



Fairness to Freedom

Campaign for Universal Representation

ANNA MONEYMAKER/The New York Times/Redux

The Vera Institute of Justice and the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) are launching a campaign to push for legislation that establishes a universal right to federally funded legal representation for anyone facing deportation who is unable to afford it.

Our vision is a system in which all people whose life, liberty, or ties to the community are at risk in the immigration system have access to high-quality and independent legal representation.

NPNA
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR NEW AMERICANS

Vera
INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

Why universal representation?

There is currently no right to government-funded legal representation for people in immigration proceedings who face the devastating consequences of immigration enforcement, including detention and deportation. As a result, most people – including 70% of detained deportation cases (among cases that began in FY 2016 or later) are left to fend for themselves in navigating the complexities of immigration law while facing professional, well-resourced government prosecutors in cases that may result in physical exile from home, separation from family and community, and return to conditions of persecution, violence, torture, or death. Ensuring that immigrants have access to a lawyer also reduces the harms of the racial inequities in the criminal legal system that flow into the closely linked immigration system.

Although universal representation alone is not enough to undo the decades of systemic harm experienced by immigrants in the United States, it is clear that without a lawyer, many people who have a right to remain in the United States will instead face deportation, separation from their families, and forced return to conditions they fled seeking safety.

Who we are

We are a campaign led by immigrant justice advocates, legal service providers, and government champions in more than 50 jurisdictions across the country that have established local and state publicly funded deportation defense programs.

We believe that the voices of those most directly impacted by immigration enforcement are central to our coalition and campaign. We envision a future in which the dignity and freedom of every person in the immigration system is a priority, and we are fighting for the core premise of universal representation—that “everyone means everyone.”

Our principles

We’re building a multi-year strategy rooted in the following principles:

- › **It is rooted** in the grassroots movement for universal representation and immigrant rights;
- › **It is sustainable.** We are prepared to invest in the long-term with the goal of passing legislation within the next eight years;
- › **It is focused** on advancing universal representation in partnership with other movement priorities that advance freedom and justice for immigrants and their families; and
- › **It is flexible**, so that the campaign can bring its strength to bear on opportunities for action—in Congress, in appropriations battles, and through executive action—and it is strategic in building the public will in these programs while we create the government and community capacity necessary to guarantee due process for all.

Join us

Support our new Campaign for Universal Representation here by formally signing on as a partner. You can find more information about the campaign at [Vera](#) and NPNA.

You can also access a [recording](#) from a January 2022 partner briefing with more details about the campaign.

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