The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Reversing the Birth Rate Decline

By John and Andy Schlafly

April 2, 2024

Cultures as different as Italy and South Korea are facing the same crisis: declining birth rates that have fallen far below what is needed to sustain a population and an economy.

Italy just reported another drop in its birth rate to its record low, decreasing by a startling 34.2% since 2008. There were nearly twice as many deaths as births in Italy last year, and the average number of children per woman has declined to only 1.2, far below the 2.1 necessary for a population to survive.

"Every year I look at the birthrates and it's kind of depressing," Elon Musk told Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome last year. "One can't depend on other countries for immigration. Italy is the people of Italy. Please make more Italians."

South Korea, a prosperous nation with more Christians than any other faith, is in panic mode as its birth rate per woman fell to only 0.72 in 2023 and is projected to fall further this year. The country we saved in the Korean War is on a path to self-destruction by failing to have enough children.

Measures being considered in South Korea are instructive because the United States is on a similar course, as our birth rate has continued to fall since Obama was elected president in 2008. Young women are the demographic most influenced by political ads, and billions have been spent by the Left in promoting every alternative other than starting a family and having children.

CBS News recently reported that a South Korean company Booyoung is providing employees with a bonus of $75,000 for each new child that they parent. South Korean tax law allows companies to treat such bonuses as business expenses up to that amount, while American tax law generally fails to incentivize having and raising children.

Booyoung Chairman Lee Joong-keun candidly predicts that if the birth rate decline in South Korea continues, then "Korea will face a crisis of national existence 20 years from now, including a decline in the economically productive population and a shortage of defense personnel to ensure national security and maintain order."

The United States is not far behind. The American birth rate declined by nearly 25% between 2008 and 2022, to only about 1.6 per woman today.

Demographic trends are very difficult to reverse, as children from small families tend later to have small families or no children themselves. Political leaders in Italy and many other countries recognize the plummeting birth rates as a crisis.

Taiwan's birth rate has fallen to only 0.87, far less than half of the 2.1 children per woman needed just to survive long-term. Although a conservative country, Taiwan has turned to liberal approaches such as more government-funded child care, which have never succeeded in boosting the birth rate.

Beginning in 2019, Hungary addressed its declining births by providing a $30,000 loan to newlyweds that is forgiven if they have three children, which makes more sense than Biden's trillion dollars in student loans. Conservative policies by Viktor Orbán, the pro-Trump leader of Hungary, have increased its birth rate, which used to be the lowest in the European Union when he started and now exceeds the EU average.

Trump and the Republican Party could lead in promoting policies that encourage American families to have more children. Trump himself has a beautiful family with five children and ten grandchildren, and our country would benefit by hearing about pro-family childbearing as a campaign issue.

A pro-birth message fits well with the Republican platform of creating good jobs for Americans, which occurred from 1980 through 2007. The Obama-Biden policy of shipping our jobs to other countries while allowing in a flood of immigrants to take jobs here has been a factor in decreasing our birth rate.

Larger families typically require a good job for the husband as breadwinner in order to create a stable family life. That model, featured in many popular television shows from 1950 through the 1980s, has disappeared in the economy and in Hollywood.

Western liberals, led by then-First Lady Laura Bush, criticized Afghanistan during the U.S. occupation for not sending more women to higher education, but our birth rate is only one-third of Afghanistan's. By contrast women comprise nearly 60% of U.S. college students, far outnumbering men there while racking up over a trillion dollars in student debt.

Studies show that, on average, the more time that women spend in higher education, the less likely they want to have children. Students are misled into thinking that advancement

in educational degrees and corporate America will be more rewarding to them than having children, when it is family life that brings greater long-term benefits.

Elon Musk, one of the wealthiest men in the world, talks as much about the need to increase the birth rate as he does about own successes. Most world leaders, other than Democrat politicians, agree.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) and lead the continuing Phyllis Schlafly Eagles organizations with writing and policy work.