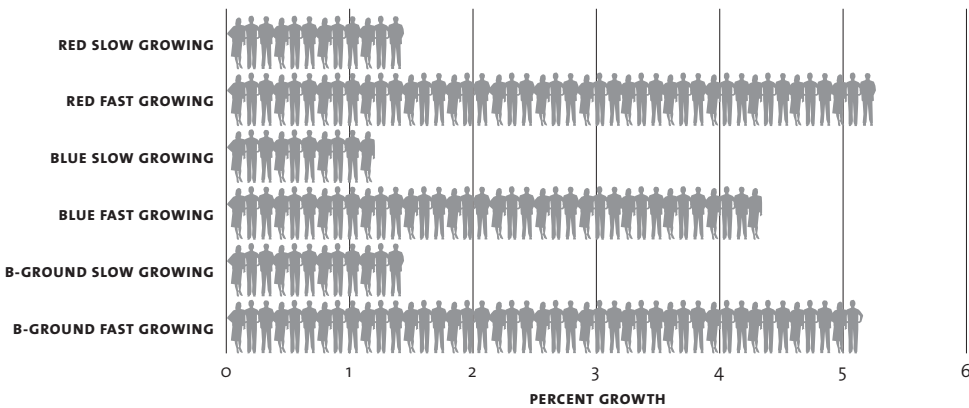
**CHARTICLE**



**NET GAIN: BUSH OVER KERRY,  
AMONG TOTAL BUSH AND KERRY VOTERS)**



**POPULATION GROWTH, 2000-2003**



SOURCE: William H. Frey analysis of US Census sources and 2004 election returns



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