

End of an exodus BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

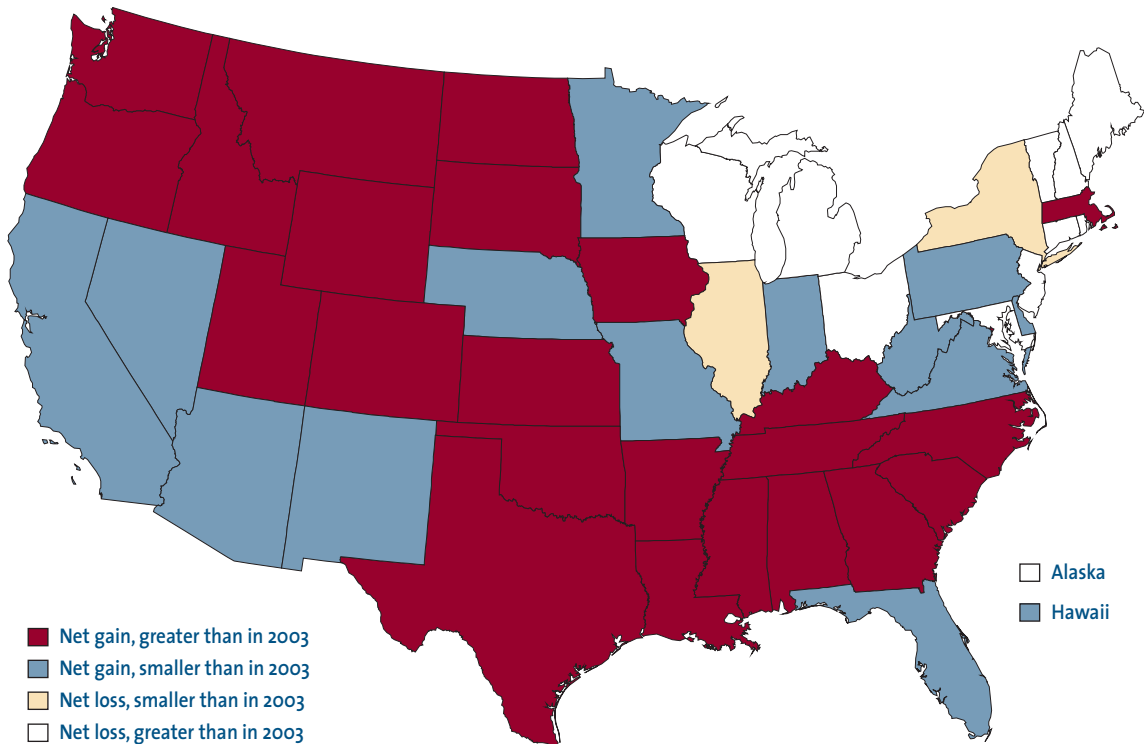
ONLY A COUPLE of years ago, many of us fretted about the Bay State's declining population. (See "A Fading Dream?," Civic Sense, *CW*, Fall '06.) We didn't realize that something was coming that would reverse the tide: a rotten economy.

According to Census Bureau estimates, Massachusetts grew by just over 30,000 people from July 2007 to July 2008, our biggest gain since the official 2000 count. This was not because we were having more children (our birth rate was still among the lowest in the US), and it wasn't because more immigrants were arriving here (the influx from other nations was the smallest since 2000). Instead, fewer people left Massachusetts for other states—perhaps, in part, because falling real estate prices are making it harder for people to sell their homes and use the profits to move elsewhere. In 2005, we registered a net loss of 60,053 people to domestic migration. Last year that net loss was down to 18,675. Add our 23,551 international immigrants over the same period, and you come up with 4,876 more people deciding to settle here than deciding to leave.

As the map below shows, the Bay State may be in the vanguard of a national demographic shift. It was the only Northeastern state with a net migration gain in 2008 that also represented an improvement over 2003. (Five other states went from a net loss to a net gain over the same period: Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Utah. How often are Massachusetts and Utah part of the same trend?) It's striking that all five other New England states showed net migration *losses*, perhaps a sign that long commutes to jobs in Boston and New York City are going out of fashion.

The "sand" states of Arizona, California, Florida, and Nevada—all whacked by high foreclosure rates—still gained people last year, but at a much slower rate than before. A report by the Brookings Institution in March noted that "the migration bubble in the middle of this decade, fueled by easy credit and superheated housing growth in newer parts of the Sun Belt and exurbs throughout the country, seems to have popped." **CW**

NET MIGRATION GAIN OR LOSS, 2008 VS. 2003



Source: US Census Bureau (www.census.gov).

CommonWealth Magazine's

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*“How much cutting
is really going on?”*

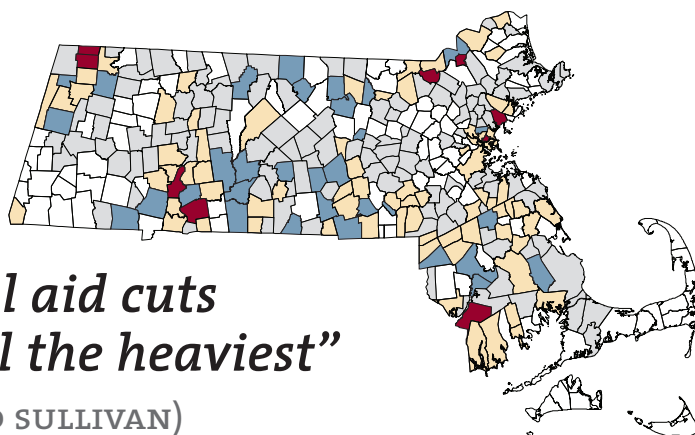
(BRUCE MOHL)

*“Ka-ching:
Delay pads
DiMasi’s
pension”*

(JACK SULLIVAN)

*“Money for nothing: Still
dire straits at the MBTA”*

(GABRIELLE GURLEY)



*“Where local aid cuts
may fall the heaviest”*

(ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN)

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