



Immigration Policy Reform Should Now Begin in Cities and Counties

Cities can play a crucial role in ensuring that the policy environment concerning immigration does not undermine economic growth or erode community cohesion.

New York, December 3, 2013—In the absence of forward movement on comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S. House of Representatives, the job of improving the legal, business, and human rights environment for immigrants falls increasingly to U.S. cities and counties. This was the conclusion of the Summit of Gateway Cities, which took place at Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA) in New York on December 3, 2013. The meeting brought together high-ranking public officials as well as business and community leaders from Atlanta, Charlotte, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, and St. Louis to discuss and share policies and best practices for facilitating the integration of immigrants into local communities, encouraging economic development and financial inclusion, improving access to basic services, smoothing police-community relations, and changing the public discourse and debate around immigration to the U.S. economy—locally and nationally.

All of the cities represented in the summit have taken a leadership position in promoting more humane, inclusive policies, in several cases where state legislatures have adopted particularly harsh policies regarding access to higher education and local and state government enforcement of federal immigration laws. In the absence of comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, and New York are demonstrating that they have an economic and political interest in promoting the integration of immigrant communities and improving the treatment of immigrants. To this end, AS/COA is working with local leaders to identify specific policies, tools, and strategies that will assist other gateway cities develop more a welcoming, humane and economically rational policy and community environment for immigration and immigrants.

The meeting comes after the Charlotte City Council issued a [resolution](#) announcing the creation of an Inter-Agency Task Force to “examine and recommend best practices in immigrant integration and educate the community of the economic and social benefits of its growing immigrant populations.” And in July 2013, the Nashville Metro Council signed on to a [resolution](#) urging the U.S. Congress to enact “comprehensive immigration reform.” These are only some of the steps that cities are and can take in pushing for immigrant reform and improved policies toward immigrants.

AS/COA believes that in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform, cities can play a crucial role in ensuring that the current federal—and in some cases local—policy environment concerning immigration does not undermine economic growth and development or erode community cohesion.

- Read a recent AS/COA [research report](#) on how immigration has helped sustain property values and maintain manufacturing jobs and wages.
- Get AS/COA [fact sheets](#) covering ways immigration supports job creation, the agricultural sector, the health care industry, and more.
- Access information about the AS/COA [Immigration and Integration Initiative](#).

For press inquiries, please contact Adriana La Rotta at alarotta@as-coa.org or +1 (212) 277-8384.

Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA) unite opinion leaders to exchange ideas and create solutions to the challenges of the Americas today. Americas Society (AS), the recipient of a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to produce this research, was established by David Rockefeller in 1965 and is the premier forum dedicated to education, debate and dialogue in the Americas. Council of the Americas (COA), affiliate organization to AS, is the premier international business organization whose members share a common commitment to economic and social development, open markets, the rule of law, and democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere. Recognizing the link between U.S. immigration and overall hemispheric relations, AS/COA launched its Integration and Immigration Initiative in 2007 to draw on its public–private convening power to bring together key constituencies in new gateway cities and to produce research on the link between changing demographics and economic competitiveness. Visit us at www.as-coa.org.