

# For the Benefit of All

Strategic Recommendations to Enhance the State's Role in the Integration of Immigrants in Illinois



## Joint Executive Summary, Year Two

Issues of Housing,  
Police-Community Relations,  
and Economic Development  
and Entrepreneurship



A Report issued by ICIRR  
and the Governor's Office  
of New Americans Policy  
and Advocacy



Governor's Office  
of New Americans  
Policy and Advocacy  
100 W. Randolph  
16th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 814-3245



Illinois Coalition for  
Immigrant and  
Refugee Rights  
55 E. Jackson  
Suite 2075  
Chicago, IL 60604  
(312) 332-7360



Governor Rod Blagojevich signing the New Americans Executive Order on November 19, 2005, at the Immigrant Justice Convention, hosted by Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, in Chicago.

## **FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL** **Strategic Recommendations to Enhance the State's Role in the** **Integration of Immigrants in Illinois.**

Joint Executive Summary, Year Two Issues of Housing, Police-Community Relations, and Economic Development and Entrepreneurship.

### **Contributing Authors:**

Louise Cainkar, Joshua Hoyt, Lisa Thakkar, Fred Tsao, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR); Nandini Saldanha, Stacia Frens, and Christine Rhee, ICIRR volunteers; Luis Lara, ICIRR intern

**New Americans Policy Council Co-Chairs:** Ngoan Le, Chicago Community Trust; Juan Salgado, Instituto del Progreso Latino

**Office of Governor Rod R. Blagojevich:** Jose Luis Gutierrez, Grace Hou (Interagency Task Force Co-Chair), Matthew Summy, Samreen Khan, and Joan Brody

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## Introduction



Illinois is home to an estimated 1.8 million immigrants and has the fifth largest immigrant population of any state in the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 14 percent of Illinois residents hail from almost 200 different countries, and speak more than 100 different languages. Foreign-born workers constitute more than 14 percent of the state's aggregate workforce in jobs at all skill levels, making an integral contribution to the state's economy. These numbers reflect the diverse population of Illinois and help illustrate the state's need to effectively address immigrant and refugee integration.

In 2005, in response to the language, cultural, and economic challenges faced by many immigrants and refugees, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich signed the first-in-the-nation **New Americans Executive Order**<sup>2</sup> to address the integration needs of immigrants throughout Illinois. The Executive Order launched a groundbreaking public-private partnership to form a coherent, strategic, and proactive approach by state government to immigrant integration. Under the Executive Order, the **Governor's Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy** was created and two **Interagency Task Forces**, comprised of nine state agencies each, were convened to examine how state government can systematically address the changing demographics in Illinois. At the same time, a **New Americans Policy Council**, convened by the **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights**, was charged with assessing and developing recommendations for Illinois' immigrants and refugees from the community perspective. This two-phase integration project began shortly after the issuance of the Executive Order, and we are now pleased to present our Year Two recommendations.

Pursuant to the Phase One recommendations, the State opened an **Illinois Welcoming Center** (IWC)

in Melrose Park in 2007. The IWC was launched by the Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy and is managed by the Illinois Department of Human Services. A one-stop shop, the IWC provides a range of state services in a manner that eliminates language and cultural barriers for Illinois residents, opening up a new world of access and opportunity. The Center has been well received, and the response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Residents appreciate the easy access of the community-based services, and neighborhood partners welcome the collaborative nature of this endeavor. Local elected officials, business owners, advocates, and residents have been supportive partners of the IWC. A local advisory board has also been set up to guide the IWC to ensure responsiveness to the needs of the community.

Illinois is a national leader in implementing a statewide comprehensive immigrant and refugee integration policy. This two-phase process has addressed immediate integration needs of New Americans with the provision and expansion of state services. Illinois is proud of its ongoing leadership in this field, and the work of the New Americans Policy Council and the State's Interagency Task Force will continue to provide guidance to both Illinois and the nation on the complex issues of governance with a diverse population of newcomers. Integrating immigrants and refugees will improve their civic, social, and economic participation, while benefiting all Illinoisans.

## Background

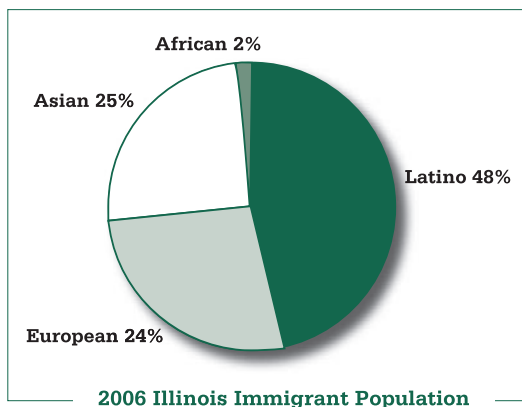


Since its founding, Illinois' population and economic growth has been fueled by immigrants. Successive waves of Irish, German, Scandinavian, Polish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants dug the canals, farmed the fields, built the railroads, constructed the cities, slaughtered the livestock, and worked the steel mills and mines that have made Illinois a great economic power.

### What is immigrant integration?

**Immigrant integration is a dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities. As an intentional effort, integration engages and transforms all community members, reaping shared benefits and creating a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>3</sup>**

As in the past, Illinois currently is experiencing another large wave of immigration. Of the state's 12.8 million people, 1.8 million are foreign-born residents and at least another 1.5 million are U.S.-born children of immigrants.<sup>4</sup> The number of immigrants in Illinois is increasing by more than 35,000 people annually.



Drawn largely from Mexico, Poland, India, China, the Philippines, Africa, the Middle East, and many other nations and regions, Illinois' immigrants and refugees are diverse in origin, age, language, culture, and skills. Immigrants also share a deep desire to build a better life for their families and a better society in

which to live. And, by all indications, immigrants are doing just that. According to recent data:

- **Immigrant workers are driving Illinois' labor force growth, particularly in high-skilled and low-skilled job sectors.** While immigrants comprise 12.6 percent of the state's population, they make up 17 percent of the state's workers. As the number of native-born workers shrank from 2000 to 2005, the increasing number of immigrant workers enabled the state's workforce to grow overall during that period.<sup>5</sup>
- **Immigrant workers are critical to expanding sectors of the Illinois economy.** Between 2000 and 2005, immigrant workers filled 27.7 percent of the 21,000 new health diagnostic jobs and 42.4 percent of the 53,000 new food preparation and serving jobs.<sup>6</sup>
- **Immigrants are driving the housing market in Illinois.** Between 2000 and 2005, immigrants represented 46.5 percent of all of the new homeowners in Illinois and an astonishing 80.9 percent of the new homeowners in suburban Cook County.<sup>7</sup>
- **Immigrant entrepreneurs are helping to build new Illinois businesses.** Illinois ranks among the top of immigrant receiving states for immigrant self-employment.<sup>8</sup> In 2002, Asians represented 4.6 percent and Hispanics 4.1 percent of the total businesses owned in Illinois.<sup>9</sup>

These economic and demographic changes bring challenges to our state. How do we encourage immigrants to set down roots and build assets in our state? What can be done to help immigrants navigate our financial systems, buy homes, and set up businesses? How can governments help to build trusting relationships between immigrants and public officials that will ensure immigrant investments in our neighborhoods and communities will be safe? These are the questions the second phase of the New Americans Executive Order policy project explored.

## New Americans Executive Order



The goal of the New Americans Executive Order is to determine the most effective strategies for immigrant integration that the State of Illinois can implement or encourage. The intention is not to have government replace or replicate the successful immigrant integration going on within families, faith institutions, and community and service organizations, or at the local level. Rather, the purpose is to identify strategic and cost-effective measures governments can take to enhance immigrant integration and social cohesion.

The Executive Order created a **New Americans Policy Council**, comprised of two dozen Illinois business, faith, labor, community, philanthropic, and governmental leaders who, over a two-year period, were asked to develop recommendations for a comprehensive strategy that would direct state resources in accelerating immigrant and refugee integration. The Policy Council consulted with immigrant leaders, state officials, and a **National Advisory Panel**, composed of immigration policy experts from around the country, to explore the issues surrounding immigrant integration. The **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights** staffed the Policy Council's work with the assistance of national policy experts at the **Migration Policy Institute** and the **National Immigration Forum**. This work received support from philanthropic partners at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The recommendations of the New Americans Policy Council are included in two policy reports, both titled "**For the Benefit of All: Strategic Recommendations to Enhance the State's Role in the Integration of Immigrants in Illinois.**" The first-year report, focusing on education, health care, human services, citizenship, and English acquisition, was published in December 2006. The second and final year report, focusing on workforce development, entrepreneurship, housing, homeownership, and police-community relations, was released in June 2008.

The Executive Order also created the **Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy** within the Office of the Governor. This office convened two **Interagency Task Forces**, a key parallel planning process conducted within state government. The first Interagency Task Force, comprised of nine state agencies, presented Governor Blagojevich with seven global recommendations in the areas of human services, healthcare, citizenship, and education for integrating the needs of Illinois' immigrant and refugee communities. Each of the nine state agencies was also asked to assess and implement their own standards specific to the services they provide. The task force issued its recommendations in December 2006 in the report "**Immigrant Integration: Improving Policy for Education, Health and Human Services for Illinois' Immigrants and Refugees.**" Today, these agencies continue to develop and implement agency-specific New Americans Plan recommendations, including the IWC.

The second New Americans Interagency Task Force, consisting of a set of nine additional state agencies, developed more specialized recommendations to address economic and employment development, housing and homeownership, and public safety issues for New Americans. The Task Force recommendations are contained in the report titled "**New Americans Interagency Task Force Report: Phase Two.**"



# Recommendations Of The New Americans Policy Council



## HOUSING

A home is one of the most important assets that one can own. For immigrants in particular, homeownership reflects a strong commitment to their new country and an investment in the future of their families and their community. Homeownership involves at least two key questions.

First, **are the potential homeowners ready to buy and maintain a home?** This question involves not just having sufficient funds and access to credit, but also knowing the risks. The recent rise in foreclosures, specifically those tied to subprime mortgages, reflect the need for greater understanding of the responsibilities that homeownership entails.

Second, **is there suitable housing to meet the needs of the homeowners' household?** The housing market is facing a mismatch between the supply of available housing and the needs of immigrant families and households. In northeastern Illinois, current construction trends indicate a bias toward condominiums and large-lot single-family homes. In contrast, demand trends, particularly in light of growing immigrant populations, show a need for small-lot or attached single-family homes.<sup>10</sup> How can the State help address this mismatch?

**1. The State should advance a financial literacy campaign to offer Illinois residents, especially immigrants, the tools they need to buy homes and stay in them.**

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), in collaboration with other relevant state agencies, should launch a statewide financial literacy initiative for Illinois residents. Such an initiative should target the needs of immigrant families, who may lack the language skills, education, and cultural fluency of native residents. Through this campaign, community organizations, employers, community colleges, local schools, and other institutions would host literacy programs and help

develop culturally appropriate lesson plans to educate immigrants regarding the financial system in their new home country and other information they will need to be successful homeowners.

As a corollary, IDFPR should work with community organizations, mortgage brokers, banks, and credit unions to create a voluntary certification program for financial institutions to educate employees about how to better serve immigrant or limited-English-proficient (LEP) customers.

**2. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) should work with developers, local governments, and other stakeholders to better match the housing supply to the demographic and housing needs of immigrant households.**

Developers should be encouraged to build appropriate affordable housing in targeted areas, and appropriate incentives should be offered. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) should coordinate and participate in discussions with developers, immigrant and worker advocates, and other community stakeholders to develop a common understanding of the various housing needs of immigrant families, including home size, types of rooms, and location. One outcome of these meetings should be recommendations for appropriate housing development ideas and strategies for communities to meet their immigrant and workforce needs.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

The safety of the entire community hinges on **trust between residents and public safety officials**. Effective trust-building measures can encourage crime victims, witnesses, and other community members to cooperate with police in solving and preventing crime. How can public safety officials best build trust? First, departments must be able to **communicate effectively** with residents, ideally hiring civilian and sworn members who speak

the same languages as the communities in which they serve. Departments must **seek input from the community**, including representation from community members on task forces and other similar community-police commissions and boards. Finally, building trust requires **instituting policies that are sensitive to community concerns**. The following recommendations propose specific measures that the State can take the lead to foster trust between public safety agencies and immigrant communities.

### **1. The Illinois State Police should encourage local communities to craft policies restricting police inquiries regarding immigration status.**

Illinois State Police Directive ENF-031 limits the ability of ISP officers to ask about the immigration status of individuals they encounter. The City of Chicago, the Town of Cicero, and Cook County all have enacted similar restrictions.<sup>11</sup> All of these policies are crafted so as not to undercut the ability to identify, prosecute, and punish serious offenders.

Policies that allow or require officers to ask about the immigration status of anyone they encounter undermine trust between public safety agencies and immigrant communities. Immigrant crime victims, including survivors of domestic violence, become reluctant to report offenses for fear that they or their family members will in turn be reported to immigration authorities. Witnesses to crimes similarly feel intimidated about coming forward, no less testifying in open court regarding what they have seen.

In addition, inquiry policies may lead to abuse and accusations of racial profiling. Such policies may be interpreted as encouraging officers to make stops in immigrant neighborhoods that may intimidate residents.

Public safety departments across the nation recognize that safety hinges on the ability of all people, including immigrants, to cooperate without fear. Many departments view inquiry policies as counterproductive and distracting from their duties of addressing violent or property crimes. In the words of recently-installed Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn, “If someone shot you, is our first question, ‘What’s your immigration status?’ or ‘Can you describe your assailant?’”<sup>12</sup>

Illinois State Police Directive ENF-031 balances the need for effective law enforcement with the need for immigrants to feel safe when they encounter the ISP. The directive is a good example of how state and local police departments can foster trust with immigrant communities. The State should encourage other local jurisdictions throughout Illinois to enact similar directives.

### **2. The State should lead an initiative to develop a statewide recruitment campaign among state and local public safety agencies to attract and recruit immigrant and bilingual personnel.**

A key factor in building stronger ties between immigrant communities and public safety agencies is the ability of public safety officers and personnel to communicate effectively with immigrants and to handle incidents in a culturally-sensitive manner. Immigrants who are willing to serve as officers, community liaisons, and in other official capacities can help build these ties. The Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy should encourage a statewide recruitment strategy for both officers and civilian positions that is coordinated with other county and municipal public safety departments.

In addition, the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (ILETSB) should ensure that training for all public safety officers and personnel includes tactical training on serving and interacting with limited-English-proficient individuals and immigrants, both during the police academy and as part of continued education.

### **3. Representatives of immigrant communities should be appointed to state boards overseeing public safety policies.**

The state should ensure that appointees and the people staffing panels are sensitive to the concerns of the immigrant community. Examples of panels include the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the Illinois State Police Merit Board, and the Racial Profiling Prevention and Data Oversight Board.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

As the State strives to foster economic growth and provide economic opportunities throughout Illinois, it must remember that **immigrants are key contributors** to our success. In particular, immigrants fuel economic activity not just as workers and consumers, but also as entrepreneurs. Immigrants engage in entrepreneurial activity at significantly higher rates than native-born Americans, and immigrant-founded businesses represent a quarter of all US firms in technology and engineering.<sup>13</sup> How can the State best **include immigrants in its economic development planning?** How can it **provide potential entrepreneurs, including immigrants**, with the information and financing they will need to be successful?

**1. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) should identify and address the potential contributions of immigrant and refugee residents of the state as it coordinates its business development and local government assistance efforts.**

DCEO is working with other state agencies to plan and implement regional economic development strategies. The plans will be used as a guide for investing in established regions to increase the skills of workers, create and market business incentives, and highlight existing natural resources. In planning and implementing these strategies, DCEO should fully incorporate the potential contributions of immigrants as workers, business owners, and community leaders. DCEO should bring into this process ethnic chambers of commerce; immigrant-led community organizations; trade associations such as the Illinois Restaurant Association, the Illinois Green Industry Association, and the Illinois Hospital Association that represent businesses that rely on immigrant workers; educational institutions that serve immigrants and their children; and other local and regional stakeholders.

Examples of policies and programs that would reflect the interests of the immigrant community include bridge programs and skills training in high-demand, well-paying jobs, as well as technical, financial, and succession support to entrepreneurs looking to start a small business. Such programs could build upon work that the State is conducting to address critical skills shortages in areas such as nursing (especially given the demand for bilingual nurses) and manufacturing.

**2. DCEO should launch a comprehensive training program targeted at potential entrepreneurs, specifically recognizing the needs of immigrants.**

DCEO should work with other relevant state agencies and community organizations to organize training workshops offered in multiple languages in targeted communities and at ethnic chambers of commerce. Such workshops should offer multiple levels of training, beginning with basic financial literacy. They could be conducted through DCEO-funded entrepreneur centers statewide.

A statewide consumer-level financial literacy campaign for all residents of Illinois should include a track for non-English speakers. (*See housing recommendations above.*) Through such a campaign, classes would be offered in the community and students would learn the English necessary to successfully navigate the financial systems they encounter in their daily lives. DCEO and other

relevant state agencies should work with ethnic chambers of commerce, local banks, and other community institutions to develop this program.

More advanced workshops should educate current and potential immigrant entrepreneurs on the cultural and legal differences between their countries of origin and the United States. These workshops would emphasize business regulations including incorporation, licensing, tax, workplace safety, labor, and employment laws. They would also provide information on additional resources for new business owners, including financial assistance and peer support.

DCEO should offer workshops that address succession issues that many small businesses face when owners retire and want to pass on the business to family members or employees. Specific workshops should engage organizations representing immigrant-heavy industries such as the Illinois Restaurant Association, Illinois Green Industry Association, and Illinois Hospital Association as well as community organizations to train potential successors on the necessary management and ownership skills to assume an existing business.

Finally, DCEO should take primary responsibility for the development and implementation of these recommendations.

**3. The State should fund and implement a micro-lending program to increase access to capital for small business owners.**

A major obstacle for many small business owners is lack of financing. Access to small loans that allow people to build a credit history, and from there gain access to larger amounts of credit, would assist many residents of Illinois, both immigrant and non-immigrant, to become business owners. Micro-lending models have gained renewed attention after the Grameen Bank and its founder, Muhammad Yunus, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

The Illinois Works capital plan contains funding for a micro-lending program for potential entrepreneurs, specifically immigrants, women, and ex-offenders. DCEO has done the background work to map where there is a need, who could make referrals and who could act as lenders. The General Assembly should fund this initiative, and DCEO should promptly implement it.



# Recommendations Of The New Americans Interagency Task Force

The **Phase Two New Americans Interagency Task Force** created a two-fold process in the development of its recommendations. The first process includes **three statewide recommendations addressing language access, economic integration, and bilingual pay/hiring strategies**. The second process created a more targeted set of recommendations that are specific to each of the nine state agencies and that address **economic and employment development, housing and homeownership, and public safety issues** for immigrants and refugees.

## New Americans Interagency Task Force II Agencies

1. Central Management Services
2. Illinois Department of Labor
3. Illinois Emergency Management Agency
4. Illinois State Police
5. Illinois Housing Development Authority
6. Illinois Department of Human Rights
7. Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
8. Illinois Department of Corrections
9. Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation

The nine participating agencies are vastly different in structure and in the services they provide. Therefore, the development of more targeted recommendations, unique to each of the participating agencies, was required in the second process. A set of seven guiding principles with an emphasis on service access needs were used to standardize their recommendations.

## Seven Guiding Principles

1. State services should be provided to all residents in ways that are innovative, effective and efficient.
2. Adequate language services should be provided to the limited-English-proficient (LEP)



population to encourage and accelerate immigrant and refugee integration.

3. Meaningful access to state services should be afforded to all residents, including the LEP population, from all agencies and organizations providing services on behalf of the state.
4. State staff should have a proficient level of cultural and linguistic competence and will be provided continued access to comprehensive cultural and linguistic competence training.
5. All vital documents should be language-accessible to all LEP individuals.
6. Outreach to immigrant and refugee communities is recognized as essential to responsible government.
7. Agency policy decisions affecting immigrants and refugees should be informed by population, demographic, and language data.

Relying on seven guiding principles that emphasized service access needs, the Phase Two New Americans Interagency Task Force developed the following **three recommendations**:

### 1. Establish a Central Language Access Office.

This office will be an initiative of the Governor's Office and will provide authoritative oversight, centralized coordination, and technical assistance to state agencies in the implementation of language access services to LEP individuals. The responsibilities of this office will include the following areas of service:

- **Administration and Management:** Manage and oversee language access initiatives for all state agencies and assist in the development and assessment of bilingual hiring plans.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance and expertise to agencies for language access services.

- **Training and Staff Development:** Provide staff with the skills and tools necessary to effectively serve LEP clients through coordinating and providing statewide cultural competence training.
- **Clearinghouse and Repository:** Provide translation services and store copies of all translated documents in a central repository.
- **Translation and Interpretation:** Develop and implement consistent standards for translating web and printed content and testing interpreters and translators for proficiency.
- **Outreach and Communication:** Ensure state agencies develop strategic plans for communication and outreach to multilingual communities.

## 2. Implement an Economic Integration Project.

This project aims to help highly skilled unemployed and underemployed immigrants and refugees to leverage their foreign credentials into professional positions in Illinois. Specifically, the project will include the following tasks:

- Create a clear process for transferring training, skills, and education to the Illinois workforce, which will involve assisting foreign-educated professionals in meeting state and federal licensing standards.
- Develop programs and expand existing programs that assist professionals in meeting licensure requirements, as appropriate. Assistance in navigating the licensing process will serve to increase the number of skilled professionals securing employment in their field.
- Provide technical assistance and resource availability utilizing public/private partnerships, credentialing entities, employers, and state agencies. This collaboration will establish a seamless integration of skilled immigrants into the workforce.
- Offer educational assistance, bridge programs, and mentorship. Activities such as targeted technical English language support for skilled immigrants and job search skills training, and the support of those who have been successful in

translating their skill set will help remove the barriers to comprehensive employment integration.

- Continue to address other barriers identified in the process as they are identified.

## 3. Standardize Statewide Bilingual Pay and Hiring Processes.

This process will effectively address the need for competent and proficient bilingual staff. The state will implement a standard two-tiered process to ensure language proficiency of applicants. Specifically, this process will include the following tasks:

- Establish a central policy for how state agencies address the issue of bilingual pay. Central Management Services has begun to develop a procedure that outlines proficiency and language use requirements.
- Implement a standard proficiency exam that accurately measures the skill level of potential bilingual staff. This exam will serve to establish a baseline level of language proficiency for new applicants to state government.
- Create content specific proficiency exams for state agencies. These exams will allow state agencies to further assess the appropriate language skills of bilingual staff by testing proficiency in agency specific terminology.

The recommendations from both phases of this project exemplify the state's commitment to addressing and overcoming many of the integration challenges faced by immigrants and refugees, thus helping Illinois to serve as a catalyst for comprehensive integration efforts nationally.

## The Role Of The Federal Government



The New Americans Executive Order sought to create a proactive state government approach to immigrant integration. Immigration policy, however, is set by the federal government, and federal actions directly affect the prospects for successful immigrant integration at the state and local level. In Illinois, it is estimated that as many as one-third of our foreign-born neighbors are undocumented.

Governor Blagojevich, along with both of our state's U.S. Senators and the Illinois General Assembly, has consistently called for a bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to earned legalization for these Illinois residents. The New Americans Policy Council supports this position, and considers comprehensive reform beneficial for the Illinois economy and humane policy for the immigrants themselves.

Once immigration reform legislation is passed, national attention will then turn to the issues of effective integration. The Policy Council believes that the federal government should examine how it might launch national immigrant integration

programs that fund English language acquisition, promote U.S. citizenship, develop job skills, encourage immigrant homeownership and entrepreneurship, foster effective law enforcement and positive police-community relations, and build upon the other recommendations of the New Americans Executive Order project. The Policy Council urges the State of Illinois to work closely with the Illinois Congressional delegation to pass comprehensive immigration reform and begin a serious national dialogue about immigrant integration.



## Conclusion



**T**he New Americans Executive Order recognizes the key role that immigrants have played in the prosperity and vitality of our state. Immigrants have contributed to our economy, brought their talent and energy to our communities, and become good neighbors and citizens.

As the immigrant population of our state continues to grow, we face the challenge of how to best ensure that these newcomers become rooted into our community: how do immigrants build assets that promote our state's economic growth, and become good neighbors and informed members of the community? These challenges require thoughtful planning and coordination among a wide range of stakeholders. Our state government has already taken bold leadership in moving integration forward, but the State must also engage local governments, businesses, financial institutions, trade associations, and community organizations to address these challenges more effectively.

We hope that the recommendations in this joint summary offer a clear strategic path toward immigrant integration, not only in Illinois, but also in other states and communities throughout our nation. More important, we hope that we have fostered a new way of thinking about immigrants in our community—a way that views them as good neighbors and key contributors. This perspective will become increasingly important to remember as our national immigration debate moves forward.

## New Americans Policy Council

**Co-chair Ngoan Le**  
Chicago Community Trust

**Co-chair Juan Salgado**  
Instituto del Progreso Latino

**Rita Athas**  
World Business Chicago

**Tom Balanoff**  
Service Employees International Union  
Local 1

**Marshall Bouton**  
Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

**Ramon Cepeda**  
Northern Trust

**Sunil Chand, Ph.D**  
College of DuPage

**Anthony Cole**  
United African Organization

**Omar Duque**  
Illinois Hispanic Chamber of  
Commerce

**Ricardo Estrada**  
Erie Neighborhood House

**Suzanne Franklin, M.Ed.**  
Jewish Child and Family Services

**Susan Gzesh**  
Human Rights Program, University of  
Chicago

**Bishop Rev. Hee Soo Jung**  
United Methodist Church Northern  
Illinois Conference

**Ann Lata Kalayil, Ph.D**  
South Asian American Policy and  
Research Institute

**Margaret King, Ph.D**  
Metrocon International, Inc.

**Michael Kinkade**  
Kankakee Police Department

**Esmail Koushanpour, M.D., Ph.D**  
Council of Islamic Organizations of  
Greater Chicago

**Ricardo Millet, Ph.D**  
Ricardo Millet and Associates

**Maria Pesqueira**  
Mujeres Latinas en Acción

**Andrew Przybylo**  
White Eagle Banquets and  
Restaurants; Trustee, Village of Niles

**Sylvia Puente**  
Institute for Latino Studies, University  
of Notre Dame

**Steve Scates**  
Pat Scates and Sons Farms

**Wendy Siegel**  
Millennia Consulting, LLC

**Alejandro Silva**  
Evans Food Group

**Dave Sullivan**  
Raucci and Sullivan Strategies, LLC

## State of Illinois New Americans Interagency Task Force

**Caronina Grimble**  
Project Director  
Department of Human Services

**Jose Luis Gutierrez**  
Director  
Governor's Office of New Americans  
Policy and Advocacy

**Shelith Hansbro**  
Chief of Community Outreach  
Illinois Department of Corrections

**Grace Hou**  
Assistant Secretary  
Illinois Department of Human Services

**Olga Iniguez**  
Acting Manager Statewide Diversity  
Director, Hispanic Employment Plan  
Illinois Department of Central  
Management Services

**Jay Keeven**  
Statewide Investigations Commander  
Illinois State Police

**Samreen Khan**  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Governor's Office of New Americans  
Policy and Advocacy

**Raymond Luna**  
Chief Legal Counsel  
Illinois Department of Human Rights

**Kevin McClain**  
Chief Legal Counsel  
Illinois Emergency Management  
Agency

**William Pluta**  
Housing Coordinator Service Director  
Illinois Housing Development  
Authority

**James Reinhart**  
Chief of Staff  
Illinois Department of Corrections

**Bert Rodriguez**  
Assistant Director  
Illinois Department of Labor

**Toyia Sims**  
Policy Advisor  
Illinois Department of Corrections

**William Smirniotis**  
Assistant to the Executive Director  
Illinois Housing Development  
Authority

**Fred Stewart**  
Equal Employment Officer  
Illinois Department of Central  
Management Services

**Jessica Trame**  
Chief of Staff  
Illinois State Police

**Jason Tyszko**  
Deputy Chief of Staff  
Illinois Department of Commerce  
and Economic Opportunity

**Thu A. Vo**  
Special Assistant to the Director  
Illinois Department of Children and  
Family Services

**Bobbie Wanzo**  
Deputy Director  
Illinois Department of Human Rights

## National Advisory Panel

**Co-Chair Frank Sharry**  
National Immigration Forum  
Washington, DC

**Co-Chair Doris Meissner**  
Migration Policy Institute  
Washington, DC

**Maria Elena Durazo**  
UNITE HERE Local 12  
Los Angeles, CA

**Michael Fix**  
Migration Policy Institute  
Washington, DC

**Marcelo Gaete**  
National Association of Latino Elected  
and Appointed Officials  
Los Angeles, CA

**Mario Hernandez, M.Sc.**  
Western Union  
Englewood, CO

**Randy Johnson**  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
Washington, DC

**David Kennedy, Ph.D**  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, CA

**Geri Mannion**  
Carnegie Corporation  
New York, NY

**Rev. Dr. Sid L. Mohn, OEF**  
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs  
and Human Rights  
Chicago, IL

**Cecilia Muñoz**  
National Council of La Raza  
Washington, DC

**Daranee Petsod**  
Grantmakers Concerned with  
Immigrants and Refugees  
Sebastopol, CA

**Julia Stasch**  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur  
Foundation  
Chicago, IL

**Sheri Steisel**  
National Conference of State  
Legislatures  
Washington, DC



## Endnotes

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