



The Bridging America Project: AJC's New Immigration Initiative

Goal

To convene, connect and engage new and experienced voices from mainstream sectors that can bring additional access and new political power to policy makers, influence the public debate and promote, support and enable the passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

At a time when America has seen a dramatic increase in immigration across the nation, our immigration structures are in disarray. Diverse sectors within many cities and states are unprepared for the resulting demographic, social and economic changes. At the same time, millions of undocumented immigrants live in the shadows, not allowed to contribute fully to their communities, further their education, report crimes, open bank accounts or obtain drivers' licenses. Can a pathway to legalization be found, and what else must be addressed in order to ensure that we have immigration policies in place that are fair, humane, smart, and above all, meet America's needs in this new era?

The voices of thoughtful, moderate leaders who represent affected businesses, professions, unions, religious communities, and public institutions such as education, healthcare and law enforcement, are often not heard in this debate because rational discussions are frequently drowned out by harsh and misinformed anti-immigrant rhetoric.

These voices must be heard. Absent opportunities for thoughtful and informed discussion on the issues, we may not be able to achieve serious immigration reform, nor will we be able to ensure that proposed policies work for our communities and embody the values of our nation.

Thanks to the generous support of The Ford Foundation, the American Jewish Committee is convening conversations across America to give voice to such leaders. By making a commitment to three professionally-facilitated discussions, each two weeks apart, participants will share their experiences and views in a setting of civil discourse, strengthen leadership networks and strategize optimum ways to influence the coming debate.

AJC's work is motivated and sustained by a vision of America that incorporates the principles of democracy, social justice, pluralism and social cohesion, and the protection of the nation's economic and security needs. The Jewish community, rooted in an immigrant past, understands that immigration policy reflects, but also shapes, these principles and conditions. AJC will act as convener and as one participant among many at these taskforce sessions. With a network of 26 regional offices and a strong non-partisan advocacy presence in Washington, D.C., AJC has developed a reputation as an organization that seeks thoughtful answers to pressing problems in a non-ideological fashion. In designing and implementing this series of taskforce meetings, AJC seeks to engage new leadership and create solutions that strengthen America's social fabric.