

## Overview

One week after the election, at a difficult moment for immigration advocates urging reasonable solutions, nearly 300 national security, law enforcement, faith and business leaders came together and rededicated themselves to supporting immigrants and America.

Our Leading the Way 2024 theme was “Addressing Realities, Promoting Solutions,” and that’s exactly what our participants — from at least 24 states — did November 12-14 in Washington, D.C. Activities included constituency meetings, a general session, our Keepers of the American Dream awards reception and advocacy meetings on Capitol Hill.

## General Session

Attendees heard experts speak about challenges and solutions regarding competitiveness, the border, the post-election outlook, and state-level immigration policy developments.

**“You can’t be America First by putting immigration last; that math just doesn’t work,”** economist Douglas Holtz-Eakin of the American Action Forum said during the competitiveness panel, as reported by Marty Schladen of the [Ohio Capital Journal](#).

Elaine Duke, former Acting Secretary of Homeland Security during the first Trump administration, provided the keynote address and voiced her hope that a greater focus at DHS on immigration enforcement doesn’t pull resources from the department’s other crucial work, as Rebecca Santana of the [Associated Press](#) reported. The Forum also honored Reps. Tom Suozzi (D-New York) and Morgan Luttrell (R-Texas) with the Courage to Lead award for their ongoing work on bipartisan immigration reforms. Ellen M. Gilmer of [Bloomberg Government](#) has more on their efforts.

## Advocacy

The Forum led an in-person Capitol Hill fly-in on November 14. Meeting with more than 50 Republican and Democratic House and Senate offices, more than 100 faith, business, national security, and other partners advocated for congressional leadership on solutions for Dreamers and Afghan evacuees, and for a robust refugee program. On the heels of Donald Trump’s election to a second term, this group of center-right advocates demonstrated continuing support for pro-immigration policies even as the incoming government has promised to take a series of restrictionist and enforcement-focused actions.

Participants shared stories from their families, churches, businesses, and communities, highlighting the fear and concern that already had mounted following the election. They pressed congressional offices to clarify limits on Trump administration mass deportation efforts and to preserve and expand parts of the immigration system that are working, including refugee resettlement and non-immigrant work visas. Most of the congressional offices, including conservative Republicans, were receptive to this message.



## Affiliated Constituency Meetings

Faith, law enforcement, national security and business leaders also held constituency-specific gatherings, where they discussed immigration challenges and opportunities within their businesses, congregations, and communities.

- 1. Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT):** Our EIT partners held a convening on Capitol Hill where nearly 200 attendees heard from Representatives Maria Salazar (R-Florida) and Hillary Scholten (D-Michigan), as well as two expert panels on evangelical engagement and ministry to and with immigrants in a polarized time.
- 2. Council on National Security and Immigration:** 15 national security leaders strategized responses to issues such as mass deportation and threats to birthright citizenship.
- 3. Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force:** 17 sheriffs and police chiefs discussed best practices to protect community trust and counter misinformation and disinformation amid challenging circumstances.
- 4. Corporate Roundtable:** 33 business representatives discussed best practices in immigrant inclusion, post-election immigration messaging, and 2025 priorities.
- 5. Women of Welcome and We Choose Welcome:** 24 leaders met to reflect and strategize for 2025, and our newly formed Welcome Collective — 10 women who met weekly to learn about how women advocated in the Bible — gathered to learn how to use their voices as immigration advocates.

## Keepers of the American Dream

The evening of November 13, the Forum hosted the annual Keepers of the American Dream awards reception to recognize leaders and organizations who embody the spirit of immigrant achievement and contribute significantly to the well-being of immigrants in the United States. This year, the Forum recognized the work of four inspiring leaders:

- **ISS & Guckenheimer** for their support of immigrant employees, including piloting an innovative English curriculum specifically customized to enhance career pathways through the Forum's English at Work program.

- **Blue Island, Illinois, Police Chief Geoffery Farr and Officer Mitchell Soto Rodriguez.** Soto Rodriguez is Blue Island's first DACA-recipient police officer, thanks in part to Chief Farr's advocacy for legislative reforms to permit her hiring.
- **Antonia Hernández,** former president and chief executive officer of the California Community Foundation, who has spent much of her life fighting for the rights of immigrants in the United States.
- **Michael DeBruhl** for his commitment to security and compassion throughout his unique career: Border Patrol agent, Customs and Border Protection executive, and migrant-shelter leader.

## What can you do next?

- [Sign up for The Forum Daily](#) for news summaries, and for other Forum emails.
- [Add your name to our campaign](#) advocating for humane and balanced immigration reforms.
- Consider [making a donation to the Forum](#).

As Jennie said when she kicked off the general session, many of us sense that a mountain lies before us. But at Leading the Way, we brought together nearly 300 leaders who agree that we must stand firm on our principles:

- Compassion and justice for longtime residents.
- Addressing the need for safety and security on the border and in our communities.
- Moral leadership in the world as a welcoming and compassionate nation that offers refuge to the persecuted.
- Honoring the human dignity of all people through our words and actions.
- Fair and orderly legal immigration that allows all of us to thrive economically.
- Defending the longstanding constitutional principle of birthright citizenship.

Together, we will climb this mountain and get to the other side. And in the meantime, we are already looking forward to reconvening next fall in Nashville for Leading the Way 2025!