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## Office of Public Engagement

# People are Talking and People Want Immigration Reform...

Posted by Stephanie Valencia on May 31, 2011 at 10:45 AM EDT

On May 10th, President Obama issued a call to action to fix our broken immigration system so that it works for our 21st century economic and national security needs. He asked Americans to elevate the debate on this issue and have a nation conversation about realistic solutions. Over the past three weeks, we've had hundreds of Americans in all parts of the country and all walks of life participate in conversations about realistic solutions to fixing our broken immigration system.

Here is just a sampling of some of the great roundtables that have happened over the last few weeks:

- On May 24th Mayor Paul Bridges of Uvalda, GA held a roundtable with a dozen leaders in his town of 600 – saying *“All I can say is IT WAS AWESOME! THANK YOU ALL for the idea of a Roundtable. People are talking and people want Immigration Reform.”* (see photo below)



Uvalda, GA Mayor Paul Bridges convenes an immigration reform roundtable.

Photo Credit: Montgomery Monitor

- On May 11th in Dallas, Texas Assistant Secretary of State Jose Fernandez held a roundtable with business leaders talking about the imperative for business owners and leaders to be involved in the immigration reform debate. Bert Kaufman from Business Forward who attended the roundtable writes *“The need to fix the broken immigration system is on top of mind for business leaders across the country. It is important*

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*to get outside of DC to listen to these folks because you learn just how seriously employers take the situation. This issue has come up, without fail, in every roundtable that I've participated in across the 20 cities I've visited over the past 5 months."*

- Also on May 11th, Catholic Charities of Dallas convened a roundtable with key community leaders to discuss how they can lend their voice to the conversation saying, *"We support the President's initiative for this national conversation and will do what we can to promote more Roundtable discussions."*
- On May 12th, Aneesh Chopra, Chief Technology Officer for the Obama Administration convened a roundtable with diverse stakeholders in Omaha, Nebraska (Yes, Omaha, Nebraska). In a blog post summarizing the event, Aneesh wrote, *"the message I heard was clear -- if we are to effectively compete in the global economy, we need access to the very best talent our communities can attract, especially in regions that lack the kind of talent concentration one finds in areas like Silicon Valley or Austin, TX."*
- On May 20th, Cecilia Munoz, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs did a roundtable with key business leaders in Orlando, Florida discussing what immigration reform means to business owners. Cecilia said that, *"Leaders of the Orlando business community illustrated very powerfully that immigration reform is an economic imperative. CEOs and entrepreneurs in businesses both large and small reflected on both the human costs and the economic costs which add up every day that Congress fails to act on immigration reform. I am so encouraged by the level of engagement in the business community. "*
- On May 24th, Aneesh Chopra held another roundtable with business leaders in the Silicon Valley and the importance reforming our immigration system is to our economy. In a blog post he wrote: *"Aneesh participated in a roundtable yesterday hosted by the Silicon Valley Leadership Group where nearly half of the executives in the room were immigrants. They were unanimous in their call for action in the high skilled area -- a top priority for the group, along with a new service campaign to connect the best and brightest in the Valley with kids in need. But they were also frustrated with our inability as a country to tackle these issues as it has been several years since they began such conversations."*
- On May 25th a group of students from the University of Michigan convening a conversation to talk about what the broken immigration system means to them.

These are just a sampling of how everyday Americans are elevating the debate around fixing our broken immigration system. Our goal is to host at least one conversation in every single state. Join the conversation and host one today by visiting [www.whitehouse.gov/immigrationaction](http://www.whitehouse.gov/immigrationaction).

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