



## **The Political Demography and Geography of the Intermountain West**

**October 8, 2010  
8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Greenspun Hall Auditorium  
University Nevada, Las Vegas**

**Hosted by:**

### **Brookings Mountain West**

Brookings Mountain West is a partnership between UNLV and the Brookings Institution, the world's leading think tank, based in Washington, D.C. This initiative brings Brookings' high-quality, independent, and impactful research to a wide range of issues facing the dynamic Intermountain West region. Brookings Mountain West builds upon the work of Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program, which focuses on helping metropolitan areas such as Las Vegas grow in robust, inclusive, and sustainable ways. Brookings scholars collaborate with UNLV faculty and students and engage business, university, political, and community leaders from across the entire Mountain region to address issues that shape the West.

## **The Political Demography and Geography of the Intermountain West**

The Intermountain West region, including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah, is the new swing region in American politics. Many national observers and commentators have only a superficial understanding of the profound economic, political, and social changes that continue to reshape this region. Brookings Mountain West is pleased to offer a collection of contemporary research papers on recent demographic trends that alter this region and its politics. These studies, including a public opinion survey that explores attitudes on state and national politics, alternative energy, education, deficits, health care, immigration, and other topics illuminate the political landscape of this region on the eve of the 2010 elections and in advance of the 2012 presidential race.

**Registration and Reception** **8:00 – 8:30 a.m.**

**Introduction and Welcome** **8:30 – 8:45 a.m.**

Robert E. Lang, Professor and Director, Brookings Mountain West and The Lincy Institute, UNLV

### **SESSION I**

**1. *America's New Swing Region: The Political Demography and Geography of the Mountain West*** **8:45 – 9:15 a.m.**

The 2008 Presidential election showed the political importance of the Mountain West, America's new swing region. Changing demographics and shifting geographical voting patterns have put this region in play between the two parties and competition is sure to be fierce for many years to come. This paper examines the political demography and geography of states in the Mountain West in anticipation of this November's elections and the 2012 Presidential election.

Authors: Ruy Teixeira, Visiting Fellow, Brookings Institution; Joint Fellow,  
Center for American Progress and the Century Foundation  
William Frey, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Discussant: David Damore, Associate Professor, **9:15 – 9:30 a.m.**  
Department of Political Science, UNLV

**2. *The Metro Politics of the Intermountain West*** **9:30 – 10:00 a.m.**

The Intermountain West region may be America's new swing region. The region's suburbs are where the battle lines between the parties form. This paper will look at the region's metropolitan political dynamics and predict how they will shape the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Authors: Robert E. Lang, Professor and Director, Brookings Mountain West and  
The Lincy Institute, UNLV  
Thomas Sanchez, Professor and Chair of Urban Affairs and Planning,  
Virginia Tech

Discussant: David Damore Associate Professor, **10:00 – 10:15 a.m.**  
Department of Political Science, UNLV

**BREAK** **10:15 – 10:30 a.m.**

## SESSION II

1. *Hispanics and the Changing Racial Demographics of the Intermountain West* **10:30 – 11:00 a.m.**

In the past decade, Hispanics accounted for more than half of the nation's population gains, while whites accounted for less than a fifth. The minority vote played a significant role in Obama's victories in Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado. Issues such as immigration will make the Hispanic vote crucial in November. This paper examines the rising significance of Hispanics and other racial minorities in the Intermountain West electorate.

Author: William Frey, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Discussant: Maria Raquel Casas, Associate Professor, Department of History, UNLV **11:00 – 11:15 a.m.**

2. *Millennials and Politics in the Intermountain West* **11:15 – 11:45 a.m.**

The Millennial generation was distinctively Democratic and liberal in the 2008 elections, as well as in 2006 and 2004. Using national surveys conducted in 2009 and 2010, as well as exit polling from 2008, the political views and partisan dispositions of Millennials in the Intermountain West will be compared with older adults in the region and with their Millennial counterparts elsewhere in the U.S.

Author: Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research, Pew Research Center

Discussant: Andy Kirk, Professor, Department of History, UNLV **11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**LUNCHEON** **Student Union Ballroom** **12:00 – 1:30 p.m.**

Topic: *The Immigration Issue: Nevada, Arizona, and the Nation*

Panel: Ron Brownstein, Political Director, Atlantic Media Company  
José Cárdenas, General Counsel, Arizona State University  
David Damore, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, UNLV

Moderator: Robert E. Lang, Professor and Director Brookings Mountain West and The Lincy Institute

## SESSION III

1. *Education in the Intermountain West* **1:30 – 2:00 p.m.**

This paper provides baseline comparative data across the six intermountain west states regarding commonalities and differences in the region related to current K-12 education policy. Among the topics to be explored are: demographics, state funding issues, state accountability issues, and the political challenges to improving K-12 education.

Author: Teresa Jordan, Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, UNLV

Discussant: Lee Bernick, UNLV Interim Dean, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs **2:00 – 2:15 p.m.**

**2. *Public Opinion in the Intermountain West***

**2:15 – 2:45 p.m.**

This paper will present results of a major new survey of the Intermountain West states. The survey will examine the distinctive political, policy and cultural attitudes of Intermountain West residents and assess their likely impact on the region's policy agenda moving forward. Survey results will also be linked to the shifting demographic profile of the region to assess likely political effects from these changes.

Authors: Ruy Teixeira, Visiting Fellow, Brookings Institution; Joint Fellow, Center for American Progress and the Century Foundation  
Karlyn Bowman, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

Discussant: Ronald Brownstein, Political Director,  
Atlantic Media Company

**2:45 – 3:00 p.m.**

**CLOSING REMARKS**

**3:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

Robert E. Lang, Professor and Director, Brookings Mountain West and The Lincy Institute

## Profiles



**Lee Bernick** holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Oklahoma. Prior to being named UNLV Greenspun College of Urban Affairs Interim Dean in 2008, Professor Bernick served as chair of the Department of Public Administration at UNLV since 2000. His research and teaching areas of expertise include fiscal administration, executive and legislative roles of government, state government, and human resource management.



**Karlyn Bowman** is a senior fellow at American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Her research areas include public opinion and polls, American politics, and the media. She regularly updates her AEI Public Opinion Studies on terrorism, the Iraq war, taxes, the environment, abortion, economic insecurity, and other topics. Ms. Bowman writes regular features on pulse opinion for *The American* and its online edition.



**Ronald Brownstein** political director of Atlantic Media Company—one of America’s broadest-reaching and most influential distributors of political news—he produces sharp contemporary analysis on politics, the media, healthcare, and the whole range of issues informed by his strong sense of America’s political and national history. Twice a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize cited for “the clarity, consistency, and quality of his political reporting,” he is a prolific and penetrating columnist on politics and policy, appearing regularly in the *Atlantic*, *National Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Ron Brownstein is, as the *Economist* said, simply “one of America’s best political journalists. Before taking over the political coverage for Atlantic Media Company, Brownstein served as the national political correspondent and a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* from 1990 to 2007. Brownstein served as chief political correspondent and columnist for *U.S. News and World Report* for seven months in 1998. He has also appeared frequently on *Meet the Press*, *This Week with George Stephanopolous*, *Face the Nation*, the *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, and *Washington Week in Review*. From 1998 through 2005, he served as an on-air political analyst for CNN. His book, *The Second Civil War: How Extreme Partisanship Has Paralyzed Washington and Polarized America*, was named one of “ten books to curl up with” for 2007 by the *New York Times*.



**Maria Raquel Casas** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. A graduate of Yale University she has taught at the University of Wisconsin, Madison as a visiting professor. She is the author of *Married to a Daughter of the Land: Interethnic Marriages in California, 1820-1880* (University of Nevada, Las Vegas Press, 2007). She is also the author of an article in *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (Oxford Press, 2005) and various entries in *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Indiana University Press, 2006).



**David Damore** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at UNLV. His primary research interests are campaign and elections. Damore is asked to comment on Nevada politics and government for a variety of local, national, and international media outlets. He received his BA from University of California, San Diego (1992), M.A. from the University of Georgia, Athens (1995), and his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Davis (2000).



**William H. Frey** is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program and a research professor in population studies at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research. Mr. Frey specializes in issues involving state and regional populations, migration, immigration, race, aging, political demographics, and the U.S. Census. He has authored or coauthored over 150 articles and books, including *America by the Numbers: A Field Guide to the U.S. Population* (New Press, 2001) and *The Allyn & Bacon Social Atlas of the United States* (Pearson, 2008). Mr. Frey has been a contributing editor of *American Demographics* magazine. He frequently discusses demographic trends in national media venues.



**Teresa S. Jordan** is a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Prior to joining the UNLV faculty in 1990, she was the Director of Research and Evaluation in a large Arizona school district. Her previous work experience includes head of a private consulting firm that provided staff development and special education support services to public school systems, private school administrator, speech-language pathologist, and special education early childhood teacher. Her policy and research expertise is in public school finance, particularly funding for special needs youth, state level educational accountability systems, and school improvement programs. Her recent public policy research includes (1) a comprehensive cost study of BIA-funded schools; (2) a plan for capacity-building program to help BIA-funded schools meet national standards; (3) a comprehensive study of the state school funding formula in New Mexico; (4) the development of a funding index to allocate fiscal resources to districts to provide programs and services for at risk youth, and (5) the development of a state-unit accountability program for the New Mexico public school.



**Scott Keeter** is the director of survey research at the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. He is the coauthor of four books, including *A new Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen* (Oxford University Press, 2008), *The Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (Yale University Press, 1996), and *Uninformed Choice: The Failure of the New Presidential Nominating System* (Praeger, 1983). His other published research includes articles and book chapters on survey methodology, political communications and behavior, and health care topics. Since 1980, Mr. Keeter has been an election night analyst of exit polls for NBC News. He previously served as chair of standards committee of the American Association for Public Opinion Research and is currently councilor-at-large for the Association. Previously, Mr. Keeter was a professor of political science and department chair at George Mason University and Virginia Commonwealth University.



**Andy Kirk** is professor of history at UNLV. His research and teaching focus on the intersections of cultural and environmental history in the modern U.S. with a special interest in the American West. He also leads UNLV's public history program, an initiative that specializes in innovative cooperative federal and regional research partnerships. Current projects include: an eight-year partnership with the National Park Service to research the historic and cultural resources of Western National Parks, the Nevada Test Site Oral history Project <http://digital.library.unlv.edu/ntsohp/>, and the Autry National Center Fellowship that tracks graduate students through a special material culture program culminating with a research residency at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. He also serves on Preserve Nevada, a statewide cultural research and preservation group. Preserve Nevada's unique research and advocacy efforts linking cultural preservation and environmental sustainability have been featured in publications including *the New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Preservation Magazine*, *Public History News*, *Docomomo-US*, *Preservation Forum*, and *the Chicago Tribune*. Kirk received his B.A. (1989) and M.A. (1992) from the University of Colorado, Denver and his Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico (1998).



**Robert E. Lang** joined the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) in January 2010 as a professor of sociology and UNLV Director Brookings Mountain West at UNLV. He also serves as executive director of The Lincy Institute at UNLV. In 2008, he was the co-author with Mark Muro of the Brookings Institution report, "Mountain Megs: America's Newest Metropolitan Places." Prior to coming to UNLV, Dr. Lang served as professor of urban planning and director of the Urban Affairs and Planning Program at Virginia Tech's National Capital Region in Alexandria, VA. He was also co-director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia. Dr. Lang is the editor of the scholarly journal *Housing Policy Debate* and serves as a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a fellow at the Urban Land Institute, both in Washington, D.C. In 2008, Dr. Lang was a Fulbright Fellow at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. In 2006, he was a visiting distinguished

professor at Arizona State University. Dr. Lang was also recently a planning and development fellow of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and a visiting fellow of the University of California. Prior to joining Virginia Tech, Dr. Lang was director of urban and metropolitan research at the Fannie Mae Foundation in Washington, D.C. Dr. Lang received a Ph.D. in Sociology from Rutgers University, where he also taught sociology and urban studies. He was a research associate at the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. Dr. Lang's research specialties include suburban studies, real estate, world cities, demographic and spatial analysis, housing, and metropolitan governance. He has authored more than 150 academic and professional publications on a wide range of topics and has developed many new urban concepts such as "Boomburbs," "Edgeless Cities," and "Megapolitan Areas."



**Thomas W. Sanchez** is Professor and Chair of Urban Affairs and Planning at Virginia Tech, editor of *Housing Policy Debate*, review editor of the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Nonresident Senior Fellow of the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, and chair of the Transportation Research Board Committee on Social and Economic Factors in Transportation. He has been on the faculties of Iowa State University, Portland State University, University of Utah, and Virginia Tech. His research and writing focus on the social impacts of land use change, transportation planning, environmental justice, and transportation equity. He co-authored *The Right to Transportation* for the American Planning Association; and *The Social Impacts of Urban Containment* published by Ashgate. He holds a Ph.D. in City Planning from Georgia Tech.



**Ruy Teixeira** is a Senior Fellow at both The Century Foundation and American Progress. He is also a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, where he recently co-directed a joint Brookings-American Enterprise Institute project on political demography and geography, "The Future of Red, Blue and, Purple America," and wrote a series of reports with William Frey on the political geography of battleground states in the 2008 election. He is the author or co-author of six books, including *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*; *The Emerging Democratic Majority*; *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*; and *The Disappearing American Voter*, as well as hundreds of articles, both scholarly and popular. He also writes Public Opinion Snapshot, a weekly feature featured on the CAP and TCF websites. Teixeira's book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, written with John Judis (Scribner, 2002), was the most widely discussed political book of that year and generated praise across the political spectrum, from George Will on the right to E.J. Dionne on the left. It was selected as one of the best books of the year by *The Economist* magazine. Teixeira's recent writings include "Demographic Change and the Future of the Parties," "The European Paradox" (with Matt Browne and John Halpin), "New Progressive America," "New Progressive America: The Millennial Generation" (with David Madland), and "The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class" (with Alan Abramowitz).