



# A PUBLIC VOICE 2018

## Fact Sheet

### COMING TO AMERICA WHO SHOULD WE WELCOME? WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

**WHO:** THE [KETTERING FOUNDATION](#), a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization; THE [NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS NETWORK](#), a network of independent forum moderators and centers for democratic public life, including schools, libraries, colleges and universities, community and religious organizations, senior centers and other local groups.

**WHAT:** In 1983, Kettering Foundation and National Issues Forums began an annual program to help policymakers understand the importance of giving citizens better opportunities to deliberate on tough issues and listening to the insights that emerge. Each year, citizens across the country come together in deliberative forums to talk through a tough issue, and Kettering Foundation reports insights from these forums to policymakers in several ways: a yearly DC event, briefings, and a final cumulative report on the forums.

#### SO WHY ARE DELIBERATIVE FORUMS DIFFERENT AND VALUABLE?

1. Forums start from a non-partisan, non-polarizing framework.
2. Forum participants look at alternative ways to address an issue and listen to different points of view.
3. Forum conversations promote thoughtful, open-minded, deliberative decision making, not debate or venting.

**THIS YEAR'S FRAMEWORK:** Decisions about immigration are some of the most important we make as a country. For centuries, a steady influx of people to the U.S. from around the world has been a source of pride and national strength. But today, many are asking questions about our immigration policies—important questions we need to consider together. *Coming to America* can help all of us take a step back from the divisive policy debates in political circles and the media and think about the kind of immigration policies we ought to have and what values and goals we want to guide these decisions.

**WHAT EXACTLY IS A DELIBERATIVE FORUM?** A [forum](#) is a conversation amongst community members, usually guided by both a moderator and framework, in which participants:

- examine options for dealing with an issue
- exchange their views and lived experiences
- weigh potential consequences and work through tensions
- identify areas of common ground and areas where people need to know or talk more.

Very often, forums lead to discussions about “who else do we need to hear from?” Consequently, forums often produce very different conversations than we’re used to seeing in the news.

#### WHEN

- 2018: Forums held throughout the country.
- SPRING: May 9, 9:30 am – 11:30 am ET: The Kettering Foundation hosts a gathering of Washington DC policymakers and deliberative democracy practitioners from around the country to talk about insights emerging in the forums. This event will be streamed via Facebook Live and forum participants are highly encouraged to contribute via social media.
- FALL AND WINTER: Kettering and our research partners analyze insights from forums nationwide throughout 2018, preparing a cumulative report, and holding briefings with elected officials and other policymakers in DC and nationwide.

**WHERE:** There are forums in communities across the country, as well as online forums!

**WHY:** BECAUSE PEOPLE NEED TO START TALKING TO EACH OTHER AGAIN AND FOCUSING ON SOLVING OUR PROBLEMS TOGETHER. A Public Voice is designed to give people a chance to wrestle with tough questions, hear different perspectives, and share the best of their thinking with our nation’s leaders.