



Unity & Validity: The Case for an EB-5 Coalition



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One reason associations exist is to leverage its members' buying power or political capital. Improving or strengthening a profession's or an industry's ability to serve their markets is a direct result of coming together on the same platform and speaking with one voice to underscore unanimity and the message's importance.

There are risks, however, in relying solely on strategies that leverage an association's voice, namely the appearance of self-serving. For example, if the International Association of Vampires (IAV) spoke clearly and unequivocally that garlic should no longer be sold in grocery stores, their message -although unified- may find significant criticism, not the least of which would be from the International Association of Garlic

Growers (IAGG).

Sometimes a unified voice must be substantiated by authorities *outside* an association to claim validity, demonstrate truly comprehensive benefits, and dispel mercenary or self-regarding motives.

IIUSA's drive to reform and reauthorize the EB-5 Regional Center Program is easily the association's top priority. Other than its demand for additional EB-5 visas, there is little else that speaks as loudly or clearly to the association's mission and vision. In years past, differences of opinion among EB-5 Regional Centers confused the association's call for reauthorization; confused and frustrated policy makers and ultimately frustrated IIUSA's goal. Today, that confusion is largely eliminated. IIUSA members and non-members are finally collectively leveraging their political capital toward a common end. The industry's bifurcated history (or histrionics), however, still colors policy makers' memory and perceptions, so it is no longer enough to demonstrate unity. Now we also need validity.

Even before the global pandemic and its economic impact, IIUSA sought inroads with "outside" organizations to more emphatically illustrate EB-5 investments' economic impact. For example, IIUSA

has a good working relationship with the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), a national association dedicated to the advancement of development finance concerns and interests. During our 2019 Seattle gathering, IIUSA welcomed its first honorary economic development organization (EDO) members. The message was clear. EB-5 investments are an economic driver. EDOs that recognize that or EDOs that want to know more: Welcome. Let's work together.

As the pandemic's economic realities became clear, so did the need (and opportunity) to further these inroads, widen them, pave them, and fill them. EB-5 investments' economic benefits are no different now than they were last year, but in 2020 they are more necessary to validate.

Our association's push to reform and reauthorize the Regional Center program now has clear meaning to others outside our traditional orbits. In particular, municipalities, small business interests, and hotel and lodging owners all realize that in these times, when operating and development capital is scarce and expensive, EB-5 investments are an incredibly valuable asset. Just as the 2008 Great Recession focused attention on EB-5 investments, so too is 2020's COVID-19.

Continued On Page 53

Continued From Page 52

This time, however, to overcome the EB-5 industry's recent discord and to be sure our unified voice is validated, IIUSA is actively pursuing these "outsiders" and developing a very broad and very strong coalition. Unlike 2008, this time EB-5's value does not speak for itself. This time, it demands unity *and* validity.

IIUSA's coalition is based on a singular message captured in our long-standing letter to Congress. EB-5 has helped the economy before. It can do it again, but this time we need Congress to act with purpose. This time the Regional Center program needs integrity reforms and long-term stability. And this time, it is not just the EB-5 industry that is saying so.

IIUSA's shoe-leather drive along with a recently developed educational video have captured the attention and support of, among many others, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the Dallas Regional Chamber

of Commerce, the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Latino Hotel Association, the Las Vegas Latin Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Argentum - the leading national association for companies operating professionally managed senior living communities.

This growing coalition supports and validates IIUSA's long held position: That a reformed and reauthorized Regional Center program not only benefits the EB-5 community and its investors, it benefits local, regional, state, and national economies. It creates and saves jobs. Its Congressional intent as an economic development driver is being met and with Congressional action can be augmented, just when we need it most.

Soon, Congress will refocus its attention from elections to policy. Its make-up may be different when that happens, but IIUSA's (and now its coalition's) message will be the same. We will continue to expand our "outside" support to validate our internal synchronized beliefs to ultimately reach our goal. If you would like to help us do so, please share this link: <https://iiusa.org/advocacy/eb-5-letter-of-support/>. Encourage your local mayors, chambers of commerce, and business owners to join. We've worked hard to finally establish unanimity. Validation will carry us through. ▶

