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CENTER FOR
HOUSTON'S
FUTURE 



THE FUTURE OF IMMIGRATION IN HOUSTON

Thursday, March 7, 2019

James A. Baker III Hall
Rice University

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THE FUTURE OF IMMIGRATION IN HOUSTON

About the Event

As a border state with a large and growing immigrant population, Texas is disproportionately affected by federal immigration policies and is ground zero for the national immigration debate. The Houston region, home to 1.6 million immigrants, is key to understanding the importance of immigrants to local economic growth and community stability.

At this conference, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and representatives from local and national organizations address how Houston can take a lead role in the immigration discussion. The event also includes a panel of experts who will share current research and data on immigration in the Greater Houston region, a screening of a short film from the “Rational Middle of Immigration” series, and breakout sessions on addressing workforce, policy and social support issues.

This event is co-sponsored by the **Baker Institute Mexico Center**, **New American Economy** and the **Center for Houston's Future**. Additional assistance is provided from **The Rational Middle**, the **Anti-Defamation League**, **Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative**, the **Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**, **National Immigration Forum** and the City of Houston's **Office of New Americans and Immigrant Communities**.

Organizers

Baker Institute Mexico Center

The Baker Institute Mexico Center provides policymakers, the public and industry leaders with quality, data-driven analysis of the policy issues that affect Mexico and the United States. The center's nonpartisan research assists public policy coordination by framing problems, providing policy alternatives and contributing to informed decisions that consider both U.S. and Mexican interests. In its binational approach, the Mexico Center envisions a future in which coordinated policy decisions maximize benefits for all who live in the North American region. In order to facilitate the task of public policy coordination between Mexico and the United States, the center reaches out to scholars and other experts to produce original, empirical research on issues such as trade, energy, the rule of law and human mobility; fosters the exchange of ideas through public events that bring together decision-makers from both sides of the border; and gathers input from government officials, the private sector and the general public to develop effective and pragmatic policy recommendations.

Center for Houston's Future

Center for Houston's Future (CHF) works to address matters of high importance to the long-term future of the Greater Houston region by engaging diverse leaders, providing impactful research and defining actionable strategies. It brings business and community leaders together to develop innovative solutions for Greater Houston. CHF is devoted exclusively to long-range strategic planning for the nine-county Greater Houston region. Three program areas provide a framework for CHF's mission: strategic planning, business/civic leadership development and community future awareness.

New American Economy

New American Economy (NAE) brings together more than 500 Republican, Democratic and independent mayors and business leaders who support immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans. Coalition members include mayors of more than 35 million people nationwide and business leaders of companies that generate more than \$1.5 trillion and employ more than 4 million people across all sectors of the economy, from agriculture to aerospace, hospitality to high tech and media to manufacturing. The New American Economy is also working in over 10 communities in Texas.

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8:00 am Breakfast and Registration

Welcome and Introduction

8:30 am **Tony Payan, Ph.D.**
Françoise and Edward Djerejian Fellow for Mexico Studies and Director, Mexico Center, Baker Institute

Keynote Address — Houston: A City of Immigrants and Refugees

8:45 am **The Honorable Sylvester Turner**
Mayor, City of Houston

9:30 am Question and Answer Session

9:45 am Break

Film Screening — Rational Middle of Immigration Series

9:55 am Introduction and Remarks
Stan Marek
President and CEO, Marek Companies
Gregory Kallenberg
Director and Producer, The Rational Middle

10:10 am Video: “Immigration’s Crossroad: Rebuilding After Hurricane Harvey”

Panel — Houston and U.S. Immigration Research and Outlook

Introduction: **Gregory Kallenberg**, Director and Producer, The Rational Middle

10:25 am **Wafa Abdin**
Executive Director, Houston Volunteer Lawyers

Tony Payan, Ph.D.
Director, Mexico Center, Baker Institute

Brett Perlman
President and CEO, Center for Houston’s Future

Jeremy Robbins
Executive Director, New American Economy

Moderator: **Jay Root**, Texas Tribune, Senior Investigative Reporter

11:30 am Question and Answer Session

Luncheon Armchair Discussion — Value of Immigrants and Immigration

Noon **The Honorable Lina Hidalgo**
Harris County Judge

Kate Vickery
Executive Director, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative

Breakout Sessions: Cross-Sector Needs

- 12:45 pm *Immigration and Houston's Workforce*
Moderator: **Jennie Murray**, Director, Integration Programs, National Immigration Forum
- Policy and Legislation: The Path Forward*
Moderator: **Chelsie Kramer**, State Organizer, New American Economy
- Critical Social Support Services*
Moderator: **Kate Vickery**, Executive Director, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
- 1:50 pm Breakout session reports

Closing Remarks

- 2:30 pm **Tony Payan, Ph.D.**
Director, Mexico Center, Baker Institute
- 2:45 pm Adjourn

Participants

Wafa Abdin is the executive director of Houston Volunteer Lawyers, which provides free legal services to low-income residents and promotes volunteerism among lawyers. She also managed Immigration Legal Services and Refugee Resettlement at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston for more than 16 years, including serving as vice president for six years. Abdin has represented detained juveniles, asylum seekers, and victims of human trafficking and other serious crimes before the Department of Homeland Security, the Immigration Court and the Board of Immigration Appeals. She was awarded the Chrys Dougherty Legal Services Award in 2010 by the Texas State Bar Association, and also received the University of Houston Law Center Public Interest Fellowship. Abdin is a past president of the Arab American Cultural Center. She is also the local asylum liaison for the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and a member of AILA's national Asylum Liaison Committee and of the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance. Abdin received her J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center.

The Honorable Lina Hidalgo was elected Harris County Judge in November 2018 and was sworn in as the first Latina to hold this position on Jan. 1, 2019. An immigrant originally from Colombia, Hidalgo has been committed to giving back, seizing opportunities to serve the immigrant and incarcerated communities. Since arriving in Texas in 2005, she has worked at the Texas Civil Rights Project, served as a Spanish-English medical interpreter at the Texas Medical Center, and supported immigrants searching for lost loved ones. Hidalgo has also researched criminal justice policies and coordinated with advocacy groups and governments to push for reform. In Southeast Asia, she worked to promote transparency and accountability by supporting journalists, bloggers and artists. Hidalgo received a bachelor's in political science from Stanford University.

Gregory Kallenberg is the director and a producer of the "Rational Middle of Immigration" film series. He is the founder of Rational Media, a media and events company committed to creating balanced media and catalyzing civil, solutions-based discussions around divisive topics. Prior to the "Rational Middle of Immigration," Kallenberg worked with Shell to create the "Rational Middle of Energy." To date, "Rational Middle" films have been downloaded, viewed and shown over 6 million times. Kallenberg also directed and produced "Haynesville: A Nation's Hunt for an Energy Future," a documentary chronicling a large natural gas discovery in northwest Louisiana and its effect on three individuals' lives. Kallenberg's previous work in the film industry includes writing and story editing for the award-winning production house Blue Field Productions. He has also written for Esquire, The New York Times and the Austin American-Statesman, among other publications. Kallenberg received a bachelor's degree in film from The University of Texas at Austin.

Chelsie Kramer is the state organizer for New American Economy. In this role, she focuses on building relationships and creating a broad Texas network that can be mobilized to engage in the immigration debate through the lens of the positive economic impact immigrants have on the Texas economy. Prior to joining NAE, Kramer was the executive director of the Gulf Coast for the Texas Association of Business, which represents more than 2,800 businesses and chambers of commerce. Kramer received a bachelor's degree in political science from Texas A&M University.

Stan Marek is president and CEO of the Marek Family of Companies, one of the largest interior contractors in the southwest, with offices in Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Harlingen, Atlanta and Oklahoma City. In 1970, he began his career as a journeyman carpenter and spent the next two years working on large commercial projects throughout Houston. Marek then worked for the Marek Companies as a project manager, estimator and sales manager before becoming president in 1982. He also served in the Marine Corps Reserves. For the past three years, Marek has focused on comprehensive immigration reform as the co-founder of Texans for Sensible Immigration Policy. He is also a member of the Greater Houston Partnership's Americans For Immigration Reform Task Force. Marek received a bachelor of business administration in finance from Texas A&M University.

Jennie Murray is the director of Integration Programs for the National Immigration Forum. She leads the forum's New American Workforce citizenship and English-language training initiative and its newly formed Corporate Roundtable. Prior to joining the forum in 2013, she served as the director of programs at Jubilee Jobs and as outreach coordinator at Catholic Charities' Washington, D.C., Refugee Center. Murray received a bachelor's degree from Union University and a master's from Wesley Theological Seminary.

Tony Payan, Ph.D., is the Françoise and Edward Djerejian Fellow for Mexico Studies and director of the Mexico Center at the Baker Institute. He is also an adjunct associate professor at Rice University and a professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. Between 2001 and 2015, Payan was a professor of political science at The University of Texas at El Paso. Payan's research focuses primarily on border studies, particularly the U.S.-Mexico border. His work includes studies of border governance, border flows and immigration, as well as border security and organized crime. Payan has authored two books, "Cops, Soldiers and Diplomats: Understanding Agency Behavior in the War on Drugs" and "The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration and Homeland Security" (2006 and 2016 editions). In addition, he has co-edited six volumes and authored several book chapters and journal publications. Payan has served on several boards, including the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority in El Paso, Texas, and the Plan Estratégico de Juárez in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. He previously served as president of the Association of Borderlands Studies between 2009 and 2010. Payan earned a B.A. in philosophy and classical languages from the University of Dallas and an MBA from the University of Dallas Graduate School of Management. He received a doctorate degree in international relations from Georgetown University in 2001.

Brett Perlman is the president and CEO of the Center for Houston's Future. Perlman previously was a fellow at the Harvard Electricity Policy Group and the Consortium for Energy Policy Research, programs in the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In 2016, he was a fellow in the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI), which focused on developing new approaches to solving the world's most pressing social issues. In 1999, then-Gov. George W. Bush appointed Perlman as a commissioner for the Public Utility Commission of Texas, a position he held for four years. He founded Vector Advisors, an entrepreneurial management consulting firm that serves telecommunications and energy clients. Since 2013, he has been an independent director of Just Energy Group. Earlier in his career, Perlman was a consultant with McKinsey & Company, and he practiced law with major firms in Houston and Washington, D.C. Perlman received a bachelor's degree with honors from Northwestern University, a master's in public policy from Harvard and a J.D. from The University of Texas at Austin Law School.

Jeremy Robbins is the executive director of the New American Economy, a bipartisan coalition of more than 500 CEOs and mayors making the economic case for immigration reform. Robbins previously worked as a policy advisor and special counsel in the Office of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and as a judicial law clerk at the United States Court of Appeals. He also worked on prisoners' rights issues in Argentina as a Robert L. Bernstein International Human Rights Fellow, and served as a litigation associate at WilmerHale in Boston where he was part of the firm's team representing six Bosnian men detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Robbins received a B.A. in political science from Brown University and a J.D. from Yale Law School.

Jay Root is a senior investigative reporter at the Texas Tribune and co-director of the award winning documentary "Beyond The Wall," a film about immigration and border security in the age of Donald Trump. After traveling extensively in Central America and Mexico for the Tribune and TIME Magazine, Root directed a newly released documentary, "Border Hustle," about the lucrative business behind smuggling and detaining thousands of U.S.-bound migrants each year.

The Honorable Sylvester Turner was elected Houston's 62nd mayor in December 2015. Since taking office, Turner eliminated a \$160 million budget shortfall, led the city's recovery from Hurricane Harvey, spearheaded the city's pension reform efforts and expanded municipal investments in renewable energy. The mayor's other priorities include

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filling more than 90,000 potholes on city streets, implementing a six-point holistic plan for addressing homelessness, reducing flooding and improving drainage. Prior to his election as mayor, Turner served for 27 years in the Texas House as the representative for District 139. During his tenure, he worked on the House Appropriations Committee for 21 years and served as speaker pro tem for three terms. He was appointed to several budget conference committees to help balance the state's budget and served on the Legislative Budget Board. Turner began his career in law, practicing at Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P. before founding the Barnes & Turner Law Firm. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Houston and a law degree from Harvard University.

Kate Vickery is the executive director of the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative (HILSC), a network of nonprofits, funders, law schools and community stakeholders that provide legal and social services to immigrants in the Greater Houston region. Vickery works to facilitate meaningful collaboration among HILSC's members, amplify funding available to member organizations, build strategic partnerships and create creative solutions to issues plaguing immigration legal services providers in Houston. She has a diverse professional background that includes leadership positions in the areas of immigration, criminal justice, community development, and environmental conservation. Vickery received a master's of public affairs from and a master of science in community and regional planning from The University of Texas at Austin.

Additional assistance for this event is provided by:



HOUSTON IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

