



A bipartisan Presidential Commission on Immigration: A vehicle to turn stalemates into solutions



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By C. L. Max Nikias and
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During his first State of the Union address last week, President Trump outlined his four-pillar vision to advance immigration policy. The emotions, complexities, impacts and partisan political stances surrounding this debate make reaching an agreement a daunting task indeed. Exacerbating this situation is a looming March 5 deadline to reach a Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) resolution. In effect, our representatives have less than two weeks on their work calendars before the program expires and an estimated 690,000 young people face deportation.

Given our current political climate, it is unlikely that lawmakers will be able to tackle all four pillars by this deadline. But

there can still be a path to success: act on the first two pillars (DACA and border security) now; and take a page from our presidential and national history by methodically integrating and resolving all of the other issues of comprehensive reform by convening a Presidential Commission on Immigration.

As both current and former leaders of

large institutions that interact regularly with a substantial immigrant population, we understand well what is at stake in this ever-swirling debate. We have seen firsthand the contributions that immigrants make to our society. And as a proud naturalized citizen, and the son of a proud naturalized citizen respectively, we feel a sense of duty to ensure the best outcome possible for both DACA recipients and for our nation.

Congress can and should act now to send a bill to the president's desk that would deliver on our nation's promise to Dreamers, along with a reciprocal commitment to tighten border security.

As we have watched the renewed debate the president's proposals have generated, it has become clear that a great deal of work lies ahead if our nation is to ably tackle comprehensive reform. This is why we are calling on President Trump to do something that no president since Harry Truman has done — establish a Presidential Commission on Immigration.

President Truman established his President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization in 1952, giving it the mandate to "study and evaluate" the nation's immigration and naturalization policies and recommend "legislative, administrative, or other action" to advance "the interest of the economy, security, and responsibilities of this country." The work of the seven-member bipartisan commission led to the Immigration and Nationalization Act of 1965, which remains the cornerstone of U.S. immigration policy today.

President Trump should authorize a new similarly bipartisan presidential

commission, giving it the same broad mandate — to help bring American immigration policy into the 21st century, shaping it to meet the realities of a now globalized economic and financial system.

A presidential commission could transcend the political pressures that have thwarted immigration reform for more than 30 years.

This commission can be given broad authority to study all the difficult and interrelated issues of industry, labor, trade, education and training, migration, foreign aid and investment, civic responsibility and American identity. In addition, the commission can address the unique needs of our economy at a time when an estimated 10,000 baby boomers are reaching retirement age each day.

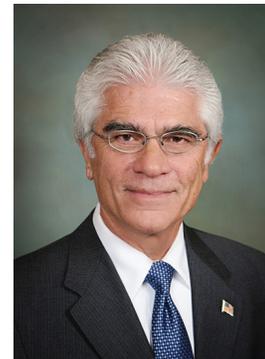
In *The Coming Jobs War*, Gallup chief executive officer Jim Clifton argues that America's amazing growth in the 20th century can be traced to roughly 1,000 "rainmakers" — an astounding 60 percent of whom were immigrants, many coming to this country as a result of the recommendations made by the Truman commission.

In many ways, the dynamism of our economy and vibrancy of our culture in the post-war era can be attributed to the human capital of this great generation of immigrants. This remains the quiet legacy of President Truman's immigration commission.

Likewise, by using his executive power to appoint a thoughtful, bipartisan commission, President Trump can establish a similar legacy by finally moving this country beyond its perennial stalemate toward true immigration reform.



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