

National Governors Association (NGA)

Chair Letter

DEAR DELEGATES,
Welcome to the meeting of the National Governor's Association at CNYMUN 2027! We are excited to have you be a part of this committee and foster productive debate about important issues. Your chairs this year will be Evan Wagner-Flynn and Sydney Graham.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:
Evan Wagner-Flynn is a senior at Jamesville-DeWitt High School. This is his third time chairing. In addition to Model UN, he is a lead attorney on the Mock Trial team and the student Board of Education representative. In his free time, he enjoys baking, listening to NPR, reading the newspaper, and learning about men's formalwear.

Sydney Graham is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. She is a first time chair but has been an active member of Model UN since her freshman year. Other than MUN, Sydney wrestles and plays lacrosse for both her school and club teams. She also works as a summer camp counselor and birthday party specialist at a children's fitness center. In her free time, she loves to listen to music, cook, and spend time with her two dogs and two cats. Sydney loves participating in MUN, and is looking forward to meeting all of you. She is excited for stimulating debate and innovative problem solving regarding the issues facing the National Governors Association.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:
The National Governors Association (NGA) was founded at the Conference of Governors held at the White House in 1908 under President Theodore Roosevelt.[1] The conference marked the first time that all State and territorial governors gathered as one. The focus of the first conference was conservation and proper use of natural resources, and developed into an annual meeting that became the National Governors Association.[2] The NGA serves the governors of the United States and works to develop state-based policy solutions that fosters national progress. The NGA serves as a liaison between state governors, congress and executive branch agencies. The NGA provides legislative analysis, tracks grant opportunities, and coordinates state advocacy across local, state, and the federal government.[3] The NGA promotes a strong civic system that is defined by partnership and collaboration, protecting states' individual freedoms and empowering governors to effectively serve their constituents.[4] NGA connects states and their leaders across both the public and private sectors in order to develop real solutions to the most challenging public policy problems. These are issues that do not have easy or permanent solutions, and can lead to disagreements among lawmakers of different political parties and perspectives including the rising costs of education, health care and housing for families, law enforcement cooperation across federal, state, and local governments, the environment, workforce and economic development, and infrastructure maintence. The National Governors Association is made up of the governors from all 50 states plus territories of the United States.

Note: There are 39 states, along with Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, having gubernatorial elections in November 2026. Therefore, some delegates may be assigned their state before the election. However, their actual role will be determined by the results of the gubernatorial election after it occurs. For example, the delegate assigned the role of the Governor of New York will be expected to represent Governor Kathy Hochul if she wins or County Executive Bruce Blakeman if he wins.

Seeing as the NGA is an independent, non-profit organization rather than an official federal government commission, it cannot officially enact federal laws. Instead, it recommends policies and advocates for state interests. Accordingly, all resolutions written will be treated as a formal policy recommendation to Congress and a commitment by each governor to pursue application of the resolution within their state.

Your topics for the National Governors Association at CNYMUN 2027 will be:

1. Addressing the Role of State Governments in Immigration Enforcement
2. Maintaining Decaying Transportation Infrastructure.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Following CNYMUN tradition, the debate will be conducted in Harvard style, meaning delegates will not be allowed to use pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during the committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards.

[1] "National Governors Association," National Governors Association, https://www.nga.org/.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a position paper via email that addresses both topics before the start of the conference. Position papers should be 2-3 pages with each topic covering about a page. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation and display an understanding of the topics, demonstrating research and knowledge of your organization's goals. When deciding on awards, the chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort towards research/preparation, collaborate with other delegates during committee sessions, stay within their nation's policies, and get their voice heard without being overbearing.

Furthermore, CNYMUN has implemented a tiered structure of committees to ensure similar experience levels for all committee members. NGA is designated as an **advanced** committee, as such all delegates in this committee should have extensive Model UN experience and have previously attended multiple conferences. Debate should also reflect the advanced nature of this committee. In turn, the 'Best New Delegate' award will not be offered to any delegates in this committee.

The special features of mini crisis and head-to-head debates will be used throughout the committee.

For the first time ever CNYMUN will have online delegate training sessions prior to the conference. These sessions will help delegates new and experienced learn about MUN and prepare for the nuances of CNYMUN. The schedule for these sessions and steps to participate can be found on our website, www.cnymun.org. We highly recommend all delegates regardless of experience join.

Please share position papers before the conference begins. Our emails are listed below for you to contact your chairs about any research, position papers, committee inquiries, or other questions. We also encourage you to scan our lengthy delegate preparation resources and award structure on www.cnymun.org. We wish you luck and look forward to what CNYMUN 2027 will bring.

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TOPIC 1: ADDRESSING THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENTS IN IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Under the United States Constitution, Congress explicitly has the plenary power to regulate naturalization (i.e., regulate how, when, and upon whom to confer citizenship).[5] However, Congress's power to govern immigration into the United States is implied, leaving the states room to regulate. Prior to the twentieth century, most immigration enforcement was done by states as part of their police function.[6] Many states, particularly those in the South but also including states like Illinois, enacted antebellum legislation aimed at restricting the movement of free Black people so as to avoid diluting the slave labor supply.[7]Additionally, for most of the nation's history, Congress's exercise of its authority has been limited, aimed primarily at stopping or slowing immigration from certain countries or regions, especially those in Asia and Eastern Europe. From the Nationality Act of 1790 through at least the mid-20th century, the vast majority of federal laws regarding immigration were explicitly designed to limit the entrance of anyone deemed insufficiently white.[8] This originally was targeted primarily at those of African descent, but soon expanded to restrict immigrants from China, with laws such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This law was championed in Congress by California senators on behalf of a state gripped with sinophobia. This hatred of all things Chinese was oftentimes economically motivated, with labor leaders such as Denis Kearney framing Chinese laborers as foreign strikebreakers. Later, the Immigration Act of 1917 not only barred all immigration from an area spanning from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, but also instituted literacy tests for immigrants from Eastern Europe.[9] This discrimination against those of Eastern European and Asian descent continued through the early-mid 20th century, and expanded to include those from South and Central America with the Undesirable Aliens Act of 1929 ,[10] also referred to as Blease's Law after prominent immigration hawk and chief proponent of the bill South Carolina Democratic Senator Cole Blease, which criminalized crossing the border at a non-designated point of entry.[11]

The Immigration Act of 1924 ,[12] lobbied extensively by Washington Governor Louis Hart and sponsored by Washington Congressman Albert Johnson and Pennsylvania Senator David Reed (hence its nickname, the Johnson-Reed Act), instituted the first comprehensive quota system, which would persist until 1965. Under the quota system, only a certain number of immigrants would be permitted from each county. Because the quotas were set based on the ethnic makeup of the United States as of the 1890 national census, certain countries and regions, namely, Europe, were heavily favored over others. While this system was highly discriminatory, the following decades, especially during and after World War Two, saw a mild thaw in American immigration policy, with the introduction of the Bracero Agreement — a program which permitted Mexican men to work short-term agricultural jobs in the United States — in 1942 and the repeal of Chinese exclusion in 1943. The 1950s saw further reductions in restrictions, especially for refugees, and saw the end of race-based refusal of citizenship. Undercutting this progress, however, was 1954's Operation

[5] "Overview | Constitution Annotated | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress." *Constitution.Congress.Gov*, https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artI-S8-C18-8-1/ALDE_00001255/.

[6] "Immigration - Historical Society of the New York Courts." *Historical Society of the New York Courts*, 29 Oct. 2022, https://history.nycourts.gov/democracy-teacher-toolkit/federalism/immigration/.

[7] SCHOEPPNER, MICHAEL A. "Black Migrants and Border Regulation in the Early United States." *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2021, pp. 317–39. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27088843.
"Ban on 'Importation' of 'Any Negro, Mulatto, or Other Person of Colour' (1803) (Effective 1808)." Immigration History, immigrationhistory.org/item/1803-ban-on-importation-of-any-negro-mulatto-or-other-person-of-colour-effective-1808/.

[8] "Timeline - Immigration History." *Immigration History*, 2019, https://immigrationhistory.org/timeline/.

[9] Immigration History. "Immigration Act of 1917 (Barred Zone Act)." *Immigration History*, 2019, https://immigrationhistory.org/item/1917-barred-zone-act/.
Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "39 Stat. 874 - An Act To Regulate the Immigration of Aliens to, and the Residence of Aliens in, the United States.." *Www.Govinfo.Gov*, 2026, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-39/STATUTE-39-Pg874-2/summary.

[10] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "45 Stat. 1551 - An Act Making It a Felony with Penalty for Certain Aliens to Enter the United States of America under Certain Conditions in Violation of Law.." *Www.Govinfo.Gov*, 2026, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-45/STATUTE-45-Pg1551.

[11] "Undesirable Aliens Act of 1929 (Blease's Law)." *Immigration History*, 2019, https://immigrationhistory.org/item/undesirable-aliens-act-of-1929-bleases-law/.

[12] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "43 Stat. 153 - An Act To Limit the Immigration of Aliens into the United States, and for Other Purposes.." *Govinfo.Gov*, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-43/STATUTE-43-Pg153-2

Wetback, which involved the use of military tactics to deport illegal immigrants to Mexico with the goal of alleviating downward pressure on wages in states near the border.[13] This operation faced some amount of pushback from local employers, who had benefited from paying reduced wages, and from some lawmakers, who objected to the militaristic approach.[14] While the operation was successful in reducing the number of undocumented workers,[15] the continuation of the Bracero program meant that downward wage pressure may have actually increased.[16]

The modern American immigration system derives from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also referred to as the Hart-Celler Act, which abolished variable national origin quotas in favor of purpose-based preferences, which highly favor educated workers over unskilled laborers.[17] The problems created by this have persisted to the present day, and though there have been considerable changes made to the specifics of the immigration system, including a notable rise in emphasis on securing the border, the basic premise remains largely the same.

For most of American History, the vast majority of political leaders expressed negative opinions of immigration, regardless of party. However, this began to change following World War Two, with Democrats especially adopting more positive attitudes towards immigrants (e.g. President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy), while Republicans began espousing increasingly negative rhetoric in the 1990s, and have continued to do so in the modern day. This may be due to immigrants, especially Hispanic immigrants, composing an increasingly large share of the voting population and simultaneously presenting an easy scapegoat for many economic problems, presenting two strategies for gaining new voters: either advertise directly to immigrants, or blame them for the problems faced by other potential voters. Attitudes towards immigration have also grown more polarized, with Democrats adopting a markedly more dovish — i.e., moderate, tolerant — posture post-2010 and Republicans becoming more hawkish, with the latter utilizing more derogatory language, including comparing immigrants to animals, accusing them of possessing bad genes, alleging that immigrants eat pets, and, in the case of President Trump, saying that "[a]s borders are [*sic*], she flooded America with savage, illegal alien criminals who have been raping, pillaging, and killing our cities and our towns" in August of 2024.[18]

The first federal enforcement agency was the Office of the Superintendent of Immigration, established in 1891. This agency was primarily concerned with keeping out Chinese persons and those with contagious diseases.

In 1933, the enforcement portion of immigration was combined with the naturalization portion under the umbrella of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), initially under the United States Department of Labor, so organized because immigration had historically been viewed as a labor market problem. In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt transferred INS from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, reflecting growing pre-war concerns over national security. INS was increasingly tasked with tracking and fingerprinting immigrants, and with detaining those viewed as threats to national security during wartime.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, INS shifted away from naturalization and asylum processing, and towards law enforcement, particularly law enforcement on the interior of the United States, as well as along the border. This coincided with a large increase in funding and nationwide emphasis on security and crime reduction (most famously expressed via the War on Crime and War on Drugs).

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and tasked it with, among other things, overseeing immigration. The Homeland

[13] Peralta, Eyder. "NPR Choice Page." *Npr.Org*, 2019, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/11/11/455613993/it-came-up-in-the-debate-here-are-3-things-to-know-about-operation-wetback.

[14] Funderburk, Brent. "Operation Wetback | United States Immigration Law-Enforcement Campaign." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 4 Sept. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/Operation-Wetback.

[15] Toft, Evelyn. "Operation Wetback | History | Research Starters | EBSCOhost." *Ebsco*, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/operation-wetback/.

[16] Wang, Claire. "Millions of Mexican Americans Were Deported in the 1930S. Are We about to Repeat This 'Ethnic Cleansing?'" *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 3 Dec. 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/dec/03/trump-mass-deportation-plan-1930s-repatriation-program.

[17] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "79 Stat. 911 - An Act to Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act, and for Other Purposes." *Govinfo.Gov*, 2026, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-79/STATUTE-79-Pg911.

[18] "Political Parties' Impact on Immigration | Political Science | Research Starters | EBSCOhost." *Ebsco*, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/political-science/political-parties-impact-immigration/.

Security Act of 2002 also dissolved INS,[19] replacing it with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with jurisdiction over interior enforcement and immigration-related crimes; Customs and Border Protection (CBP), with jurisdiction over the border; Transportation Security Administration (TSA), with jurisdiction over major transit hubs; and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), with jurisdiction over asylum and naturalization.[20] This period and law finalized immigration as a law enforcement function, one that was primarily the responsibility of the federal government, though states retained options to participate. Specifically, 287(g) agreements — referring to section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1357(g) — allow for local and state law enforcement and prison officials to exercise the powers of ICE agents under a variety of circumstances after having received training. States with many such agreements include Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, and New Hampshire.[21] If, on the other hand, state or local law enforcement agencies arrest an undocumented immigrant unknowingly, ICE may send these agencies an "immigration detainer" requesting that the detainee be held for an additional forty-eight hours. These detainers are nonbinding, and it is up to state and local governments to decide whether to honor them. Cities with official policies of not honoring immigration detainers, such as New York City, are often referred to as "sanctuary cities," though immigrants are not directly guarded from federal immigration authorities within them.[22]

During his first term in office and continuing into his second, President Trump had and continues to have an extremely hawkish view of immigration, particularly immigration from Muslim-majority and Latin American nations. During his first term, President Trump imposed a travel ban on several Muslim-majority nations,[23] which saw extensive challenges in court before being upheld 5-4 by the Supreme Court in *Trump v. Hawaii*,[24] and lobbied for the construction of a wall along the southern border.[25]

One of the main features of his second term has been President Trump's unprecedented emphasis on not only border security, but interior enforcement actions, especially against those of Hispanic or Middle Eastern origin or descent. This has taken numerous forms, including Operation Metro Surge, a massive immigration enforcement action targeting urban areas with high immigrant populations which led to the deaths of two American citizens — Alex Pretti and Renée Good — during widespread protests in Minneapolis;[26] a $70 billion funding increase via the One Big Beautiful Bill Act ;[27] deals with nations in Africa and Latin America (e.g., Costa Rica, Colombia, South Sudan) to accept deported immigrants, even if those immigrants are not from those countries — these are known as third county deportations (TCDs),[28] and at least twenty-two thousand have occurred as of August 2026;[29] and innumerably many other legal, administrative, and legislative initiatives.[30] The increase in funding has allowed for enforcement surges in cities such as Minneapolis, MN; Chicago, IL; Washington, D.C.; and Los Angeles, CA; triggering widespread protests. These protests have resulted in several injuries, with protesters being left blinded or with lacerations, fractures, and brain damage.[31] Many states,

[19] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "116 Stat. 2135 - Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act." *Govinfo.Gov*, 2024, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-116/STATUTE-116-Pg2135.
[20] "The Homeland Security Act of 2002: Your Ultimate Guide [US Law Explained]." *USLawExplained.Com*, 2020, https://uslawexplained.com/homeland_security_act_of_2002.
[21] "287(G) | Immigrant Legal Resource Center | ILRC." *Ilrc.Org*, 25 Mar. 2025, https://www.ilrc.org/practitioners/national-map-287g-agreements.
[22] "Immigration Detainers: An Overview - American Immigration Council." *American Immigration Council*, 28 May 2026, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/immigration-detainers-overview/.
[23] "Muslim Travel Ban." *Immigration History*, 2019, https://immigrationhistory.org/item/muslim-travel-ban/.
[24] "Trump v. Hawaii." Oyez, www.oyez.org/cases/2017/17-965.
[25] Greene, Connor. "What's the Status of Trump's Border Wall? A Key Campaign Promise, Over a Decade On." *TIME*, Time, 6 Aug. 2026, https://time.com/article/2026/08/06/trump-border-wall-immigration/.
[26] "Operation Metro Surge - Immigration History." *Immigration History*, 26 Aug. 2026, https://immigrationhistory.org/item/operation-metro-surge/.
[27] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. "Public Law 119 - 21 - an Act to Provide for Reconciliation Pursuant to Title II of H. Con. Res. 14.." *Www.Govinfo.Gov*, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-119publ21.
[28] Wong, Edward, et al. "Inside the Global Deal-Making Behind Trump's Mass Deportations." *The New York Times*, 25 June 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/25/us/politics/trump-immigrants-deportations.html.
[29] R. "TCD Tracker - USCRI." *USCRI - U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants*, 21 July 2026, https://refugees.org/tcdtracker/.
[30] "TCD Tracker - USCRI." *Uscri*, 15 Dec. 2025, https://refugees.org/tcdtracker/.
[31] Olivares, José. "'Misuse' of Crowd-Control Weapons on ICE Protesters Led to Blindings and Traumatic Brain Injuries, Report Finds." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 14 July 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jul/14/misuse-crowd-c

organizations, and individuals have sued the Trump administration over its enforcement tactics, including warrantless searches, violations of court orders, masking agents, excessive force, and more.[32] This includes over fifty lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union.[33] However, many people, especially on the political right, have praised the Trump administration's tactics, with "Border Czar" Tom Homan quoted as saying that Operation Metro Surge left Minneapolis safer.[34] Additionally, in April 2026, 31% of survey respondents said that the Trump administration was doing "about the right amount" vis-à-vis deportations, with another 15% saying the administration was doing too little. The former percentage was down from October 2025, while the latter was up.[35] Many of those in favor of increased immigration enforcement argue that immigrants take jobs away from American citizens, decrease wages, and compete for housing. Others have argued that immigrants are inherently or disproportionally prone to crime or violence, which is not substantiated.[36]

State reactions to the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration have been varied and highly partisan, with some states, such as Illinois, actively resisting immigration enforcement and others, such as Texas, actively embracing it in response to constituent demand.[37] This has led to tensions between states, especially states which do not permit the construction of immigration detention facilities inside their borders. Such prohibitions force the transfer of detainees to other states, where they are sometimes released without any clear way to return to their state of origin. Other sources of tension include the extradition of immigration officials from one state to another,[38] and the policies some states have adopted in order to rid themselves of migrants, most prominent among the latter being Texas governor Greg Abbott's shipping of migrants to New York city via bus.[39]

While the NGA has recently endeavored to facilitate gubernatorial cooperation and involvement in immigration policy, including hosting a fireside chat with DHS Secretary Markewayne Mullin this past August,[40] criticism has been levied against the NGA for its perceived lack of action on immigration, with New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) calling it "feckless."[41] In February 2026, Gov. Lujan Grisham signed the Immigration Safety Act, which restricted "public bodies" from assisting with federal immigration actions, prohibited the construction of detention centers on state-owned land, and barred 287(g) agreements. However, New Mexico has agreed not to enforce this act until the resolution of a lawsuit brought by the Department of Justice.[42] As

ontrol-weapons-ice-protesters-blindings-traumatic-brain-injuries-report.

[32] Just Security. "Litigation Tracker: Legal Challenges to Trump Administration Actions." *Just Security*, 10 Feb. 2025, https://www.justsecurity.org/107087/tracker-litigation-legal-challenges-trump-administration/.

[33] Cader, Yasmin. "We've Filed More Than 50 Legal Claims Over Abuse by Federal Immigration Agents. Here's Why.." *American Civil Liberties Union*, 5 Aug. 2026, https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/weve-filed-more-than-50-legal-claims-over-abuse-by-federal-immigration-agents-heres-why.

[34] Carpenter, Susan. "Homan Says Operation Metro Surge Is Ending in Minneapolis." *Spectrumlocalnews.Com*, Spectrum News, 12 Feb. 2026, https://spectrumlocalnews.com/us/snplus/immigration/2026/02/12/homan-operation-metro-surge-ends-in-minneapolis.

[35] Copeland, Joseph, and Alexandra Cahn. "On Deportations, 52% of Americans Say Trump Administration Is Doing Too Much (2026)." *Pew Research Center*, 4 May 2026, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/05/04/about-half-of-americans-continue-to-say-trump-administration-is-doing-too-much-on-deportations/.

[36] Kulke, Stephanie. *Northwestern Now Trending Topics: Expert Viewpoint (//Topics/Expert-Viewpoint/) Global (//Topics/Global/)*. https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/117980/documents/HHRG-119-GO00-20250305-SD029.pdf.

[37] Pham, Katrina. "Detained out of State, Chicago Immigrants Rely on Strangers to Find Their Way Back Home." Borderless Magazine NFP, 26 May 2026, https://borderlessmag.org/2026/05/26/detained-out-of-state-chicago-immigrants-rely-on-strangers-to-find-their-way-back-home/.

[38] Helmore, Edward. "Judge Blocks Minnesota Bid to Extradite Texas ICE Agent Accused of Shooting Man." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 26 Aug. 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/aug/26/ice-agent-shooting-texas-minnesota-extradition.

[39] Calvan, Bobby Caina. "After Sending Busloads of Migrants to NYC, Texas Governor Visits City to Fault Biden for Crisis." *AP News*, 27 Sept. 2023, https://apnews.com/article/migrants-new-york-adams-abbott-colombia-58d423ab3e84e5692d50f773803254ee.

[40] National Governors Association. "DHS Secretary Mullin Joins Governors and NGA to Advance State-Federal Homeland Security Coordination." National Governors Association, Aug. 2026, https://www.nga.org/news/press-releases/dhs-secretary-mullin-joins-governors-and-nga-to-advance-state-federal-homeland-security-coordination/.

[41] Mondschein, Matthew. "New Mexico Gov. Lujan Grisham and Utah Gov. Cox Discuss How to 'Disagree Better' across Party Lines." *Source New Mexico*, 15 Sept. 2026, https://sourcenm.com/2026/09/15/new-mexico-gov-lujan-grisham-and-utah-gov-cox-discuss-how-to-disagree-better-across-party-lines/.

[42] New Mexico Legislature. *ACT RELATING to PUBLIC BODIES; ENACTING the IMMIGRANT SAFETY ACT; PROHIBITING PUBLIC BODIES FROM ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS USED to DETAIN INDIVIDUALS for FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS and REQUIRING the TERMINATION of ANY SUCH EXISTING AGREEMENTS; PROHIBITING PUBLIC BODIES FROM OTHERWISE USING PUBLIC PROPERTY to FACILITATE DETAINING INDIVIDUALS for FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS. BE IT ENACTED by the LEGISLATURE of the STATE of NEW MEXICO*. 7 Feb. 2026, www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/26%20Regular/final/HB0009.pdf.

we go into this meeting, all governors should be prepared to tackle this difficult topic at last.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What is the proper place for governors and state governments in the immigration process?
2. To what extent should the NGA involve itself in the individual affairs of the states?
3. How can states handle the economic impacts of immigration, both positive and negative?
4. How can Democratic and Republican governors promote cross-aisle dialogue on the issue of immigration?
5. To what extent should governors cooperate with the federal government?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

- "ArtI.S8.C18.8.1 Overview of Congress's Immigration Powers" https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artI-S8-C18-8-1/ALDE_00001255/
- "Timeline Immigration History." https://immigrationhistory.org/timeline/
- "The Homeland Security Act of 2002: Your Ultimate Guide" https://uslawexplained.com/homeland_security_act_of_2002

Tonski, Kris. "New Mexico Governor Signs Immigrant Safety Act." *Immigration Response Playbook*, 5 Feb. 2026, playbook.irisct.org/new-mexico-governor-signs-immigrant-safety-act/.

TOPIC 2: MAINTAINING DECAYING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation infrastructure are the physical systems of movement such as roads, railways, ports, airports, and a variety of public transit services including buses, trollies, lightrails, subways, ferries, and paratransit and vanpool services for individuals with disabilities or seniors who may need assistance. Together they provide the underlying system of public works that facilitate the connection of people, raw materials, and finished products that serve as the basis of every economy at every level of society.[43]

High repair costs are one of the major problems in addressing the issues with decaying transportation infrastructure. One factor leading to high repair costs is the lack of qualified construction workers and engineers to meet the present demand. The pool of prime-age construction workers, those between 25 and 54 years old, has shrunk from 72% to 67% over the past eleven years.[44] Moreover, there are almost 700,000 open engineering positions in the United States.[45] However, fewer than 150,000 new engineers enter the workforce each year.[46]

In addition, over the next ten years, 24 states will face an 86 billion dollar deficit alone for maintaining roads and bridges.[47] For example, in 2025, Michigan reported the largest road funding gap between needed investments in road investment and actual expected spending. Michigan only expected to spend $9.2 billion of the actual $24 billion needed for the National Highway System (NHS) road maintenance in their state.[48] In that same year, New York State reported an 11 billion dollar gap in funding for NHS bridges.[49]

States have implemented different measures to try and address infrastructure maintenance funding gaps. For example, Michigan initiated new fuel taxes in January of 2026. According to Michigan law, at least 90% of the revenue from taxes on fuel have to go towards road and bridge infrastructure. Additional earmarking of funds from corporate income tax (CIT) revenue as well as a new wholesale tax on Marijuana were designated for road maintenance. However, increased taxes can be unpopular with voters, and state governors must be careful with what increase in taxes they propose to their state legislature.

To promote long-term infrastructure planning and investment, Federal law requires that each state have a Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP). TAMP reports are a requirement for states receiving federal NHS funding, in order to help state departments of transportation (DOTs) assess the condition of their NHS roads and bridges.[50] Transportation Asset Management Plans (TAMP) act as a focal point for information about the assets, their management strategies, long-term expenditure forecasts, and business management processes for roads and bridges.[51] Each state is required to submit their TAMP every four years, and the National Highway Administration does review state plans annually. However, despite federal efforts to have states create consistent TAMPs, state DOTs vary in which roads and bridges they analyze, and how they define and measure roadway conditions. Additionally, TAMPs only need to address NHS roads and bridges, which do not include all of the roads and bridges within a particular state.[52] States are not required to report the total funds lacking or funding gaps by asset category.[53]

The Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law”, passed by Congress in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic had provided 1.2 trillion in infrastructure investment, including specialized investment in rural roads and bridges. While 19% of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, 45% of all roadway fatalities occur on rural roads, making the

[43] "Transport Infrastructure," ScienceDirect Topics, Elsevier, https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/transport-infrastructure.
[44] "How Workforce Shortages Are Reshaping Engineering Delivery," EY, July 2026, https://www.ey.com/en_us/insights/industrial-products/workforce-shortages-reshape-engineering-delivery.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Fatima Yousofi and Eli Gullett, "5 Factors Inflate Costs of Maintaining Roads and Bridges," The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 8, 2026, https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2026/04/08/5-factors-inflate-costs-of-maintaining-roads-and-bridges.
[48] The Pew Charitable Trusts, *States Fall Short of Funding Needed to Keep Roads and Bridges in Good Repair: Lessons from Transportation Asset Management Plans*, July 16, 2025, https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2025/07/states-fall-short-of-funding-needed-to-keep-roads-and--bridges-in-good-repair.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] "Transportation Asset Management Plans," Federal Highway Administration, last modified May 21, 2026, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/asset/plans.cfm.
[52] The Pew Charitable Trusts, *States Fall Short of Funding Needed to Keep Roads and Bridges in Good Repair: Lessons from Transportation Asset Management Plans*, July 16, 2025, https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2025/07/states-fall-short-of-funding-needed-to-keep-roads-and--bridges-in-good-repair.
[53] Ibid.

fatality rate on rural roads two times higher than on urban roads.[54] However, the act was only intended for five years. It was initially set to expire in September 2026.[55] Although Congress has continued transportation funding authorizations through December 11, 2026, there is no current legislative replacement, and any future legislation is unlikely to sustain that level of investment. The probability of reduced federal funding, underinvestment in capital repair projects, combined with rising construction costs due to inflation mean that states could struggle to pay for the necessary repairs to roads and bridges, two of the most important parts of transportation infrastructure.[56] Already, over the past two decades, states have taken on a greater share of transportation funding, with state general fund contributions doubling from 8% of all transportation revenues in 2002 to 17% in 2023.[57] However, states themselves also face their own declining revenues due to higher fuel and construction costs as well as the uncertainty over future federal funding for infrastructure projects.[58]

In addition to reducing funding for infrastructure projects, bureaucratic delays, often referred to as "red tape," postpone the implementation of programs to repair decaying infrastructure.[59] All infrastructure projects must first clear the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).[60] NEPA sets up the regulatory steps that all infrastructure projects must adhere to prior to the beginning of construction. In May of 2025, the United States Supreme Court did put limits on the regulatory power of NEPA. However, other barriers remain including legal challenges from environmental groups and other groups concerned about specific projects, funding delays, and state-specific regulations and procedures.[61] These issues have yet to be effectively addressed by states. The end result is that state governors face being critically behind on essential maintenance of roadways and bridges in their states.[62]

Public transit, including buses, trains, subways, light rails, and ferries, is another important part of transportation infrastructure. In 2023, 34 million people across the United States used public transit daily.[63] In 2025, public transit riders took 8.1 billion total trips, which was a 6% increase from the previous year, and the fifth consecutive year of ridership increase.[64] While public transportation use has still not returned to pre COVID-19 pandemic levels, gas price increases may further drive public transit ridership recovery. For example, rising gas prices in March 2026 increased public transportation ridership by 12% compared to just one month prior[65].

Reliable public transportation infrastructure reduces costs and provides economic benefits for governments, businesses and individuals.[66] For every 1 dollar invested in public transit, 5 dollars are generated in economic returns.[67] Additionally, every 10 million in capital investment in public transportation yields approximately 30 million in increased sales for business. In the private sector, home values near public transportation were up to 24% higher.[68] However, maintaining transportation infrastructure is an ongoing concern for state governors as structures decay due to use, exposure to elements, and time.[69]

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[54] U.S. Department of Transportation, "Building a Better America Fact Sheet for Rural Communities," Briefing Room, April 8, 2022, https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/building-better-america-fact-sheet-rural-communities.

[55] Abraham Mfon, "The 2026 Infrastructure Funding Cliff: What Happens When the IIJA Expires," *JPC Blog*, JPC Engineering, April 20, 2026, https://www.jpcengineering.com/jpc-blog/the-2026-infrastructure-funding-cliff-what-happens-when-the-iija-expires.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ora Halpern, Eli Gullett, and Fatima Yousofi, "States Adapt Transportation Funding Strategies to Meet Resource Challenges," The Pew Charitable Trusts, June 18, 2025, https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2025/06/18/states-adapt-transportation-funding-strategies-to-meet-resource-challenges.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Abraham Mfon, "The 2026 Infrastructure Funding Cliff: What Happens When the IIJA Expires," *JPC Blog*, JPC Engineering, April 20, 2026, https://www.jpcengineering.com/jpc-blog/the-2026-infrastructure-funding-cliff-what-happens-when-the-iija-expires.

[60] Nina Totenberg, "Supreme Court Limits Environmental Reviews of Infrastructure Projects," *NPR*, May 29, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/05/29/nx-s1-5415742/supreme-court-nepa.

[61] Ralph Vartabedian, "Years of Delays, Billions in Overruns: The Dismal History of Big Infrastructure," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/28/us/infrastructure-megaprojects.html.

[62] Ibid.

[63] "Transit," Report Card for America's Infrastructure, American Society of Civil Engineers, March 25, 2025, https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/transit-infrastructure/

[64] "Policy Research," American Public Transportation Association, https://www.apta.com/news-research/policy-research/.

[65] Ibid.

[66] "Economic Strength: Creating Reliable and Efficient Access to Resources, Markets and Good-Paying Jobs," U.S. Department of Transportation, last updated April 6, 2026, https://www.transportation.gov/economic-strength-creating-reliable-efficient.

[67] American Public Transportation Association, "Policy Research."

[68] Ibid.

[69] Daniel Yamín, Andrés L. Medaglia, and Juan F. Correal, "Transportation Infrastructure Maintenance Planning: An Exact Column Enumeration Approach," *Computers & Operations Research* 184 (2025): 107246, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cor.2025.107246.

Public transit relies on a combination of local, state, and Federal financial funding. Increased federal funding through IIJA provided temporary support to states for their public transit services. However, due to years of delayed repairs, public transportation systems in the United States face an over 150 billion dollar funding gap.[70] Local leaders and state governors must now address how to provide for repairs and facility upgrades to public transit systems, while dealing with the reduced federal funding.

To keep transit systems operating, local governments and states have to shift money budgeted for capital improvements to operational costs, along with implementing rate hikes and service reductions. For example, in 2025, Philadelphia's public transportation system, SEPTA, had to reverse highly unpopular cuts to service because there was a 63% increase in late arrivals to school among Philadelphia students who used public transportation to get to school.[71] As a result of public pressure, Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania Josh Shapiro allowed SEPTA to move almost 400 million dollars from capital funding to operational funding in order to restore service routes that had been cut.[72] However, shifting funding, rate hikes, and service cuts are at best temporary solutions. Local and state governments need to develop permanent funding solutions that do not sacrifice capital investment in public transportation infrastructure.

Airports and seaports are additional concerns that governors and their state governments must address. While the federal government controls aviation, airports themselves rely on a combination of local, state, and federal funding. Airports in states across the country require extensive renovation to meet modern standards of safety, capacity, and travel efficiency.[73] In fact, on September 15th, 2026, United States Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced 1.1 billion in funding to improve airport infrastructure. The funding will include 280 grants to airports in 46 states and 3 United States territories.[74] These grants address a variety of needs including runway reconstruction and repair, facility upgrades, noise pollution, and additional technology to improve air traffic control safety.[75] While improvements to airports themselves are important, access to airports further depends on other aspects of decaying transportation infrastructure including roads, bridges, and public transportation. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, only 36% of Americans have the choice between air, rail, and bus transportation services. In fact, The U.S. system of airports provides 99% of the U.S. population with access to air transportation, including Americans living in rural areas. Approximately, 71% of rural Americans do have access to airline service. However for some residents in rural communities, air service is the sole intercity transportation service available.[76]

Ports are also a combination of local, state, and Federal control.[77] 95% of cargo entering the United States arrives by ship.[78] While the federal government has made recent investments in port infrastructure, including grant opportunities for ports and near port communities to address environmental issues, there are still issues that concern state governments including unpredictable extreme weather events that can quickly and drastically raise sea levels and threaten port safety and function.

Looking towards the future of transportation infrastructure, the NGA hosted its 11th Infrastructure Coordinator Workshop in Washington, D.C. in May of 2026. The workshop brought together 30 infrastructure coordinators and advisors from 20 states and territories with Federal officials, and experts to discuss priority infrastructure topics facing governors and their staffs.[79] The workshop focused on the future of infrastructure funding after the expiration of the IIJA as well as on state and territory best practices in permitting, aligning infrastructure deployment and land use, and public-private partnerships, agreements between government entities and private corporations to finance, build, and

[70] Ibid.
[71] Shalina Chatlani, "States Scramble to Plug Transportation Funding Holes," *Stateline*, September 25, 2025, https://stateline.org/2025/09/25/states-scramble-to-plug-transportation-funding-holes/.
[72] Ibid.
[73] "The State of America's Aviation Infrastructure," Ground Penetrating Radar Systems (GPRS), https://www.gp-radar.com/article/the-state-of-americas-aviation-infrastructure.
[74] Joey Stoate, "$1.1 Billion to Be Invested in Airport Upgrades Across the US," *Airport Industry-News*, September 15, 2026, https://airportindustry-news.com/1-1-billion-to-be-invested-in-airport-upgrades-across-the-us/.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "The Critical Role of Rural Communities in the U.S. Transportation System," U.S. Department of Transportation, last modified March 17, 2025, https://www.transportation.gov/rural/grant-toolkit/critical-role-rural-communities.
[77] "Ports Primer: 2.1 The Role of Ports," United States Environmental Protection Agency, last modified March 17, 2026, https://www.epa.gov/ports-initiative/ports-primer-21-role-ports.
[78] Ibid.
[79] "NGA's Spring 2026 Infrastructure Coordinator Workshop," National Governors Association, June 4, 2026, https://www.nga.org/meetings/ngas-spring-2026-infrastructure-coordinator-workshop/.

operate projects to deliver public services or projects like infrastructure.[80]

The conference had several key takeaways. First, in order to speed up the implementation of projects, states should consider all interconnected sections of an infrastructure project together and issue permits as a whole rather than for each component of a project separately.[81] The conference also stressed the need for better communication between federal, state, and local agencies in order to improve coordination on infrastructure project development and implementation. Finally, the conference highlighted the growing importance of P3s for supporting transportation infrastructure. 40 states, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico have laws that enable P3s for infrastructure projects. Some of the states including Florida and Washington, have broad laws that are the most inclusive of P3s.[82] Other states such as California and Texas have more limited laws while still fostering the development of P3s. However, other states including New York and Michigan do not have any current laws that enable P3s for infrastructure development.[83]

State and territory workshop attendees also had the opportunity to meet with leaders from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to discuss Federal infrastructure programs and current priorities.[84] The NGA will need to continue to provide leadership and support for governors as they continue to navigate the challenges of maintaining decaying infrastructure. However, after the elections in November of 2026, the political makeup of the NGA could change drastically. This may be especially true for issues relating to maintaining transportation infrastructure like tax increases and environmental regulations. While the NGA strives to generate bipartisan solutions, new governors may feel pressure to advocate for solutions based along campaign promises and/or party lines. These divisions can generate intense debate as governors from both political parties try to address the many issues facing transportation infrastructure.

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[80] "Public-Private Partnerships," Digital Transformation Collaborative Finance Toolkit Factsheets, UNESCO, accessed October 6, 2026, https://www.unesco.org/en/dtc-finance-toolkit-factsheets/public-private-partnerships.

[81] "NGA's Spring 2026 Infrastructure Coordinator Workshop," National Governors Association, June 4, 2026, https://www.nga.org/meetings/ngas-spring-2026-infrastructure-coordinator-workshop/.

[82] "P3 Legislation," Center for Innovative Finance Support, Federal Highway Administration, accessed October 6, 2026, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/p3/legislation/.

[83] Ibid.

[84] "NGA's Spring 2026 Infrastructure Coordinator Workshop," National Governors Association, June 4, 2026, https://www.nga.org/meetings/ngas-spring-2026-infrastructure-coordinator-workshop/.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How can governors most effectively identify which transportation infrastructure their individual states should prioritize?
2. How can governors coordinate with the federal government and various stakeholders to best address decaying transportation infrastructure?
3. How can state governors work together to develop a plan for future infrastructure development and innovation?
4. How can state governors develop a plan to adequately fund necessary infrastructure repairs?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

- "Transit" https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/transit-infrastructure/

- "State and Local Governments Face $105 Billion in Deferred Maintenance for Roads and Bridges." https://www.google.com/goto?url=CAES2AEB6zswFYFSLMykx2qTuRqo51dcdX88Yc79o6PemzSd5X3kLlctGhCq1ef7XkOdNEdD4xRtX2Wlqs8_tGFHS3442e1aQAqsNoUjY9lUj95lM2wERmrZodqnu96p7KP5mZSTFw-pyfwoW4prvcbdn17CBVTKDECI4K76pNEafPctHDi1UpSvhwrcF_w34DOz0nUkxd5iTpPw1qzTo2eVR9iOz11AkjoO9RAVAp-f8_QNIpJA07dw9z0x8fEU_PZjEcA_rojz9CB-HpeAp5wm-HBti0Q9r60jwAc

- "State P3 Enabling Laws" https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/p3/legislation/