

JULY 2024

Mid-Year Report

2024

Message from the **Executive Director**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In a year fraught with pressing issues, immigration stands at the forefront of our national discourse. This year holds immense significance for policy and attitudes in the United States, impacting millions of current and future newcomers and our country as a whole. From local elections to federal races, immigration will be a cornerstone issue, influencing legislative priorities and public opinion and echoing well beyond the campaign trail. The American Immigration Council is embracing this moment's distinct opportunities and challenges head-on. We are diligently working to promote inclusion at all levels and show the positive pathways forward that exist at the local, state, and national levels.

As we look back on everything the Council has done so far this year, we are proud of what we have accomplished through our multi-pronged approach and how our staff has worked in tandem to advance lasting policy and social change for immigrants and receiving communities in the United States. From policy analysis to impact litigation, we are working to advance a fairer, more humane system that updates policies and safeguards individual and human rights. We are advancing real solutions like a national Center for Migrant Coordination to help cities better prepare to support local integration efforts. As harmful bills make their way through state legislatures, we are fighting back with facts and lawsuits. We are also locking in meaningful wins in our ongoing court cases and transparency work.

Our sophisticated research and persuasive communication strategies are helping push back on anti-immigrant propaganda to shape a positive perception of immigration for the public, the business community, and policymakers. We are partnering across the country to promote welcoming and inclusive behaviors that strengthen the social fabric of America through compelling public service announcements and thought leadership on narrative change.

Our work to build a more welcoming country from the ground up focuses on broadening our coalitions and coordinating local allies to address emerging challenges. Our nontraditional partners, including business leaders, local governments, and community organizations, share our tailored economic and social data on immigrant contributions in their communities and advocate for pragmatic policy approaches. These impactful state and local coalitions are helping to create environments ripe for immigrant inclusion and integration economically, socially, and legislatively.

We are excited to share with you the progress we have made together in 2024, and as always, are grateful for your continued partnership and support of this important work.



Jeremy Robbins
Executive Director

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Robbins'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **Stopping unconstitutional anti-immigrant laws in Iowa and Florida:** In June, a federal judge in Iowa temporarily blocked the state’s new criminal reentry and removal law — a copycat of Texas’ S.B.4 — after we filed a lawsuit alongside the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the ACLU of Iowa on behalf of two Iowa residents and Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice and argued in court. Only a few weeks earlier, a Trump-appointed federal judge blocked a central provision of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis’ harsh, sweeping anti-immigration law after the Council brought suit alongside the Southern Poverty Law Center, ACLU, ACLU of Florida, and Americans for Immigrant Justice on behalf of several individuals and the Farmworker Association of Florida. The Council continues to litigate both cases, and our victories act as a warning to other states that they will face strong legal opposition should they enact laws that usurp federal immigration enforcement authority. *Read more on pages 8 and 9.*
- ▶ **Expanding our State Network:** Twenty states now participate in our Office of New Americans State Network, with the addition of Pennsylvania this year. We have successfully supported several states that have recently created new statewide offices to support immigrants, including Hawaii and Maine, and others that have pending legislation to do so, including Vermont, Arizona, and Delaware. Our rapidly growing network has more than tripled in size since 2019. *Read more on page 21.*
- ▶ **Shaping positive narratives about immigration and connection:** In March, we partnered with the Team Up Project (led by founding partners Catholic Charities USA, Habitat for Humanity International, Interfaith America, and the YMCA of the USA) to release a new public service announcement (PSA) called “[Shared Table](#)” as part of our Belonging Begins with Us campaign with the Ad Council. This PSA encourages people to come together across lines of difference to build relationships and find connection through shared action in local communities. So far, it has reached over 1,800 TV stations nationwide and has been shared across numerous social media accounts with a combined follower count of 3 million. *Read more on page 24.*
- ▶ **Bringing new talent to American companies:** Through webinars and educational sessions, we are spreading the word about the Council’s recent designation in the J-1 Visa Research Scholar category. This designation complements our two decades of experience sponsoring around 500 interns and trainees annually through our Cultural Exchange program. We are thrilled to be putting our first-ever cohort of research scholars through the program. *Read more on page 23.*
- ▶ **Untangling the impacts of complex new policy developments:** The Council has rapidly responded to three major moments in federal immigration policy, providing same or next-day analysis that is utilized by press, partners, and the public. In February, we seized on one of the most pivotal moments in recent congressional action on immigration and produced a [rapid analysis](#) of the mammoth proposed Senate immigration bill; our analysis was read by nearly 100,000 individuals and helped shape the national narrative around that legislative proposal. In May, when President Biden announced major executive action aiming to dramatically reduce asylum processing, we published a [rapid analysis](#) that was [prominently featured](#) on national media. Two weeks later, when President Biden announced the “parole-in-place” program for certain spouses of U.S. citizens, our team once again released [analysis](#) within 48 hours about how the program will open up temporary protections, work permits, and pathways to permanent legal status for more than 550,000 individuals in mixed-status families. *Read more on page 6.*

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **Responding to new regulations impacting immigrants:** We submitted comments in response to several Biden administration proposed or interim regulations, including a comment supporting a change to automatic extension of work authorization documents that helped over 800,000 people keep their ability to work. We also led a grassroots comment campaign against the June 2024 restriction on asylum, which had hundreds of responses in its first days. *Read more on page 13.*
- ▶ **Uncovering unjust Border Patrol practices from our FOIA requests:** We published [a report](#) in partnership with Ohio-based Basic Legal Equality illuminating racial profiling and problematic apprehension practices of immigrants and U.S. citizens by Border Patrol agents in northern Ohio. *Read more on page 11.*
- ▶ **Supporting detained individuals with no other access to counsel:** Immigration Justice Campaign volunteers answered 204 calls on our [legal information hotline](#) that helps migrants in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody prepare for their expedited credible fear interviews. Because attorneys and the public aren't allowed inside these facilities, this project, which began in October 2023, is providing valuable first-hand accounts from CBP custody. *Read more on page 12.*
- ▶ **Emphasizing the contributions of immigrants in the U.S.:** We have released quantitative resources, like our [naturalization fact sheet](#), [H-2A report](#), and new state-level data on [Map the Impact](#), that highlight the importance of immigrants in the fabric of America. The naturalization fact sheet emphasizes the potential electoral impact of the 7.4 million immigrants who are eligible to naturalize. The H-2A report shows the number of certified H-2A workers surged by 65% between 2017 and 2022, underscoring the U.S. agriculture sector's increasing reliance on foreign-born workers. *Read more on page 15.*
- ▶ **Equipping state advocates:** We tracked more than 700 immigrant-related state bills and kept our local, state, and national partners and stakeholders abreast of their status. In collaboration with partners, we created a [toolkit](#) for mobilizing against anti-immigrant policies to equip advocates with information, tools, and strategies to challenge unjust and harmful policies in their communities. *Read more on page 19.*
- ▶ **Growing our influence in Texas:** We have worked with more than 160 business leaders through our Texas business coalition to foster a collaborative approach to addressing immigration policies. We have showcased immigrants' vital role in the state's workforce and economy in cities like [Houston](#) and [Dallas](#). Our coalition-building serves as an essential counterweight to harmful policies and advances immigrant inclusion and economic prosperity across the state. *Read more on page 22.*

Inside this report, you will read in depth about how our staff has worked tirelessly toward progress on *Advancing a Fairer, More Humane Immigration System; Informing Decisionmakers, Media, and the Public; and Building a More Welcoming Country From the Ground Up*. Read further to see the many ways we are working throughout our programs to accomplish our mission.

Programmatic Updates

**Advancing a Fairer, More Humane Immigration System:
Policy, Litigation, Transparency,
and the Immigration Justice Campaign**

Policy

We advocate for a modern, robust, and just immigration system by educating policymakers and the public on immigration issues with subject matter expertise, fact-based tools, and a nuanced understanding of the immigration arena.

Increased Visibility on Capitol Hill

Targeted advocacy with members of Congress has increased our visibility on the Hill and deepened our connections with legislators and their staff. Repeated testimony before members of Congress has built our reputation as a trusted source of information on immigration issues, further increasing the Council's effectiveness in Congress. On March 7, 2024, [we testified](#) before the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement, calling attention to the overdue need for Congress to overhaul the asylum system. The testimony called for more resources to address the challenges faced by the asylum system and has impacted the ongoing immigration debate. After a clip of our compelling testimony went viral on X, formerly Twitter, Ranking Member Pramila Jayapal invited us to brief members in person to help educate them on the history of the border. The Council has since participated in direct, one-on-one member meetings to inform members of Congress and advocate for our positions.

Rapid Analyses of Complex New Immigration Proposals and Policies

The introduction of the Senate's bipartisan border compromise in February was one of the most pivotal moments in congressional action on immigration in years—

even though the bill ultimately failed. Our team took on a huge endeavor and produced a rapid analysis within 48 hours of the bill coming out despite its mammoth size. Nearly 100,000 people read our [Emergency National Security Supplemental Appropriations Act Analysis](#), which examined the changes that the passage of the bill would implement, why the bill was necessary, and our view of its pros and cons. In June, when President Biden announced major new action intended to restrict asylum at the border, our team sprang into action again and published a comprehensive analysis less than 24 hours later. This analysis was prominently featured on [MSNBC](#) that night in coverage of President Biden's action. Our published reports on these major actions have been timely, informative, and influential, and have helped position the Council as a trusted organization that can explain what is happening and what is needed to make progress on achievable immigration reforms.

Advancing Solutions-Based Policies and Resources

The Council has become an ongoing resource for congressional offices and the media. We regularly work closely with congressional staff to advocate for solutions-based policies and more resources for immigration-related needs. This year, we recommended expanded backlog reduction funding, increased U.S. Department of Homeland Security transparency, and more significant funding for state and local communities as they welcome newcomers. We continued to advocate for the pragmatic solutions proposed in our comprehensive report, [Beyond a Border Solution: How to Build a Humanitarian Protection System that Won't Break](#), including the need for a national Center for Migrant Coordination to help cities better prepare to integrate new arrivals. Additionally, our policy team works closely with the media to highlight solutions-based policies and offer our expertise in the immigration field. Our policy team members have been cited 156 times in the press during the first half of 2024.

Litigation

We use the courts to demand a fair process for immigrants by challenging policies and laws that threaten a just immigration system.

Challenging Unconstitutional State Laws

The Council is actively countering a growing trend as states like Iowa attempt to replicate Texas’ S.B.4 and enact their own immigration enforcement and removal processes outside of federal law. If left unchallenged, these laws would create a patchwork immigration system, with 50 potentially different rules governing who can enter and who can be removed from the United States.

On May 9, our litigation team and co-counsel at the ACLU filed [a lawsuit](#) on behalf of Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice (Iowa MMJ), a membership-based immigration legal services and advocacy organization, and two Iowa residents challenging the state’s new criminal reentry and removal law, S.F.2340. The law attempts to replace federal immigration law and set up an independent, punitive state immigration scheme, giving state officials broad power to arrest, detain, and deport noncitizens in Iowa who reentered the United States after a previous removal or exclusion. Under this novel system, Iowa has created its own immigration crime, requiring state police to identify and arrest noncitizens for alleged violations, state prosecutors to bring charges in state courts, state judges to order deportation, and state officers to facilitate those orders. The law even applies to noncitizens who reenter with federal permission or who subsequently obtain lawful federal immigration status. The federal government has no role in, and no control over, Iowa’s unconstitutional immigration scheme.

Plaintiffs contend that S.F. 2340 will create a system where the state impermissibly takes over the federal government’s central role in regulating immigration, so the Council filed a motion for a preliminary injunction, asking the court to enjoin the law before it goes into effect on July 1. In mid-June, a federal court blocked the bill after the Council presented an oral argument at a hearing less than a week prior. We continue to litigate the case, which is essential to discourage future copycat laws. Through this litigation, we have shown Iowa and other states considering enacting similar laws that they will face strong opposition and will need to overcome serious litigation challenges if they attempt to usurp immigration enforcement authority.

The Harm: Communities in Fear

Iowa’s new law has already spread fear within communities across the state—fear of racial profiling by law enforcement and fear that loved ones will be arrested and deported by state officials. The plaintiffs, Jane Doe and Elizabeth Roe, both green card holders, waited for years to lawfully reunite with their families after being deported. 18-year-old Iowa MMJ member “Anna” was granted asylum after being deported and returning as a child. Ms. Doe, a widow and grandmother to 17 U.S. citizen grandchildren; Ms. Roe, a wife and sister to U.S. citizens; and Anna, a high school student with no family in Mexico, could be arrested, prosecuted, imprisoned, and removed if S.F. 2340 is allowed to go into effect.

SPOTLIGHT

Iowa Case Study: How the Council Works Holistically Across Programs

The Council employs all of our tools to stop anti-immigrant legislation—no matter where it is in the process. Here’s how we have fought, and continue to fight, against Iowa’s S.F. 2340.

- The state and local team identified and tracked the bill as one of over 700 immigrant-related bills on their radar.
- In March, the Council partnered with the Refugee Advocacy Lab and the International Rescue Committee to publish a toolkit on countering anti-immigration policies to equip advocates with information, tools, and strategies to challenge unjust immigration laws in their communities.
- As S.F. 2340 progressed through the legislation process, our former senior legal director and Iowa resident, Kate Melloy Goettel, provided expert testimony in opposition to the bill, noting the harm and legal issues with enacting such a law.
- When the bill passed, our team was ready to rapidly respond. On May 9, our litigation team and co-counsel at the ACLU filed [a lawsuit](#) challenging the law on behalf of Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice and two Iowa residents. We argued against the bill’s unconstitutionality and harmful impacts on June 10.
- A federal court blocked the bill from going into effect on July 1. From here, our litigation continues to permanently stop the Iowa law and sets a powerful precedent to challenge copycat legislation.

Pressing for Policy Changes on Visa Denials

In March, the Council and the [American Immigration Lawyers Association \(AILA\)](#) submitted an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in a case, [U.S. Department of State v. Muñoz](#), involving the denial of a visa to a spouse of a U.S. citizen. Sandra Muñoz has been separated from her Salvadoran husband, Luis Asencio Cordero, for nearly a decade because the U.S. State Department denied Luis an immigrant visa in 2015. Since then, the government has prevented Luis from returning to the United States to reunite with Sandra. Only through litigation did the couple find out that the basis for the visa denial was a discriminatory assumption about gang affiliation based on Luis' tattoos.

We participated to support the couple against the government assertion that it can deny visas — and keep families separated — with no judicial review whatsoever. This position represents a serious shortcoming of our legal system. Though the Supreme Court decided against the family, the decision leaves an opening for our position that the bar to review is not absolute and that the Administrative Procedure Act provides a viable basis for judicial review of arbitrary visa denials.

Fighting for Immigrants' Rights in Florida

In May, a federal judge blocked a central provision of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' harsh, sweeping anti-immigration law after the Council brought suit alongside the Southern Poverty Law Center, American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Florida, and Americans for Immigrant Justice. The suit, filed on behalf of several individuals and the Farmworker Association of Florida, challenged Section 10 of Senate Bill 1718, which made it a crime to drive an immigrant who entered the U.S. without inspection into Florida.

Under Section 10, families may be unable to visit each other across state lines. Parents who live near the state border may be unable to drive their children to medical appointments or soccer matches. Co-workers may be unable to drive each other to work. Friends may be unable to give each other rides to the grocery store. Churches may be unable to transport members of their congregation to religious events. The law is so unclear that it potentially sweeps in many immigrants with permission to live and work in the United States.

This ruling means increased safety for people living in Florida. As states pass unjust and unconstitutional laws that target people for their immigration status or that of their family members, it's critical that our courts protect those at risk and affirm that states cannot enforce their own immigration laws.

Transparency

Through our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) filings, we play a leading role in shedding light on immigration policies and information that is otherwise shielded from the public eye.

Convening the Top Minds in Transparency Litigation

In mid-May, in partnership with American Oversight and MuckRock, the Council co-hosted our annual interdisciplinary gathering of thought leaders to discuss common strategies to achieve greater transparency in immigration-related policies and practices. More than 70 attendees from organizations across the country attended. The virtual convening featured a keynote chat with Nate Jones, The Washington Post's FOIA director.

Our annual convening helps organizations working at the intersection of immigration and transparency develop strategies to oppose the government's efforts to resist transparency and hold it accountable in its application of policies. Participants heard from panelists on pressing topics such as border policies, how transparency organizations are preparing for 2025, and using FOIA and transparency tactics to effect policy changes. Practical issues like drafting better records requests, working with media, and developing stronger partnerships with organizations whose mission may not be transparency-focused were also featured.

Lawsuit Filed to Compel Records on the FERM Program

The Council filed [a lawsuit](#) under [the FOIA](#) to compel immigration agencies to disclose information about the implementation of the Family Expedited Removal Management (FERM) program. The FERM program is an alternative to detention program that allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers to place the head-of-households of certain asylum-seeking families initially detained near the U.S.-Mexico border under surveillance. Since its launch in May 2023, the FERM program has expanded to dozens of U.S. cities. However, advocates lack information vital to families enrolled in the program. Families enrolled in the FERM program must attend credible fear interviews, which screen individuals for asylum eligibility by assessing whether they have a "credible fear" of returning to their country of origin. Advocates working with enrolled families have reported that the process moves quickly, making it difficult for families to obtain legal representation for their credible fear interviews; lack of legal representation can fast-track removals. As such, people in the FERM program may be removed without an opportunity for immigration judges to assess their claims for protection.

The FERM program is also managed by a private prison company, raising serious concerns about how taxpayer dollars are spent and what a private prison company can do with the information collected from individuals involved.

SPOTLIGHT

Uncovering Unjust Border Patrol Practices

In March, along with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, we published the report [Ohio, We Have a Problem](#). The report analyzes data and documents about detention practices carried out by U.S. Border Patrol agents from the Sandusky Bay station in northern Ohio. The data obtained from FOIA requests uncovered:

- ▶ Border Patrol agents, in collusion with local law enforcement, engage in racial profiling and other problematic apprehension practices. A systematic sample of arrest reports shows that **half of the apprehensions targeted Latin American men with darker skin colors between the ages of 23 and 40**, and nearly 68% of arrests were Latin American men with darker skin colors between the ages of 18 and 55.
- ▶ **Law enforcement agencies used unjust tactics against men of color.** For example, local law enforcement agencies such as the Ohio State Highway Patrol often stopped Latinos. They asked for drivers' and passengers' immigration documents, even if they had valid driver's licenses.
- ▶ Instances where Border Patrol agents and local law enforcement officers used **individuals' lack of English skills** as a factor to justify interrogations about their immigration status.

The report sought to expose the problematic entanglement between federal immigration enforcement agencies and local law enforcement. The impact of this entanglement and the unjust tactics is that many of the individuals detained by local law enforcement ended up in immigration detention and then removed, even though local police and Border Patrol violated their rights. Additionally, Latinos—regardless of immigration status—the U.S. citizen children of immigrants, and immigrants legally in the United States were also detained by Border Patrol. If not exposed, the violations of rights would go unchecked due to the exceedingly high standards required by courts to hold law enforcement accountable when they violate immigrants' rights. Through the report, the Council calls for greater transparency and oversight, including ways by which victims of racial profiling can report complaints.

Immigration Justice Campaign

The Immigration Justice Campaign (IJC) organizes a nationwide network of volunteers and advocates to fight for due process and justice for immigrants.

Supporting Detainees with No Other Access to Counsel

To meet more legal service needs for migrants in detention, IJC began a project in October 2023 to provide credible fear interview preparation by phone for asylum seekers held in CBP custody — a setting that members of the public, including attorneys, are not allowed to access. Usually, credible fear interviews are conducted after a person has been released from CBP custody, but in 2023, the Biden administration began a process called Enhanced Expedited Removal, where some people are given their initial credible fear screenings while still in CBP detention facilities on incredibly rapid timelines. Passage rates are far below the national average for similar interviews, demonstrating a need for critical information for asylum seekers before their interviews.

Our [legal information hotline](#) provides critically needed preparation for these interviews, as well as a first glimpse into CBP custody proceedings, which are off limits to visitors. Volunteers provide basic information about the credible fear interview process and ask callers about their experiences in CBP custody. So far, our 23-person volunteer team has spoken to 204 people in detention and their family members.

However, this represents only a fraction of the calls we receive each week. Those who we do not have capacity to connect with or who call after hours receive information through our 8-minute voicemail recording. The need we are seeing through the hotline has raised serious concerns about whether people in these facilities have meaningful access to their right to an attorney. The Council is one of a few organizations operating hotlines, and our network is sharing data to gain a better picture of the situation inside of the CBP facilities and coordinating to advocate for expanded access to counsel for those detained there.

204

Calls answered from detainees seeking legal assistance inside CBP custody so far this year

Standing Up for LGBTQ+ Civil Rights in Detention

In April, along with our long-time partners The Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network, we filed a [joint civil rights complaint](#) on behalf of a group of transgender and nonbinary individuals who are currently detained at the Aurora Contract Detention Facility and have experienced discrimination, harassment, and mistreatment while under ICE custody. The complaint filed to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties detailed experiences of medical neglect and inadequate access to necessary medical and mental healthcare, improper and punitive use of solitary confinement, and other traumatic experiences. The complaint urges DHS to put an end to ICE's practice of detaining transgender and non-binary people and, at minimum, immediately implement new policies to provide safeguards and oversight to guarantee adherence to these protective policies.

940

Take Action messages sent to the Department of Homeland Security standing up for LGBTQ+ rights in detention

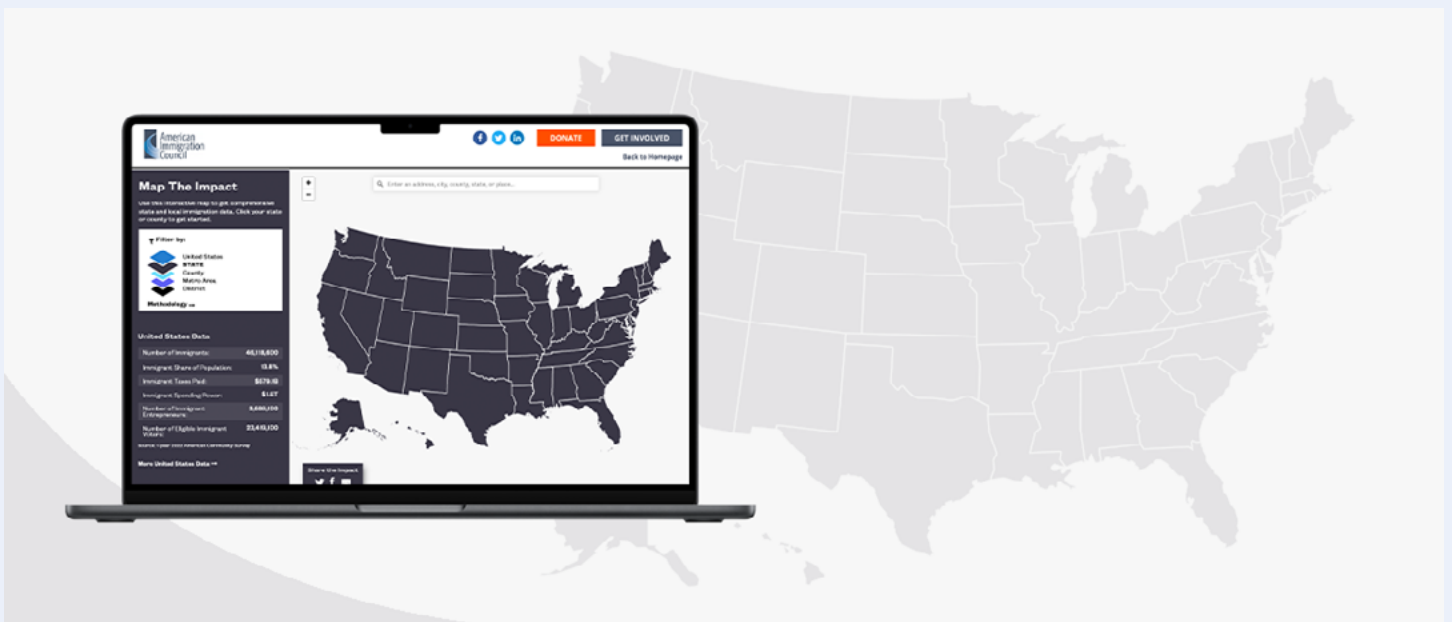
Since the complaint was filed, IJC organized a grassroots campaign that resulted in nearly 600 messages to DHS calling on the agency to take urgent action. We also provided evidence to the Senate Judiciary Committee when they held a hearing on eliminating the abuse of solitary confinement. Investigations that have been opened after the complaint include one on disability, five medical and mental health referrals, two on sexual abuse and harassment, and an extensive investigation looking at the use of force, conditions of detention, transgender care, and discrimination.

Advocating for Asylum Rights

In May and June, the Biden administration announced two proposed rules that have the potential to complicate the asylum process and send asylum seekers who could otherwise get protection back into harm's way. IJC jumped into action by opening two comment campaigns to encourage the public to send detailed responses to the administration objecting to the dangerous changes these rules would bring. In just a few weeks, IJC activists have sent in over 1,000 comments. These campaigns have also proven to be a useful resource for the broader immigration advocacy coalition.

Informing Decisionmakers, Media, and the Public

Research and Communications and Storytelling



Research

The Council's dedicated research elevates the importance of immigrants in the fabric of America. Through sophisticated data analysis and data science, we ground immigration issues and debates in facts and sound analysis.

Highlighting the Potential Electoral Power of Naturalized Citizens

In January, we published a [naturalization fact sheet](#) and accompanying [blog post](#) showing naturalization rates nationally and in crucial states. The research highlights key demographics of immigrants eligible for naturalization and their potential electoral power. Nearly a quarter of immigrants eligible to naturalize nationwide — or 7.4 million immigrants — have not yet done so. By naturalizing, immigrants are not only protected from immigration enforcement action, but they can also more actively engage in civic life, qualify for specific government jobs, and better attain economic security—factors that benefit both immigrants and American communities.

We released the data well before the November election to help encourage more immigrants to become naturalized citizens and have their voices heard. Our partners have used the research on naturalization-eligible immigrants, including countries of origin and languages spoken, to make their local outreach efforts more targeted and accessible. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus also invited us to present the key findings from this factsheet and talk about our federal, state, and local policy work.

Demonstrating Demand for Agricultural Workers and the H-2A Agricultural Visa Category

Our [H-2A data tool](#), released in June, demonstrates how the country's food production increasingly relies on H-2A workers, and that a significant share of these workers are exposed to extreme heat conditions. This tool will empower a wide range of stakeholders to advocate for expanding the H-2A program and for further protections for H-2A workers. The data will be invaluable for our state and local partners for use in one-pagers, briefings, and congressional fly-ins.



Mapping the Impact of Immigrants

At the beginning of Immigrant Heritage Month in June, we released our new state-level updates for the [Map the Impact tool](#), sharing fresh data on one of our most cited research projects. In recent years, this data has been cited by the New York City Comptroller's Office in its report about the benefits of welcoming migrants, utilized by advocates in North Carolina to fight a bill that would force sheriffs to comply with ICE, and leveraged in Arizona by our local partner Aliento in legislative calls to action. As more and more immigrant policy is proposed at the state and local levels, this new data will continue to be a critical tool for pro-immigrant advocates.

Communications & Storytelling

We inform the public with compelling media communications and storytelling that grounds the immigration discourse in facts and sound analysis.

In 2024, the Council's staff and resources have appeared in 1,167 news stories in media outlets (excluding reprints) including several prominent published pieces:

- New York Times: [A New Hurdle for Asylum Seekers: 4 Hours to Find a Lawyer](#)
- ABC News: [Trump again vows to deport millions of migrants. Could he really do it?](#)
- The Atlantic: [Asylum Seekers Didn't Create the 'Migrant Crisis'](#)
- All in With Chris Hayes, MSNBC: [Biden's Executive Action on the Border, Explained](#)
- Forbes: [Why Biden Can't Easily 'Shut Down The Border'—As Both He And Trump Have Suggested](#)
- Rolling Stone: [Congress Could Expand Immigrant Surveillance — And Make Many Companies Snitch](#)
- The Economist: [Can Joe Biden bring order to the southern border without Congress?](#)
- Associated Press: [Iowa defends immigration law that allows local officials to arrest people told to leave US](#)
- HuffPost: [A Brief History of Republicans Walking Away From Bipartisan Immigration Deals](#)
- Politico: [Federal judge blocks key part of DeSantis anti-immigration law](#)
- American Prospect: [Still Bring Us Your Tired](#)
- Bloomberg: [Illegal US Border Crossings Aren't Really Breaking Records](#)
- Fox News: [The impact of Texas's anti-immigration law](#)
- USA Today: [Can the US handle more immigration? History and the Census suggest the answer is yes.](#)

Additionally, we have published 50 blog posts to our nationally recognized blog, [Immigration Impact](#), which is an important avenue for rapid response communications and factual immigration news. We have also hosted eight webinars and press conferences featuring our experts. Two of our most popular webinars had over 1,000 attendees each.

SPOTLIGHT

Uplifting Immigration Perspectives with Empathetic Storytelling

Our storytelling team's Senior Media Fellows continue to uplift immigration perspectives that are thought-provoking, nuanced, and empathetic. This year, we have helped people publish 36 pieces, including a letter to The New York Times editor and two op-eds in Newsweek. Our guidance helps humanize immigration stories and bring those stories to a broader audience. Two recent highlights include:

Bill Lawrence, the author of [a piece in Religion News Service](#) about how his church group helped resettle an Afghan family, shared how it rippled throughout his community: "The article found its way to many more readers than we could have imagined. Friends from all over saw the piece and reached out to us, sharing they had no idea what we went through to help the Afghan family. An acquaintance who is part of a large community that serves refugees asked permission to share the article with this community. One of the pastors at our church also invited us to come speak at a staff meeting to share our story and answer questions. Afterwards, staff members said they were more aware of the issues this Afghan family faced, including the limbo status of awaiting an asylum hearing. It didn't seem to matter which political side they were on, they saw the human side of the issue."

Sophia Sexton, a monthly columnist for Northern Virginia's largest news source, Inside Nova, won a 2024 Virginia Press Award for her immigration-focused column [Journeys to NOVA](#). The storytelling team helped Sofia launch her column and provides her with ongoing mentorship and editing. Sophia says of the impact of her column, "I get emails. Messages on LinkedIn. Interviews on WTOP [local news radio]. A lot of positive feedback from the community. Even in comments sections. That discourse is great. We're starting a conversation. People are talking about it."

We are continuing to find new ways to uplift the voices of immigrants and humanize the debate through storytelling. This spring, over 1,000 people watched our first storytelling webinar which discussed the 250,000 "Documented Dreamers" — children of high-skilled immigrants who are at risk of having to self-deport when they turn 21. The webinar featured a family from India, whose father was recruited by an American company and whose daughter, a future doctor, will fall out of status in mere months. After the webinar, the team polled a selection of viewers. Of those, 150 attendees pledged to share the issue with family and friends and over 100 pledged to reach out to their congressperson. Of 211 poll respondents, 210 said the webinar increased their empathy toward documented dreamers and their families.

Building a More Welcoming Country from the Ground Up:

State and Local Initiatives, Cultural Exchange, and the Center for Inclusion and Belonging



A mural in the migrant travel center operated by Jewish Family Service of San Diego. Credit: Jewish Family Service of San Diego

State & Local Initiatives

We engage business leaders, coalitions, nonprofit organizations, and policymakers nationwide to build a welcoming environment for newcomers in states and local communities.

Equipping Advocates with Legislative Intelligence, Research, and Toolkits

We track immigrant-related legislation in all 50 states and support partners, including legislators, advocates, and business leaders in advancing or defeating legislation by providing timely updates on legislative developments, data, research reports, technical assistance, talking points, testimony, and letters of support. So far in 2024, we have tracked over 700 immigrant-related bills and provided weekly updates via external trackers to our partners and stakeholders, including the White House.

States are increasingly at the forefront of advancing positive immigrant-related policies that impact the well-being of immigrants and refugees living in their communities. In the first half of the year, we have supported 17 pro-immigrant bills related to the creation of Offices of New Americans, language access, occupational licensure, and funding to support migrant integration. We released reports on the growing demand for healthcare workers in [New York](#), [Michigan](#), and [Massachusetts](#). By supporting pro-immigrant policies, the Council is helping to create more welcoming communities where newcomers have access to the resources they need to succeed, have their contributions recognized, and can fully participate in their communities.

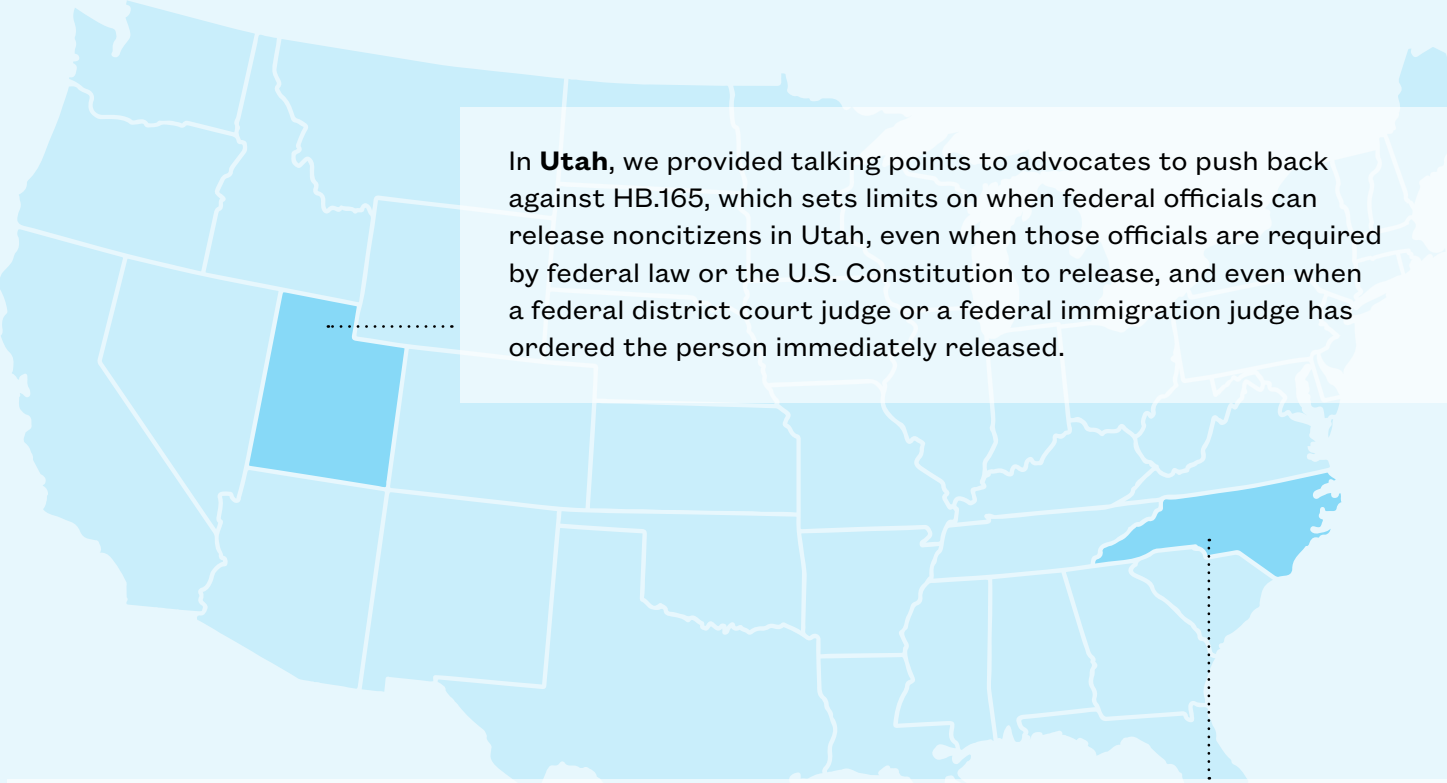


Equally important is pushing back against state policies that harm immigrants and communities overall. As some states have pursued anti-immigrant policies modeled off of [Texas' S.B.4](#), it is vital to provide our partners with tools and resources to push back against these harmful policies. In March, the Council partnered with the Refugee Advocacy Lab and the International Rescue Committee to publish a [toolkit](#) on countering anti-immigration policies to equip advocates with information, tools, and strategies to challenge unjust immigration laws in their communities.

SPOTLIGHT

Our State Policy Work in Action

The Council supports partners on the ground with research, data, and talking points to create thoughtful, fact-based arguments to defeat and reduce the harm of anti-immigrant policies. Here's how this comes to life:



In **Utah**, we provided talking points to advocates to push back against HB.165, which sets limits on when federal officials can release noncitizens in Utah, even when those officials are required by federal law or the U.S. Constitution to release, and even when a federal district court judge or a federal immigration judge has ordered the person immediately released.

In **North Carolina**, the Council participated in a webinar to uplift messaging and strategies to defeat anti-immigrant legislation, including HB.10, which mandates that sheriffs and other local law enforcement officials comply with immigration detainers and administrative warrants issued by ICE. The bill also requires officials to determine the legal residency status of individuals in detention facilities for specific offenses and hold those with ICE detainers/warrants until ICE can take custody.



A mural in the migrant travel center operated by Jewish Family Service of San Diego. Credit: Jewish Family Service of San Diego

Expanding Our Network of State Advocates and Decision-Makers

Our [Office of New Americans \(ONA\) State Network](#) continues to grow with the addition of Pennsylvania as our 20th state this year. Using Council data, formal testimony, and best practices, this year we have successfully supported several states that have created new offices through legislation, including Hawaii and Maine, and others that have pending legislation, including Vermont, Arizona, and Delaware. Since the Council and World Education Services began co-convening the ONA Network in 2019, its membership has more than tripled in size from six states to 20, reaching a critical mass of red, blue, and purple states that have invested in immigrant inclusion and economic development.

As states began encountering increasing migrant arrivals from the southern border, we prioritized taking the peer-learning ONA Network model to the U.S.-Mexico border to see a complex processing, sheltering, and onward travel operation first-hand. In March, we led a group of 15 ONA staff from 10 states on a site visit to San Diego to better understand federal, state, and NGO operations in the city and at the border. The group met with Border Patrol and CBP's Office of Field Operations to tour a migrant processing center, the border wall, and the San Ysidro Port of Entry. We ended the trip with a visit to the Jewish Family Service of San Diego to better understand NGOs' role in helping migrants travel to destination cities like New York, Boston, Chicago, and Denver. Attendees brought their learnings back home to inform their states' own responses to new arrivals. We hope to lead another border trip for the ONA Network states next year.

SPOTLIGHT

Supporting Welcoming Communities at Multiple Levels of Government

In addition to our state-level ONA Network, the Council operates Gateways for Growth, a competitive opportunity for communities to receive funding, targeted research, and technical assistance to help them support immigrants in their municipality. In February, Gateways for Growth alumni, [Global Cleveland](#), along with Re:Source Cleveland and officials with Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland, celebrated the [grand opening](#) of the [Cuyahoga County Welcome Center](#). The center provides a centralized access point to human and social services for immigrants, including language services, public benefits, education, jobs and workforce support, housing, legal, and other integration resources. The center will welcome and support immigrant and refugee populations who represent more than 120 nationalities as they create new lives in Cleveland and reflects the community's commitment to immigrant inclusion in all areas of civic, social, and economic life.

SPOTLIGHT

Texas Case Study: How the Council Works Holistically Across Programs

In a state like Texas, where the governor and state lawmakers continue to advance policies like S.B.4 that are harmful to immigrant communities, the Council's ability to counter anti-immigrant narratives through storytelling, data and research, and coalition building serves as an essential counterweight. Here's how we utilize different levers to advocate on behalf of immigrants in Texas:

- We organize and continue to grow an already strong coalition dedicated to recognizing and supporting the positive impact immigrants have on the Texas economy through the 160-member [Texans for Economic Growth](#) (TEG), our largest state business coalition. We create opportunities for these members to actively engage on immigration issues through convenings, peer-to-peer learning, information sharing, collaboration, and advocacy. We support members with talking points for D.C. fly-ins, coordination, tailored research, and communications.
- We release research demonstrating the contributions of immigrants to Texas' economy. In February, the Council launched a new research report, [New Americans in Houston: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Houston Metro Area](#). The report was published in partnership with Amegy Bank, Texas Association of Business (TAB), American Leadership Forum, Center for Houston's Future, Leadership Houston, and TEG. The launch event hosted by Amegy Bank and TAB brought together more than 130 business leaders, government officials, and community members. We also launched a [New Americans in Dallas](#) report to highlight the host city's immigrant communities during Welcoming America's annual gathering of more than 800 stakeholders, held in Dallas.
- The Council builds and supports coalition members with convenings, research, and talking points. We hosted an event in partnership with the George W. Bush Institute that offered a rare opportunity for chambers of commerce from border communities and North Texas to come together to share perspectives, experience, and expertise. We also provided information on the economic contributions of immigrants to support the Midland and Odessa Chambers of Commerce's joint D.C. fly-in.
- Our Immigration Justice Campaign works to protect the rights of immigrants across Texas by increasing access to counsel and information. The majority of the calls to our [legal information hotline](#) for people in CBP custody awaiting expedited credible fear interviews (see IJC for details) come from Texas. Since October, we have spoken with 130 individuals detained in Texas, providing them with vital information about the interview process and, in turn, gaining intelligence about conditions in CBP custody that we will compile into a report to expose the program's deficiencies to the public.
- We are actively monitoring S.B.4 implementation and legal challenges to the law. We plan to organize a rapid-response webinar when the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals issues its decision on S.B.4. As we have done in Iowa, we are assessing opportunities for litigation in states that adopt copycat bills, and have partnered on a [toolkit](#) to counter anti-immigration policies to equip advocates in challenging unjust immigration laws in their communities.
- We are working to shape positive narratives about immigration and connection through op-ed placements like [Business Leader: Let's get asylum seekers working](#) (Houston Chronicle), written by the President of the Texas Business Leadership Council, and our "Belonging Begins with Us" campaign with the Ad Council.

Cultural Exchange

We sponsor intern and trainee programs at host organizations across the United States, promoting experiences that build connections and understanding across cultures.

Bringing New Talent to American Companies

Our Cultural Exchange program promotes the exchange of ideas, research, mutual enrichment, and connections across cultures. Since 2000 (trainees) and 2007 (interns), the Council has hosted and facilitated about 500 J-1 interns and trainees per year, providing direct support to exchange visitors, companies, and attorneys from applications for J visa sponsorship through alumni engagement. With the prestigious new Research Scholar designation we received late last year, the Council is working on expanding and growing our J1 program.

The Council's program not only supports visitors with visa applications but also assists businesses in meeting the programmatic requirements of cultural exchange visas, which foster connection and sharing between visa holders and their coworkers. As our program expands, we are implementing a new case management system to empower us to continue to provide a high-quality experience. This includes integrating functionality for sponsors, allowing for seamless drafting of Training Plans directly within the platform, and integrating with our current information system. We also added custom dashboards and smart data features to enhance efficiency and decision-making.

As we build the infrastructure for scale, we're excited to be building relationships to reach more people than ever before. More than 250 people have attended our educational sessions and webinars so far in 2024. We are also leveraging our partnership with the American Immigration Lawyers Association to help immigration lawyers better understand the opportunities and the requirements; we have hosted six private events, both virtually and in person, for chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and legal firms.



The Cultural Exchange team presenting at the AILA annual conference in Chicago

Center for Inclusion & Belonging

The Center for Inclusion and Belonging (CIB) uses narrative and culture change strategies to counter biases, prejudices, and “othering” while advancing the inclusion and belonging of everyone in America.

Belonging Begins with Us is Reaching New Audiences

The Council’s communications platform, Belonging Begins with Us (BBWU), continues to reach audiences nationwide with positive, impactful messaging about creating a more welcoming nation where everyone can belong. Since the campaign’s launch in December 2020, it has garnered over \$85 million in donated media, and its content has achieved more than 5 billion impressions.

On March 5th, BBWU partnered with the Team Up Project (led by founding members Catholic Charities USA, Habitat for Humanity International, Interfaith America, and the YMCA of the USA) to release [a new “Shared Table” PSA](#) encouraging people to come together across lines of difference to cultivate stronger, more connected communities. The PSA highlights opportunities for people from all walks of life to connect through community activities such as book clubs, volunteering, and potluck meals. Created by Avoq, the film is a montage of human connection featuring people engaging with one another around various types of tables that represent opportunities to get to know others and create more resilient and connected communities. It has been distributed to more than 1,800 TV stations across the country and directs audiences to a [dedicated landing page](#) on the campaign website featuring real stories of belonging, a guided quiz that prompts users



to reflect on their own sense of belonging, and bridge-building actions people can take to help others in their local community feel that they belong. The work is currently being promoted across Ad Council, American Immigration Council, Team Up Project, and “Belonging Begins with Us” social media channels, with a combined following of nearly 3 million people.

Community of Practice is Crafting Compelling Narratives

This year, in partnership with the Othering and Belonging Institute, we led a four-series Community of Practice (CoP) focused on advancing the field of narrative practice. Narratives shape how people understand their worlds and process new information. The Council has embraced narrative strategy as an important tool that helps our organization and movement to advance collective belonging across the country, de-polarize around contentious issues, and seed the kinds of individual and institutional practices that help build more welcoming communities. This is nascent and collective work, and the CoP provided space for our staff to share insights, ask questions, and learn with other leading narrative practitioners. The Community

of Practice concluded with a convening we co-hosted with the Transatlantic Democracy & Belonging Forum and New Pluralists prior to the start of the Othering and Belonging Conference in Oakland, CA. During the convening, we brought together leading experts and practitioners to discuss enhanced bridging and narrative strategies and plant seeds for new collaborations.

Advancing Belonging Among Key Stakeholders

Our CIB team continues to provide thought leadership and share our learnings by participating in panels and giving keynote addresses at catalytic convenings. In January, CIB staff gave the keynote address at the [Levitt Foundation's annual convening](#) in Los Angeles, underscoring the importance of utilizing public space and the arts to advance belonging across increasingly diverse cities and communities in the United States. In February, during a plenary presentation at the Working Group on Resettlement in Sydney, Australia, which brought together governments, civil society, and refugee leaders, CIB staff presented on the importance of narratives in building welcoming communities. In April, CIB staff spoke on a panel on Migration and Belonging at the Othering and Belonging Conference. The CIB has a unique think-and-do tank model, and sessions like these are critical opportunities for us to share our findings, be in dialogue with other practitioners, and advance the theory and practice of bridge-building and belonging work.

Organization Update

The Council excitedly kicked off our rebranding projects that will elevate and rejuvenate our public-facing materials and messaging. The website redesign is underway, which will bring all the content from the merger with New American Economy into one site. Our new website's modern look and feel will showcase more of our incredible work through new lenses, such as audio, video, and quotes. The website will help us reach new audiences with a distinct resource section for litigators, researchers, policymakers, and the press, expanding our tent to people who may not be familiar with the Council's work. We expect to launch the website in November.

Additionally, we are creating a cohesive brand narrative that can be easily shared and understood. During our organization retreat in May, staff participated in workshops that will help us define this narrative and create a story about the full scope of our organization.

We have also started to design our brand video project, which will introduce people to our work in a way that speaks to the heart. The video, which will launch alongside our new website, will highlight interviews with our partners and directly impacted immigrants and refugees to make the emotional connection between the work we do and our audience. With all these branding updates, we aim to drive higher engagement and create a deeper connection to our mission, vision, and values.



Council staff during a workshop at our team retreat in Queens, New York

Staff Updates



In January, the Council hired a new Director of Institutional Giving, **Sofi Goode**. She oversees the Council's corporate and foundation partnerships, bringing a relational, mission-centric, and mutually beneficial approach. Sofi came to the Council from The Trevor Project, where she served as a Senior Manager of Corporate Partnerships and led a passionate team that established long-term partnerships with major institutions, brands, and industries to combat suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. Over her career, Sofi's impact has extended into reproductive rights advocacy and securing grants for educational services in low-income communities in Los Angeles. Sofi holds a B.A. in Economics and Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality Studies from Wesleyan University.



In January, the Council also hired **Amanda Hoffman** as the Director of Development Operations. In this new role, she is focused on enhancing the structures and systems needed to help the development team raise funds for the Council. This includes streamlining policies and procedures, managing the fundraising database, and overseeing analytics and prospect research. Prior to joining the Council, Amanda was the VP of Data and Operations for the fundraising team at the League of Conservation Voters. She graduated from American University and received a post-graduate certification in Nonprofit Management from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



In May, **Michelle Lapointe** joined the Council as the Legal Director where she leads impact litigation and oversees the Council's legal advocacy to achieve a fair and just immigration system. Before joining the Council, Michelle served as Deputy Legal Director at the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), where she litigated cases relating to interior enforcement, including a challenge to a worksite immigration raid that resulted in a class settlement of over \$1 million, and advocated for the immigrant worker rights. She was previously a senior supervising attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center's Immigrant Justice Project, where she represented immigrant workers in class and collective actions for unpaid wages and other employment law violations, challenged state anti-immigrant laws, and litigated civil rights cases against state and federal officials, primarily in the Deep South. Michelle is a graduate of American University Washington College of Law, where she was a Public Interest/Public Service Scholar, and Wellesley College.

Staff Updates *continued*



In July, **Anjulee Alvares-Cinque** joined the Council as our first-ever Chief Marketing Officer. Anjulee Alvares-Cinque is a Global Marketing & Communications leader with a 20+ year career spanning film, publishing and international non-profits. An ethical storyteller, committed to upholding and contributing to a culture of inclusivity, Anjulee joins AIC after an eight-year period at UNICEF USA and Save the Children. At both non-profits, she led the Media Relations, Sports & Entertainment Marketing, Social Media and Internal Communications teams, with a keen focus on building marketing strategies to advance policy change, revenue, and supporter growth. Prior to working in the non-profit sector, Anjulee spent over a decade working between film and publishing, including positions at The Weinstein Company, Fox Searchlight, Miramax Films, Random House and Penguin Young Reader's Group. She holds a B.S. in Communication Studies from New York University.



In July, **Rebekah Wolf** was promoted to the Director of the Immigration Justice Campaign. She has worked with IJC for the past five years, beginning as a mentor for pro bono attorneys representing detained clients. She has been involved in immigration advocacy for over 20 years and non-profit management for more than 15. Born and raised in New Mexico, her direct representation experience has focused on asylum-seekers, detained individuals, and unaccompanied children in border communities. Prior to her career as an attorney, Bekah co-founded and directed a small but mighty international human rights organization that mobilized volunteers from all over the world to support rural and refugee communities in the Middle East. She has a bachelor's degree in history from New York University and a JD from University of California Law San Francisco (formerly UC Hastings).



Impact by the Numbers



22,000+

Supporters of our [Immigration Justice Campaign](#)



204

Calls answered from detainees seeking legal assistance inside CBP custody



940

Take Action messages sent standing up for LGBTQ+ rights in detention



<24-48 hr

Our rapid analyses of complex proposed immigration policies published



7.4M+

Number of immigrants eligible for naturalization identified by our research



700+

State legislative bills tracked and reported to partners and stakeholders



20

States participating in our [Office of New Americans State Network](#)



1,167

Number of media mentions of the Council's staff and resources



50

[Immigration Impact](#) blog posts published



\$84.4K

Belonging Begins with Us donated media since 2020



2.0M+

All-time views on our ["How the Immigration System Works"](#) factsheet

2024 Publication Highlights

Publications

- [The Emergency National Security Supplemental Appropriations Act Analysis](#)
- [Ohio, We Have a Problem](#)
- [Naturalization in the U.S.](#)
- [The Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in MA](#)
- [The Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in NY](#)
- [The Growing Demand for Healthcare Workers in Maine](#)
- [The Economic Contributions of Immigrants in Michigan](#)
- [Contributions of New Americans in Michigan](#)
- [New Americans in Houston: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the Houston Metro Area](#)
- [Economic Impact Report: New Americans in Dallas](#)
- Blog: [Volunteers Needed for Credible Fear Interview Preparation in CBP Hotline](#)
- Blog: [Showdown Between Texas Authorities and the Federal Government Headed to the Supreme Court](#)
- Blog: [New Americans in Houston Report Launched at Regional Event](#)

Media

- New York Times: [A New Hurdle for Asylum Seekers: 4 Hours to Find a Lawyer](#)
- ABC News: [Trump again vows to deport millions of migrants. Could he really do it?](#)
- The Atlantic: Asylum Seekers Didn't [Create the 'Migrant Crisis'](#)
- All in With Chris Hayes, MSNBC, [Biden's Executive Action on the Border, Explained](#)
- Forbes: Why Biden Can't Easily 'Shut Down The Border'—As Both He And [Trump Have Suggested](#)
- Rolling Stone: [Congress Could Expand Immigrant Surveillance — And Make Many Companies Snitch](#)
- The Economist: [Can Joe Biden bring order to the southern border without Congress?](#)
- Associated Press: [Iowa defends immigration law that allows local officials to arrest people told to leave US](#)
- HuffPost: A Brief History Of Republicans Walking Away From [Bipartisan Immigration Deals](#)
- Politico: [Federal judge blocks key part of DeSantis anti-immigration law](#)
- American Prospect: [Still Bring Us Your Tired](#)
- Bloomberg: Illegal US Border Crossings Aren't [Really Breaking Records](#)
- Fox News: The impact of Texas's anti-immigration [law](#)
- USA Today: [Can the US handle more immigration? History and the Census suggest the answer is yes.](#)