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# Arizona tops Nevada in population growth

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Republic Washington Bureau  
Dec. 21, 2006 04:08 PM

WASHINGTON - Scoot over, Nevada! Arizona has ended your 19-year reign as the fastest-growing state.

And we were the rightful champions last year, too, only we didn't get credit until today, when the Census Bureau released revised 2005 figures.

Boosted by immigrants and newcomers from other states, census estimates today show Arizona led with a population growth rate of 3.6 percent in the past year, followed by Nevada (3.5), Idaho (2.6), Georgia (2.5) and Texas (2.5).

Overall, Arizona added 213,311 people, including about 32,000 immigrants and 130,000 people moving from other states.

That brings the population to more than 6.1 million and makes Arizona the 16th largest state, passing Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin just since 2000.

The nation's biggest population loser: Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Louisiana.

Last year, the Census Bureau reported that Nevada's 3.5 percent gain from 2004 to 2005 made it the fastest growing state, edging out Arizona's increase of just under 3.5 percent.

But updated numbers for that period show that Arizona's population actually rose by 3.6 percent, ahead of Nevada's 3.5 percent.

"We're proud to be number one," said Jeanine L'Ecuyer, a spokeswoman for Gov. Janet Napolitano. But she said managing that growth is a key, attached to a large number of separate issues such as adequate roads, housing, schools and water.

"Arizona still has running room - it's not facing immediate growth restraints," said Robert E. Lang, a co-director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech and a visiting distinguished professor this spring at the School of Public Affairs at Arizona

State University.

Nevada has the shrinking development possibilities surrounding Las Vegas, water-supply concerns and a housing-cost spike that kicked in nearly a year before Arizona's.

The South was the biggest regional gainer, picking up about 500,000 people. The West added 53,000 people from other parts of the U.S. The Northeast had a net loss of 375,000 people and the Midwest 184,000.

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