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## MEMORANDUM

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The link between rising world population and global warming ought to be obvious. But this communication from William B. Dickinson argues that the connection is one that climate denial forces don't want to address. "If today's 7.1 billion people have already dangerously overloaded our atmosphere with greenhouse gases, what can we expect when world population tops 9 billion by mid-century?" he asks. Dickinson, a former Washington editor and journalism professor, has been writing essays on population/environment for the last 20 years for the nonprofit Biocentric Institute.

Once you have discounted humans' role in climate change, he writes, all the empirical observations and scientific studies to the contrary become irrelevant. "Arctic melt, rising sea levels, record global temperatures, widespread drought – perhaps the trends will reverse next year or soon, and impetus for action will evaporate," Dickinson says. "One can always hope. Meantime, frame the climate threat as one driven by environmental ideologues rather than good science. So far, this has been a winning formula."

Nearly five years ago, the board of directors of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* concluded that the dangers posed by climate change "are nearly as dire as those posed by nuclear weapons." It warned that over the next three or four decades climate change could cause drastic harm to the habitats upon which human societies depend for survival. But it's taken much less than several decades for the warning to come true.

"Will the November elections clarify or further confuse public policy on greenhouse gases?" Dickinson asks. "Unfortunately, the ideological divide makes compromise difficult." He points out that alternative energy sources to replace fossil fuels will require large public and private investment. And family planning deserves top spot in the international development agenda. One study estimates that a dollar spent on family planning will yield five times the reduction of global greenhouse gases that can be achieved by technology alone.

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