



# Editorial: Texas' 'fastest-growing' label requires leadership

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Texas' urban areas are having their Sally Field moment: *People like us. They really like us.*

According to the most recently released data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Dallas-Fort Worth has the fastest-growing population in the United States. From July 1, 2011, to July 1, 2012, our population increased by almost 132,000 people. That's like having the entire city of Abilene pick up and move here — and you could add another Addison, to boot. The Houston-Galveston area was second, growing by more than 125,000.

The state's cities were also among the biggest gainers in terms of percentage. Midland was tops in the country, with a 4.6 percent increase, and its neighbor, Odessa, was fifth (3.4 percent), confirming the impact of the oil, gas and wind power energy boom in West Texas. Ever-popular high-tech hub Austin-Round Rock (3.0) was seventh.

The state also has four of the 10 fastest-growing *counties*, and 11 Texas counties are in the top 50.

We could go on and on. It's pretty heady stuff. But such population gains are also a reminder of the tremendous responsibility facing state leaders. Statewide growth has happened because of state-to-state migration, movement from rural areas to urban areas, immigration and young people staying in cities and having families. Those people would not be moving — or staying — if it weren't for low-tax, low-regulation policies that have helped businesses flourish and create jobs.

State leaders are to be commended for creating such a pro-growth climate. But it doesn't take very long driving along Interstate 635, or I-35E, or I-30 to realize there is a flip side to growth. Our infrastructure is simply not keeping up with demand — particularly in urban Texas. Roads and bridges need upgrading and expanding. Schools need to be built. And if you thought the drought had already strained our water supply, imagine what it will be like with hundreds of thousands more Texans.

As hard as state leaders have worked to create an environment that nurtures growth, it could all start coming apart with stunning quickness. Texans' taxes are low because state leaders have been frugal. But that frugality also means our infrastructure has fallen behind.

This dance between providing fiscal stewardship and ensuring the basic needs of a growing society has been the challenge for leaders since time immemorial. How well lawmakers in Austin and in our local city halls can pull off that two-step will determine whether this current boom ultimately busts.

Hopefully, these latest census numbers will impart a sense of urgency at the state Capitol to deal directly and quickly with these issues and not be sidetracked by the social-politics sideshows. We don't have the luxury of wasting time.

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