

Open for Business:

Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants

Event Summary



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Labor, Immigration & Employee Benefits





Dear Reader:

It is now well known that Capitol Hill has stalled on taking up commonsense immigration reform. While there are many reasons for this—and much finger-pointing—misconceptions about the role of immigrants in the United States underpin this gridlock.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce addressed many of these misconceptions in its earlier publication *Immigration Myths and Facts*. But one myth that continues to prevent a rational discussion is that immigrants are a burden on federal, state, and local tax rolls and take away jobs from native-born Americans. Numerous macroeconomic studies rebut this claim.

“Open for Business: Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants,” an event held at the U.S. Chamber on July 17, 2014, buttressed these studies and took this misconception on directly. It showcased the experiences of state and local governments in recruiting immigrants into their communities to revitalize their economies, recognizing that immigrants create businesses as entrepreneurs and fill gaps in the local labor force.

These governments, working with partners in the private sector, have concluded that it is in their interests to create an environment welcoming immigrants. To put it bluntly, these actions undertaken to spur the economy flatly belie those who argue that immigrants have a negative impact on wages, job growth, and the tax base. The event, through individual case studies, brought these facts to life.

The Chamber will continue to champion commonsense immigration reform. We urge you to join us in our efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randel K. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'K' and 'J'.

Randel K. Johnson
Senior Vice President
Labor, Immigration, & Employee Benefits
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Open for Business

Event Summary



In his opening remarks, Randy Johnson, senior vice president, Labor, Immigration, & Employee Benefits, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, says that the speakers at the event demonstrate how immigrants are positively impacting local economies and how immigration reform will help the economy grow.

On Thursday, July 17, 2014, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sponsored the event **Open for Business: Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants** in conjunction with Welcoming America, Americas Society/Council of the Americas, and The Partnership for a New American Economy.

Opening Remarks

Randy Johnson, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Randy Johnson, senior vice president, Labor, Immigration, & Employee Benefits, U.S. Chamber, kicked off the event stressing that cities and towns recognize the importance of immigrants in revitalizing communities.



David Lubell, executive director, Welcoming America, speaks about how cities and counties in the United States have entered into an era of competitive welcoming, recognizing the importance of immigrants and immigrant integration.

He pointed out that economic studies have demonstrated the significance of attracting immigrants to the United States and how immigration reform will help grow the U.S. economy. “The speakers here today back up these studies with actual experiences—beyond the Beltway—where the rubber meets the road,” said Johnson.

David Lubell, Welcoming America

David Lubell, executive director, Welcoming America, said that this forum, hosted at the “epicenter of business,” reflects that communities have now entered into a new era of competitive welcoming.

Open for Business:

Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants

Lubell explained that the “seeds for the era of competitive welcoming began in 2006 in Tennessee with the Welcoming Tennessee initiative and really turned a corner in 2009 when municipal leaders in Nashville, Tennessee, and Dayton, Ohio, stood up and said that immigrants are an asset and a boon to communities.”

Nashville experienced the fastest job growth in the nation in 2012, according to Lubell. Although there were many reasons for this, the welcoming climate was a contributing factor. Dayton has seen business districts that were crumbling revitalized, and the population has increased 40%. In a global race to the top, cities that are not attracting immigrants are behind the curve.

Wrapping up his remarks, Lubell said that “welcoming communities that have adopted comprehensive immigration integration programs and policies are good for business. By providing immigrants with a welcoming climate and with policies and programs that create pathways to social, economic, and professional advancement, these communities help businesses retain their employees and get them ready for positions of leadership.”

Opening Keynote *Citizenship as an Asset for Economic Opportunity*

Bob Annibale, global director, Citi Community Development and Microfinance, gave the opening keynote address: *Citizenship as an Asset for Economic Opportunity*. Annibale said, “It’s just in Citi’s blood that we are mobile and going to attract the strongest talent.” Even though the bank



In the opening keynote address, Bob Annibale, global director, Citi Community Development and Microfinance, stresses that immigrants have vastly different experiences based on where they come from. By helping those with permanent residency status apply for citizenship, he says that the U.S. economy will experience further growth.

has customers in rural areas, its major imprint is in gateway hubs such as New York, Boston, Washington, Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, and Houston.

Annibale said, “Immigrants are not a homogeneous group. It is important to disaggregate the numbers and understand the complete picture. Some are highly skilled, others are refugees, others come here to study, some are asylum seekers, others come here to get married, and some apply through the normal processes.” According to a report that examined financial integration in New York City, after a period of 10 years, 57% of Mexicans did not have access to a bank account. “As they had

Event Summary



Left to right: Ben Hecht, president & CEO, Living Cities, moderates a discussion on the influence of immigrant inclusion on economic prosperity and the importance of harnessing the talents of a diverse community. Manuel Rey, senior vice president and head of multicultural banking segments, Fifth Third Bank; Chuck Meadows, vice president of public policy, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; Jennifer Rodriguez, executive director, Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs, Philadelphia; and Melissa Bertolo, program coordinator, Welcome Dayton, comprise the panel.

more than a decade to start a savings account or build a credit history, this limits mobility," Annibale noted.

Between 2000 and 2011, 68% of all eligible non-Mexicans with permanent residency status eventually applied for and became U.S. citizens compared with 37% of eligible Mexican immigrants. If immigrants with permanent residency status applied for citizenship, there would be meaningful growth in the economy as those who are naturalized earn more and are less likely to be impoverished. According to economic studies, immigrants are more likely to start a business than those who are native born. Citi started the Pathways to Citizenship program in Long Island, New York,

to assist those with permanent residency status apply for citizenship. Annibale said, "Whole new neighborhoods come to life as immigrants revitalize communities."

Panel Discussions

Ensuring America's Future: The Importance of Welcoming Immigrants

Ben Hecht, president & CEO, Living Cities, moderated a panel discussion with Melissa Bertolo, Welcome Dayton (Ohio); Chuck Meadows, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; Manuel Rey, Fifth Third Bank (Charlotte, North Carolina); and Jennifer Rodriguez, Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs (Philadelphia).

Open for Business:

Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants

Participants discussed the influence of immigrant inclusion on economic prosperity and the significance of harnessing the talents of a diverse community.

Melissa Bertolo, Welcome Dayton program coordinator, City of Dayton Human Relations Council, said that the Welcome Dayton process began in 2005. It broadened in 2008 when Dayton decided to be a safe and inclusive community. She said, "In 2010, we began talking about what if Dayton became a welcoming city and the steps that we would need to take."

Welcome Dayton is composed of a steering committee with 30 representatives from a variety of sectors including health and social services, city services, business and economic development, nonprofits, government and justice, community, culture and the arts, and education. Bertolo said, "The most important aspect of being a welcoming city is relationship building and cross-sector collaboration."

Dayton has seen an influx of highly skilled immigrants. The city has started a project to understand who the highly skilled immigrants are and has attempted to establish career pathways for recredentialing.

Chuck Meadows, vice president of public policy, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, said that Atlanta established a coalition of businesses, local governments, and nonprofits to start the process of being designated a welcoming city. Immigrants are part of the labor force and are a key asset in

delivering services to customers. Meadows said, "The keys to success are finding a champion and then having a support structure to provide a framework for the effort."

Manuel Rey, senior vice president and head of multicultural banking segments, Fifth Third Bank, said that local governments, civic leaders, and nonprofits are leading the effort welcoming immigrants to Charlotte, North Carolina. He said, "The financial services sector sees outreach to immigrants as an opportunity to achieve additional revenue and profitability. The banking community sees outreach to Hispanics as a source of revenue, a growth opportunity, and a chance to give back to the community. Our bank needs to resemble the community we are serving."

Mayor Michael Nutter of Philadelphia established the Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs by executive order and appointed Jennifer Rodriguez as its first executive director. According to Rodriguez, immigrant entrepreneurs have revitalized portions of the city that were decaying.

They create jobs and provide the goods and services that individuals need. Philadelphia has worked with the Commerce Department to put VISTA volunteers who are multilingual in commercial corridors. Rodriguez said, "These volunteers go into specific commercial corridors based on ethnic and language needs and perform assessments. They act as a bridge between the city and entrepreneurs to ensure that businesses have access to city programs and services."

Event Summary

Panel Discussions City and Business Innovations in Welcoming Immigrants

Suzette Brooks Masters, program director of migration, J.M. Kaplan Fund, moderated the panel discussion *City and Business Innovations in Welcoming Immigrants*. The J.M. Kaplan Fund has played a key role in providing grants to assist with immigrant integration. There are a cluster of 15 Midwest cities, the Global Great Lakes Network, that have banded together to share lessons learned.

Before introducing the panelists, she said, “There is reason to have hope and optimism. The cities of St. Louis, Missouri; Boise, Idaho; and Bentonville, Arkansas, offer good examples of how to move the ball forward even if the federal government is not leveraging the work.”

Betsy Cohen talked about the St. Louis Mosaic Project, a joint collaboration of the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, the regional chamber of commerce, and 22 organizations that sit on a steering committee. In 2012, St. Louis launched the project in response to an economic impact report showing that the region was lagging in immigrant growth.

The goal is for St. Louis to become the fastest-growing metropolitan area by 2020 in attracting the foreign born. To meet these objectives, Cohen said, “The Mosaic Project has established two programs: the mosaic ambassador program for community outreach and the professional connector program. The connector program



Suzette Brooks Masters, program director of migration, J.M. Kaplan Fund, discusses the Global Great Lakes Network, a cluster of 15 Midwest cities that have banded together to share lessons about immigrant integration.

helps immigrants who are already in the region, or are planning to move to the region, build a professional network.”

Jan Reeves, director of the Idaho Office for Refugees, spoke about a major segment of immigrants, the refugee population.

During the economic downturn in 2009, refugees who had resettled in Boise, were being laid off. Native-born Americans were apprehensive, fearing that the refugees would be a drain on resources.

Open for Business:

Spurring Local Economic Growth by Welcoming Immigrants



Betsy Cohen, executive director, St. Louis Mosaic Project, discusses how St. Louis is striving to be the fastest-growing metropolitan area by 2020 in attracting those who are foreign born. In its first year of operation, the project instituted two signature programs: the mosaic ambassador program for community outreach and the professional connector program, which connects foreign-born highly skilled workers with native Americans.

Working with the mayor's office, the Refugee Community Plan was formed to change the conversation from how to limit refugees from entering into the community to building strategic capacity to meet the needs of this population.

Initially, the Refugee Community Plan focused on how to address challenges of limited resources and fragmentation across the community. The six major areas addressed were education, employment, health care, housing, transportation, and social integration. By establishing objectives and then action steps to complete these objectives, Reeves said that "the plan has evolved over time to reflect changing circumstances."

Lee Culpepper, vice president of corporate affairs, Walmart, spoke about how Walmart, working with companies in Northwest Arkansas, has ventured on a different path compared with the other cities featured.

Culpepper said, "When we thought about the template of stakeholder groups and local government coming together, that model didn't work because the local government didn't have the type of infrastructure to support Walmart's efforts. Working with other companies, Walmart gave seed money to the Arkansas United Community Coalition and The Jones Trust to establish the Engage Northwest Arkansas (Engage NWA) Partnership."

Event Summary



Lee Culpepper, vice president of corporate affairs, Walmart, provides an overview of the Engage Northwest Arkansas Partnership, a regional collaboration between the Arkansas United Community Coalition and The Jones Trust to assist with immigrant integration efforts, business relocation, and student retention.

The goal of the Engage NWA Partnership is to assist with: (1) immigration, (2) business relocation, and (3) retention, i.e., retaining people that go to postsecondary school in the area but then leave.

The Cisneros Center for New Americans through its program American Dream Leaders is in the process of deploying its fellows to work with stakeholder groups in Northwest Arkansas. These fellows will implement an integration strategy with key deliverables. Culpepper concluded, “Once the key deliverables are in place, that would be the appropriate time to go back to the local government to be designated a welcoming city.”

Closing Keynote

How Immigration Might Transform America's Towns and Businesses: Lessons From the Midwest

Mike Fernandez, corporate vice president of corporate affairs, Cargill, delivered the closing keynote, *How Immigration Might Transform America's Towns and Businesses: Lessons From the Midwest*. Cargill employs more than 140,000 people from across the globe, with 44,000 associates in the United States. Fernandez discussed the politics of immigration reform and shared observations from America's heartland.



Mike Fernandez, corporate vice president of corporate affairs, Cargill, discusses how immigrants have reinvigorated local communities, using the case example of Ottumwa, Iowa, where Cargill Meat Solutions has operations. To assist with immigrant integration, local leaders organized English as a second language classes for newcomers and Spanish language classes for plant supervisors, managers, and production workers.

Fernandez said, “Immigration is not fundamentally about border control or really about citizenship. It’s about economics.” He discussed the results of the study *Growing the Heartland*, published by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, which examines immigration and economic

competitiveness. The study says that immigration is a demographic lifeline for metropolitan areas throughout the Midwest as immigrants accounted for 38.4% of growth in metropolitan Midwest cities from 2000 to 2010.

Fernandez highlighted Cargill’s Meat Solutions, which is located in Ottumwa, Iowa, as an example of how immigrants have revitalized the surrounding community as 27 countries are represented at the plant, making 40% of the workforce foreign born. Latinos account for approximately 1,000 of the facility’s 2,250 employees, and the Latino population of Wapello County, where Ottumwa is situated, has jumped from 2% in 2000 to around 10% in 2010.

To help with integration efforts, local leaders organized English as a second language classes for newcomers who needed them, and Spanish language classes for plant supervisors, managers, and production workers who wanted to communicate better with the Hispanic workers.

Said Fernandez, “In the long term, these New Iowans helped stem a population decline, kept the plant producing, and reinvigorated the economy. As former Mayor Dale Uehling said, ‘The city of Ottumwa would not be where it is today if not for the New Iowans.’ ”



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.

Copyright © 2014 by the United States Chamber of Commerce. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form—print, electronic, or otherwise—with the express written permission of the publisher.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Labor, Immigration & Employee Benefits

1615 H Street, NW • Washington, DC 20062
www.uschamber.com