



AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

GLOBAL MIGRATION SECTION

2026 AILA/GMS Annual Global Migration Forum *Navigating Global Migration from America's Edge*

Set in beautiful San Diego, a gateway city to the Pacific and the epicenter of one of America's most dynamic border regions, the 2026 AILA/GMS Annual Global Migration Forum brings together practitioners from around the world to explore how migration is being reshaped by geopolitical realignment, technological change, and shifting national priorities. This year's forum will examine the forces redefining borders, mobility, and talent flows. It aims to move beyond crisis-driven responses toward a deeper understanding of migration as a permanent global condition. Through comparative, practice focused discussions, the expert faculty for this forum will offer insight into where global migration is headed and how professionals can navigate an increasingly complex and fragmented legal and geopolitical landscape.

June 15–16, 2026
Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego
San Diego, CA

Times listed on the program are Pacific Time (PT).

Note: All sessions and events are subject to change without notice

Monday, June 15, 2026

- 1:00 pm – 5:30 pm **Registration and Exhibits**
- 1:00 pm – 1:15 pm **Welcome and Remarks**
- 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm **Borders, Power and Global Immigration in a New World Order**

As countries shift priorities, tighten borders, and take a more unilateral, nationalistic approach to geopolitics, migration is

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increasingly being used as a political tool. This session examines how geopolitical change, rising nationalism, and shifting government priorities are reshaping immigration systems worldwide. Panelists will discuss migration as an instrument of state policy, the balance between national sovereignty and international obligations, and the consequences for refugee protection, labor mobility, and the future of international cooperation.

- The return of great-power politics and the impact of Trump-era immigration policies for global migration frameworks
- How shifting global power dynamics are reshaping migration and border governance
- Migration as a political instrument: how states use mobility to shape public opinion, domestic politics, and international relations
- Regional conflicts as geopolitical turning points and their impact on migration flows across Europe and beyond

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm **Networking Break**

Track I

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm **How “Steady-Current” Nations Are Overtaking Talent Destinations**
Global migration is increasingly flowing toward countries that offer predictability, social infrastructure, clarity, and long-term stability rather than speed alone. This session analyzes how emerging destination countries such as Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Brazil and parts of Scandinavia and Asia are leveraging transparent migration pathways to attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and researchers — and what these shifts signal about the future geography of global talent.

- Emerging talent destinations beyond the United States
- Predictability vs. speed: the value propositions drawing skilled workers
- Immigration frameworks and incentives powering “steady-current” competitiveness
- Innovation clusters and startup ecosystems as magnets for global talent
- Reframing the narrative of global leadership: mobility data trends signaling the next decade’s flows

Track II

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm **The Unauthorized Practice of Law: Redefining Professional Boundaries in a Changing Legal and Technology Landscape**
Technology has transformed how legal services are delivered, with remote work and cross-border collaboration now commonplace. Longstanding unauthorized practice of law (UPL) rules – developed for a far more traditional practice model – are increasingly under strain. This panel will explore how regulators and practitioners can protect the public while embracing modern tools and innovative service models. Panelists will discuss how UPL rules apply to global migration services, remote legal support, and technology-enabled practice, with a focus on client protection, ethical obligations, and regulatory compliance.

- UPL in a digital era: how technology-enabled services challenge traditional definitions of legal practice
- AI, automation, and legal ethics: Where do algorithmic tools fit within ethical and regulatory frameworks?
- Preventive education and safeguards that reduce harm before enforcement is needed
- Modern detection and enforcement for cross-border and remote work realities
- Balancing access to justice with professional boundaries in a cost-pressured market

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm **Coffee and Networking Break**

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm **Artificial Intelligence Workshop: How Are Practitioners Modernizing Their Practice to Keep Up with Demands?**
In these times, professional services must evolve as quickly as the tools shaping them. As client expectations rise and global immigration work accelerates, firms are turning to AI and automation to streamline operations, improve accuracy, and enhance the client experience. Panelists will explore how practitioners can ride this fast-moving digital wave while maintaining ethical integrity, consistency, and quality.

- Practical strategies for building scalable teams and workflows
- Implementing KPI-driven oversight that supports long-term sustainability
- Strengthening communication systems
- Efficient use of automation and AI, and strategies for continuity and growth
- Common pitfalls and “what not to do” when adopting AI

5:00 pm – 5:30 pm **AILA GMS 2026 Membership Meeting**
The annual AILA GMS Membership Meeting

7:30 pm – 10:00 pm

2026 GMS Forum Networking Dinner

Advance purchase of tickets is required for attendance.

More details will be available in late Spring 2026.

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

9:00 am – 12:00 pm **Registration and Exhibits**

9:00 am – 10:00 am **2026 and Beyond - What's Next in the World of Global Migration**

This closing session examines the interconnected forces shaping global migration beyond 2026, including economic realignment, geopolitical tensions, technological change, climate pressures, and the rise of digital work. Migration is no longer a temporary response to discrete events – it is a defining feature of a rapidly transforming world. Panelists will explore how migration policy is evolving from a focus on border control to a central driver of competitiveness, resilience, and societal design, and what these shifts mean for global mobility in the decade ahead.

- Digital nomads and migration as competing permanent global condition
- Economic realignment and talent flows
- Geopolitical instability and humanitarian pathways
- Technology transformation and borderless economies
- Societal design: what future migration means for social cohesion, cultural adaptation, and inclusive policy frameworks

10:00 am – 10:15 am **Networking Break**

Track I

10:15 am – 11:15 am **Stormy Seas: Why Expat Assignments Are Becoming Harder to Navigate**

Expat assignments now face growing complexity from tax rules, compliance demands, political change, and climate disruption. Panelists will cover practical fundamentals – SOPs, documentation, coordination – and forward-looking strategies to manage risk and keep assignments on track. They also will advise on everything from post-arrival compliance to contingency planning and aligning immigration, tax, and HR.

- Tax, compliance, and political shifts reshaping assignment planning
- Best practices for SOPs and risk management for assignments
- Multi-jurisdiction documentation and post-arrival compliance challenges
- Work authorization constraints and contingency playbooks
- Innovative immigration solutions for expat assignments

11:15 am – 11:30 am **Networking Break**

11:30 am – 12:30 pm **Temporary Talent Harbors in Tight Immigration Climates**

When primary destinations become unavailable due to backlogs, quotas and new restrictions, employers need compliant interim solutions. This session examines “global parking” strategies, mapping quick-turn jurisdictions and interim placements that maintain compliance, continuity, and retention while long-term pathways are pursued. Panelists will dig into operational realities that keep employees engaged and productive during temporary relocation or remote-ready setups.

- The rise of global parking strategies amid immigration bottlenecks
- Selecting viable jurisdictions for short-term or remote-ready assignments
- Operational challenges and risk mitigation
- Impact on talent retention and workforce planning
- Building a versatile global mobility playbook

Faculty:

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm **Lunch Break**

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm **Navigating the Swells of Global Investor Visas**

Investor migration carries both opportunity and risk. Panelists will compare investment vehicles across jurisdictions, analyze risk exposure, and discuss employment vs. investor-based pathways and residency-by-investment programs. Panelists will also address the increasing scrutiny of investor visa applicants and highlight key red flags practitioners should watch for.

- Permissible investment vehicles across jurisdictions
- Risk profiles and financial exposure for immigrant investors
- Employment-based vs. investor-based pathways
- Residency-by-investment policy: outcomes, limits, and safeguards
- Evolving trends and reputational considerations in investment migration

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm **Networking Break**

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm **The Rise (and Restriction) of European Investment and Hereditary Citizenship Programs**

As Europe tightens access to citizenship and investment routes, applicants face higher scrutiny and evolving requirements. This session compares viable pathways, evidentiary standards, and post-approval realities such as tax exposure and long-term obligations. Panelists will look at how families can pursue these opportunities responsibly, treating citizenship not as a quick

transactional solution, but as a carefully planned component of their broader future strategy.

- Hereditary citizenship pathways and core evidentiary requirements
- Restrictive measures and caselaw developments affecting eligibility
- Consular vs. domestic filing routes and timing tradeoffs
- Life after approval: residency, tax, and military obligations
- Risk management for families using citizenship as an “insurance plan”

Track II

10:15 am – 11:15 am **How to Ethically Attract Clients and Keep the Welcome Mat Out in an Anti-Immigration Era**

In politicized migration climates, immigration attorneys face a global paradox: governments promote “welcoming talent” while public rhetoric often signals the opposite. Lawyers must balance strong advocacy with ethical responsibility to provide clear, realistic advice. Panelists will discuss advising clients honestly, managing expectations, avoiding over-promising, and maintaining professional integrity while continuing to attract and retain clients.

- Advocacy for clients versus best interests of a country immigration programs
- Retaining and attracting clients without overselling options
- Managing client expectations in politicized environments
- Maintaining ethical transparency when a client’s preferred destination is not the most viable or strategic option

11:15 am – 11:30 am **Networking Break**

11:30 am – 12:30 pm **How Digital Creators, Athletes and Extraordinary Talent are Shifting Global Migration Landscape**

Immigration systems often struggle to keep pace with modern work models and emerging forms of talent. This panel will examine how different jurisdictions are adapting — or failing to adapt — to artists, athletes, influencers, e-sports professionals, and digital creators. This session explores how countries approach talent mobility, consular decision making, digital influence, and recognition standards in creative sectors and offers practical guidance on evidence, compliance, and cross-border mobility challenges.

- Workable legal pathways for short-term and event-based pathways
- Common mistakes and evidence pitfalls in extraordinary ability cases
- Compliance and tax traps that uniquely affect creator mobility.

- Comparative insights across the United States, UK, EU, and the Americas.
- Emerging challenges and practical guidance for global mobility practitioners navigating an evolving landscape of extraordinary talent

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm **Lunch Break**

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm **How Law Firms Stay Afloat in a Cost-Driven World**

As relocation firms and automated platforms push prices down while promising faster turnaround, law firms face a strategic crossroads: modernize intelligently or risk losing relevance. Panelists will discuss the current business realities, exploring how firms can differentiate through compliance rigor, thoughtful automation, data-driven oversight, and service models that meet client expectations.

- The rise of low-cost competitors and alternative providers
- Technology and automation: opportunity or threat?
- Balancing affordability, efficiency, and personalization while maintaining legal integrity
- Strategic adaptation for law firms
- Future outlook: how the evolution of immigration services will impact law firm structures and talent strategies

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm **Networking Break**

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm **Global Employer Compliance in an Era of Audits, AI, and Expanding Political Pressures**

Employer compliance is under increasing scrutiny worldwide. Expanded audit powers, digitized right-to-work checks, and AI-driven enforcement tools are increasingly targeting employers—particularly in politically sensitive sectors ranging from technology to the creative industries. This session will compare enforcement trends across key jurisdictions and provide practical guidance on preparing for inspections, maintaining defensible records, and coordinating effective cross-team responses to audits and investigations.

- U.S. employer compliance and business immigration audit trends
- European sponsor license enforcement, inspections, and defense strategies
- Practical case studies modeling global patterns and remediation
- AI, digital verification, and predictive analytics reshaping enforcement
- Managing political pressure and reputational risk across multinational footprints

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm **Networking Break**

Unified Track

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm **From Harmonization to Re-Nationalization: How Migration Systems Are Drifting in New Directions**

For much of the past 30 years, global migration governance has focused on harmonization across borders. In recent years, however, that trend has reversed. Many countries are reasserting national control over migration policy, emphasizing sovereignty and security in response to geopolitical instability, demographic shifts, climate pressures, and changing labor markets. As a result, migration pathways are increasingly fragmented into nationally defined systems. This session examines the legal and policy drivers behind this shift and explores its implications for asylum systems, migrant rights, and international migration law.

- How and why the balance has shifted from harmonized migration governance toward re-nationalization
- Implications of this shift for asylum protection, migrant rights, and international legal norms
- How national crises impact these issues on a global scale

5:00 pm – 5:15 pm **Closing Remarks**

5:15 pm **Conference Concludes**

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm **2026 GMS Forum Cocktail Reception**

Program Committee

Grace McGill, AILA Global Migration Section Steering Committee, Conference Program Chair, Edinburgh, UK

Jessica Dawn Jensen, AILA Board of Directors/Business Section Steering Committee/CBP Liaison Committee, Winnipeg, Canada

Maria Elena Abraham Garfias, Mexico City, Mexico

Alessia Ajelli, Milano, Italy

Maria L. Celebi, Istanbul, Turkey

Michal Kacprzyk, Warsaw, Poland

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Bram Van Melle, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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*Zara Najam, AILA Global Migration Section Steering Committee Vice
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*Chetal Patel, AILA Global Migration Section Steering Committee Immediate Past Chair,
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*Tom Thornton, AILA Section Specialist, Washington, D.C.
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