



AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

24th Annual AILA New York Chapter Immigration Law Symposium and Webcast

As the immigration landscape continues to shift amid regulatory changes, policy uncertainty, and technological disruption, this year's symposium will equip practitioners with the tools to navigate both the challenges and the innovations shaping the field. Expert faculty will provide practical, up-to-the-minute guidance across business, humanitarian, and removal practice areas—highlighting strategies for compliance, advocacy, and client service in an evolving environment. Panelists will explore cutting-edge issues such as the impact of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and litigation trends, as well as ethical considerations unique to modern immigration practice. Attendees will also hear about the latest government agency updates.

In addition, the AILA Rule of Law Task Force has prepared a full day of panels focused on helping AILA members protect themselves and their clients in today's aggressive enforcement era. Faculty will offer best practices, ethical guidance, and the latest information about these policies, tactics, and programs.

In-person registrants will have opportunities to network and exchange ideas with colleagues across New York's vibrant immigration bar.

Note: *In-person registrants will receive webcast access. Digital recordings of each session will be provided to all conference registrants. This will give attendees the ability to watch (or rewatch) any panels presented during the live conference.*

December 1, 2025
New York Marriott Marquis
New York, NY

Times listed on the program are Eastern Time (ET)

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

Monday, December 1, 2025

8:00 am – 5:00 pm **Registration and Exhibits**

Business Track

9:00 am – 9:15 am **Welcome and Greetings**
Scott Gorski, AILA Board of Governors/AILA New York Chapter Chair, New York, NY

(DL) = Discussion Leader

* = invited, not confirmed

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

9:15 am – 10:15 am	The State of U.S. Immigration for Employment-Based Cases: Hot Topics I Stay up to date on the latest statutory, judicial, and policy developments shaping business immigration. Panelists will highlight key trends and provide forward-looking insights for practitioners advising corporate clients. • Recent regulatory and fee changes affecting employment-based visa categories • Emerging litigation challenging new government policies • Agency modernization initiatives, digital filing, and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven adjudication trends • Congressional and Executive actions impacting corporate compliance and global mobility <i>Faculty:</i> <i>Scott Gorski (DL), AILA Board of Governors/AILA New York Chapter Chair, New York, NY</i> <i>Alexis S. Axelrad, AILA President-Elect, New York, NY</i> <i>Anastasia Tonello, AILA Past President, New York, NY</i>
10:15 am – 10:45 am	Networking Break
10:45 am – 11:45 am	Latest Government Agency Updates Panelists will address the latest government agency updates, including those from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). <i>Faculty:</i> <i>Cora-Ann V. Pestaina (DL), AILA New York Chapter Second Vice Chair, Livingston, NJ</i> <i>Francis J. Russo, Director of Field Operations, New York Field Office, CBP, New York, NY</i> <i>*Government Speaker 2 - USCIS (TBD)</i> <i>*Government Speaker 3 – ERO/ICE/OPLA (TBD)</i> <i>*Government Speaker 4 – EOIR (TBD)</i>
11:45 am–12:45 pm	Lunch Break
12:45 pm–1:45 pm	The Future of Business Immigration Practice: Innovation, Technology, and Client Expectations (Cybersecurity) Immigration practice is being reshaped by emerging technologies, cybersecurity demands, and shifting client priorities. Panelists will explore how attorneys can adapt to evolving tools, safeguard sensitive data, and meet business clients' growing expectations in a competitive landscape. • The impact of AI, automation, and digital transformation on immigration case management and compliance • Cybersecurity best practices for protecting client and corporate data across digital platforms • Leveraging technology to improve efficiency, collaboration, and client communication in high-volume practices • Ethical considerations and professional responsibilities when adopting new legal technologies • Coaching clients with data privacy concerns <i>Faculty:</i> <i>Mikhail Izrailev (DL), New York, NY</i> <i>Vijay Bhagwati, Lawrence Township, NJ</i>

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Michelle S. Velasco, New York, NY

1:45 pm–2:15 pm **Networking Break**

2:15 pm–3:15 pm **Ethical Boundaries in Corporate Immigration: Conflicts, Confidentiality, and Compliance (Ethics)**

Corporate immigration work often requires balancing employer and employee interests while navigating complex compliance environments. Panelists will examine conflicts of interest, confidentiality issues, and ethical considerations attorneys face when representing organizations and their foreign national employees.

- Defining the client: navigating representation boundaries between the sponsoring employer and the foreign national employee
- Identifying and managing conflicts of interest in dual representation and intra-company matters
- Maintaining confidentiality during audits, investigations, and internal reviews
- Meeting professional responsibility obligations when using technology, AI tools, and third-party vendors in client work

Faculty:

Shavit Yarden (DL), New York, NY

Melissa B. Drennan, New York, NY

Chad I. Rubin, Mountainside, NJ

3:15 pm–3:45 pm **Networking Break**

3:45 pm–4:45 pm **Relearning the H-1B Visa: Policy Shifts, Risk Points, and What to Expect for FY2027 (Skills)**

Recent developments have reshaped the H-1B visa program, from new filing fees to evolving wage policies. Panelists will provide practical strategies for advising clients, managing compliance risks, and planning effectively for the FY2027 H-1B cap season.

- Navigating presidential proclamations and agency actions
- Current status of Project Firewall, the H-1B Modernization Rule, and more
- Addressing heightened scrutiny of specialty occupation and employer/employee relationship issues
- Developing proactive compliance strategies to prepare clients for audits and site visits
- Advising employers on long-term workforce planning, alternatives to the H-1B, and cap-season timing considerations

Faculty:

Carolyn S. Alvarez (DL), Conference Program Chair, New York, NY

Miki K. Matrician, AILA Board of Governors, Boston, MA

Sonal Sharma, New York, NY

4:45 pm–5:00 pm **Conference Closure**

Carolyn S. Alvarez, Conference Program Chair, New York, NY

Track Two

9:00 am–9:15 am **Welcome and Greetings**

Carolyn S. Alvarez, Conference Program Chair, New York, NY

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9:15 am–10:15 am	Cybersecurity and Technology Risks in Humanitarian and Removal Practice (Cybersecurity) Humanitarian and removal cases often involve highly sensitive client information. Panelists will cover best practices for secure communication, data protection, and technology use when representing vulnerable populations, including detained clients. • Safeguarding confidential client data in detention and remote representation settings • Managing digital security risks when using online filing systems, messaging apps, and case management tools • Developing protocols for secure document sharing and client communication with limited access to technology • Ethical and professional responsibility considerations in technology use and data storage <i>Faculty:</i> <i>Andrew K. Nietor (DL), AILA Board of Governors, San Diego, CA</i> <i>Eileen P. Blessinger, Washington, D.C.</i> <i>Jack Jrada, New York, NY</i>
10:15 am–10:45 am	Networking Break
10:45 am–11:45 am	Ethics in Humanitarian Practice: Advocacy, Boundaries, and Secondary Trauma (Ethics) Immigration attorneys working with asylum seekers, detainees, and vulnerable clients face unique ethical and professional challenges. Panelists will discuss advocacy boundaries, confidentiality concerns, and strategies for recognizing and addressing vicarious trauma in practice. • Defining the scope of representation and managing client expectations in high-stakes humanitarian cases • Maintaining professional boundaries while providing trauma-informed legal advocacy • Protecting client confidentiality when collaborating with interpreters, social workers, and third-party service providers • Recognizing signs of secondary trauma and implementing strategies for attorney well-being and ethical self-care <i>Faculty:</i> <i>Ginny Nunez (DL), AILA New York Chapter Secretary, New York, NY</i> <i>Farah Al-kharsan, AILA Ethics Committee Chair, Ann Arbor, MI</i> <i>Karla P. Rosero, East Meadow, NY</i>
11:45 am–12:45 pm	Lunch Break
12:45 pm–1:45 pm	Transitioning from Temporary Status to Permanent Residence: Employment-Based Visa Pathways after DACA/TPS/Parole (Skills) For many clients, transitioning from temporary protection to permanent residence is the ultimate goal. Panelists will outline employment-based (and other) pathways available to individuals with DACA, TPS, or parole, offering practical guidance for attorneys supporting these cases. • Assessing eligibility for employment-based sponsorship and adjustment under current USCIS policy guidance • Navigating advance parole, travel, and entry considerations to establish eligibility for adjustment of status • Leveraging waivers, consular processing, and other strategic tools to overcome barriers to permanent residence

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- Advising clients on timing, documentation, and risk management when moving from temporary to permanent status

Faculty:

Dan Berger (DL), Northampton, MA

Paul O'Dwyer, AILA Federal Court Litigation Section Steering Committee, New York, NY

Leslie DiTrani, Cambridge, MA

1:45 pm–2:15 pm

Networking Break

2:15 pm–3:15 pm

Behind the Bench: Insights from Former Immigration Judges (Skills)

Former immigration judges share their perspectives on effective advocacy, common pitfalls in removal proceedings, and the evolving adjudication landscape. Panelists will offer attorneys a rare look at practice from the decision-maker's side of the courtroom.

- Practical guidance on presenting persuasive evidence and legal arguments before the court
- Common procedural and strategic errors observed in removal and bond hearings
- How evolving case law, policy changes, and court backlogs affect adjudication and case outcomes
- Tips for improving credibility, professionalism, and efficiency in courtroom advocacy

Faculty:

Raisa Cohen (DL), Forest Hills, NY

Carmen Maria Rey Caldas, New York, NY

David K. S. Kim, Great Neck, NY

3:15 pm–3:45 pm

Networking Break

3:45 pm–4:45 pm

The State of U.S. Immigration for Humanitarian and Removal Defense Cases: Hot Topics II

Panelists will review the latest statutory, judicial, and policy changes impacting humanitarian and removal practice. Attendees will gain insights on evolving asylum eligibility, detention policies, and prosecutorial discretion trends.

- Evolving standards for credible fear and protection claims
- Updates on TPS, parole programs, and prosecutorial discretion guidance
- Developments in EOIR practice, remote hearings, and access to counsel initiatives
- Impact of recent federal court rulings

Faculty:

Sarah Lachman (DL), AILA New York Chapter First Vice Chair, New York, NY

Joseph C. Fungsang, New York, NY

Jeremy Robbins, Executive Director, American Immigration Council, Washington, D.C.

4:45 pm–5:00 pm

Conference Closure

Scott Gorski, AILA Board of Governors/AILA New York Chapter Chair, New York, NY

AILA Rule of Law Track

9:00 am–9:15 am

Welcome and Greetings

Betsy Lawrence, AILA Rule of Law Track Chair, Washington, D.C.

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9:15 am–10:15 am

Ethics: How Attorneys Can Protect Themselves While Fulfilling Their Duty to Effectively Advocate (Ethics)

Panelists will delve into the duty of attorneys to competently, effectively, and zealously represent their clients. Moreover, they will discuss the ethical issues that can surface when lawyers fervently advocate in an enforcement-heavy environment.

- American Bar Association (ABA) Model Rules of Professional Conduct (MRPC) 1.3 – Diligence: What does it say? What does it require? Rule 1.1 – Competence
- A charge of misrepresentation: How can it affect a client? How can it affect an attorney?
- Ethical considerations during the client intake process
- Protecting against misrepresentation in immigration matters
 - Advising clients of appropriate disclosures
 - Presenting the facts in the most favorable light vs. misrepresentation

Faculty:

William A. Stock (DL), AILA Past President, Philadelphia, PA

Matthew Blaisdell, Brooklyn, NY

Alina Kats, Brooklyn, NY

10:15 am–10:45 am

Networking Break

10:45 am–11:45 am

Representing Clients Before USCIS or in Visa Matters During an Era of Aggressive Enforcement

Panelists will discuss strategies for protecting clients against discretionary overreach and heavy-handed enforcement tactics when seeking immigration benefits before USCIS or in visa matters before the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

- Current issues at USCIS interviews (asylum, adjustment of status, naturalization)
- Risks of remaining in the United States to secure an immigration benefit vs. leaving the United States
- DOS visa revocations
- Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) audits
- Advising clients regarding the potential for discretionary overreach
 - Immediate relative overstay
 - Working without authorization
 - Special considerations for DACA recipients
 - Filing petitions during the 60-day post-termination of employment grace period

Faculty:

Betsy Lawrence (DL), AILA Rule of Law Track Chair, Washington, D.C.

Jeremy L. McKinney, AILA Past President, Greensboro, NC

Jerome G. Grzeca, AILA Rule of Law Task Force Chair, Milwaukee, WI

11:45 am–12:45 pm

Lunch Break

12:45 pm–1:45 pm

Stretching the Bounds of 8 USC §§1324, 1324(c): Risks of Criminal Prosecution for Transporting, Harboring, and Document Fraud

Panelists will explore 8 USC §1324, which authorizes criminal penalties for bringing in and harboring undocumented individuals, and 8 USC §1324(c), which addresses criminal penalties

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for document fraud. They will examine and discuss how these statutes could be used against lawyers representing their clients.

- Overview and analysis of February 5, 2025, Attorney General memorandum: What does it cover and how could it be used against immigration lawyers?
- Lessons learned from recent criminal cases
- What to do if law enforcement comes to your office
- *U.S. v. Sineneng-Smith* and *U.S. v. Hansen*: encouraging or inducing unlawful immigration

Faculty:

Karl W. Krooth (DL), AILA Removal Defense Section Steering Committee, San Francisco, CA

Cory Forman, New York, NY

Jasmin Tohidi, Falls Church, VA

1:45 pm–2:15 pm

Networking Break

2:15 pm–3:15 pm

The Resurgence of Worksite Enforcement Actions

Panelists will discuss recent worksite enforcement actions—small and large-scale—and explore how they are different from (or similar to) such actions in the past.

- An overview of the current worksite enforcement landscape
- Advising clients on interacting with ICE or other law enforcement when they show up at a worksite
- ICE warrant vs. a judicial warrant
- Obstruction of justice considerations
- State enforcement actions
- Immigrant and Employee Rights Section (IER) shift in enforcement priorities: balancing employer risks

Faculty:

John W. Mazzeo (DL), AILA Verification & Documentation Liaison Committee Vice Chair, Warminster, PA

Charles H. (“Chuck”) Kuck, AILA Past President/Federal Court Litigation Section Steering Committee, Atlanta, GA

David Grunblatt, AILA Business Section Steering Committee, New York, NY

3:15 pm–3:45 pm

Networking Break

3:45 pm–4:45 pm

DOJ Attorney Discipline and Fraud and Abuse Prevention Program

Panelists will provide an overview of U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) programs and mechanisms for disciplining or targeting immigration lawyers who allegedly engage in fraud or other misconduct, including how these programs are being utilized today and actions lawyers can take if they are subject to a disciplinary action.

- Overview of the DOJ Attorney Discipline Program
- The Executive Office for Immigration Review’s (EOIR’s) Fraud and Abuse Prevention Program
- How these programs have been applied historically, and how they could be expanded
- What can attorneys do if they are the subject of a complaint?

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Faculty:

Cyrus D. Mehta (DL), New York, NY

Kenneth Craig Dobson, AILA Wellbeing Committee Chair, New York, NY

Barbara C. Brenner, Albany, NY

4:45 pm–5:00 pm

Conference Closure

Cyrus D. Mehta, New York, NY

CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

NEW YORK CHAPTER

Carolyn S. Alvarez, Conference Program Chair, New York, NY

Paul O'Dwyer, AILA Federal Court Litigation Section Steering Committee, New York, NY

Joseph C. Fungang, New York, NY

Mikhail Izrailev, New York, NY

Chad I. Rubin, Mountainside, NJ

Sonal Sharma, New York, NY

Michelle S. Velasco, New York, NY

Shavit Yarden, New York, NY

Karin Wolman, New York, NY

Scott Gorski, AILA Board of Governors/AILA New York Chapter Chair, New York, NY

Sarah Lachman, AILA New York Chapter First Vice Chair, New York, NY

Cora-Ann V. Pestaina, AILA New York Chapter Second Vice Chair, New York, NY

Ernie Collette, AILA New York Chapter Treasurer, New York, NY

Ginny Nunez, AILA New York Chapter Secretary, New York, NY

AILA RULE OF LAW TRACK

Betsy Lawrence, Conference Track Chair, Washington, D.C.

*Kathleen Campbell Walker, AILA Past President/Rule of Law Task Force Co-Chair,
El Paso, TX*

Jerome G. Grzeca, AILA Rule of Law Task Force Chair, Milwaukee, WI

Cyrus D. Mehta, New York, NY

Wendy S. Wayne, Boston, MA

Emmie R. Smith, AILA Director of Professional Development, Washington, D.C.

JJ Area, AILA Education Program Manager, Washington, D.C.

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