

2026 GA-AL AILA Conference Program

8:30am-9:30am

Keynote Address

Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg



The Kilmar Abrego Garcia case and its lessons for immigration practice today.

Keynote speaker Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg (Murray Osorio PLLC, Fairfax, Va.) represents Kilmar Abrego Garcia in his lawsuit against the government for wrongful removal to El Salvador despite a withholding-of-removal order. What first seemed like a one-off mistake that would be quickly corrected quickly spiraled into a battle royale that made its way to the Supreme Court and continues to this day, and has been described as emblematic of many of the legal issues facing the immigrant community in the current era.



Plenary Sessions

Room assignment:

7:30am-8:30am

Professionalism in the Age of Free Speech Attacks

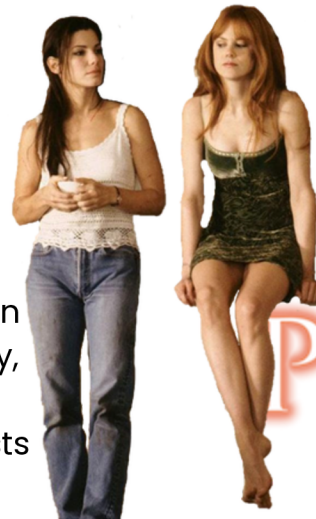
don't say
anything

Professionalism concerns in advising clients as they navigate social media checks, are at risk of being accused of "anti-Americanism," and other attacks on free speech rights of immigration attorneys and advocates.

Javeria Jamil, Andrew Nietor,
Gracie Willis, Samantha Hamilton

Josh McCall, Jennifer Romig,
Greg Siskind, Elizabeth Young

Moderated panel discussion of the ethics of AI use in immigration law (e.g., environmental, confidentiality, labor) balanced against the potential benefits, and how to chart a path forward with our clients' interests in mind.



9:35am-10:35am

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in Immigration Practice

PRACTICAL
MAGIC

Removal Defense & Litigation Track

Room assignment:

11:00am – 12:00 pm

EOIR Practice Updates



Jessie Calmes, Helen Parsonage, Emily Davis

Stay current on the fast-moving realities of EOIR practice.

This session covers changes in immigration judges, including the growing presence of JAG judges, and how the courtroom “vibe shift” is affecting advocacy. Panelists will discuss evolving dynamics with DHS, OPLA procedural memo updates, ICE filing I-261s, and strategies for handling last-minute court changes. We’ll also address third-country removals, expanded expedited removal, and recent trends in courthouse arrests.



Rekha Sharma Crawford, Sue Roy, Andrea Saenz

How do we minimize harm at the Board—and position cases for meaningful review in federal court? In the 2026 appellate environment, former BIA judges will discuss effective strategies for preserving issues, protecting the record, and framing arguments with an eye toward a potential petition for review. Panelists will discuss changes at the BIA, new precedent decisions affecting practice, and what the Board actually prioritizes in adjudicating appeals. The discussion will also address when an appeal may not serve the client’s interests and how to ensure cases are teed up for federal circuit review.



12:05pm–1:05pm

Appellate Practice





Jenny Hernandez & Juanita Kimble

Effective collaboration with criminal defense attorneys can change case outcomes. This panel covers when and how to engage defense counsel, key moments in the criminal process for immigration intervention, and common communication gaps. We'll discuss ICE detainers—how to identify them, challenge their validity, and navigate related federal litigation—along with Padilla advice and crafting plea strategies that account for immigration consequences. Practical, relationship-focused guidance for immigration practitioners.



3:05pm–4:05pm

Release from Detention

HOW
TO FREE A
GUY IN 10 DAYS

A holistic overview of release eligibility and advocacy in detention cases. Speakers will discuss up-to-the-minute changes in key precedent—including Matter of Q. Li and Matter of Yajure Hurtado—and examine the current implications of litigation such as the Maldonado Bautista class action for custody and bond hearings. The panel will also incorporate Georgia-specific insights from GAIN's bond court watch program to provide a clear picture of how release decisions are unfolding on the ground.

Karen Weinstock, Susanna Booth, Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg

With immigration detention expanding, habeas relief is an essential tool. This practical workshop walks through Habeas 101, from case screening and research to drafting and filing. Panelists will cover using PACER, the anatomy of a strong petition, and local practice tips for the Northern, Middle, and Southern Districts of Georgia, including judge-specific insights. We'll also discuss coordinating with class counsel, navigating related litigation, and available support and resources for practitioners bringing habeas cases.

2:00pm–3:00pm

Working with Defense Attorneys

IMAGINE
ME & YOU

This is an advanced session that assumes a working knowledge of crimmigration basics.

Matt Boles, Alizeh Sheikh, Felix Montanez

4:10pm–5:10pm

Habeas Workshop

SOMETHING'S
GOTTA GIVE



Business Track

Room assignment:



11:00am – 12:00 pm

PERM vs. EB-1 vs. EB-2 NIW

Working Girl

Jake Campbell, Sarah Peterson, Audra Doyle

NIWs may be getting the rom-com makeover treatment in 2025—more scrutiny, more surprises, more will-they/won't-they moments. This session zooms out to compare PERM, EB-1, and NIW strategies, tackle risk like seasoned matchmakers, and share practical framing tips to help strong cases find their happily-ever-after despite tougher reviews.



Nisha Karnani, Cherie Cookorinis, Raju Patel

Humanitarian & Business Panelists will discuss issue-spotting humanitarian issues in business practice – and vice versa – and how to navigate these issues once they have been identified. This panel will explore the crossover between these practice areas, as they pertain to additional immigration options for beneficiaries of humanitarian programs including TPS, asylum applicants, DACA recipients.



12:05pm–1:05pm

Intersections of Humanitarian & Business

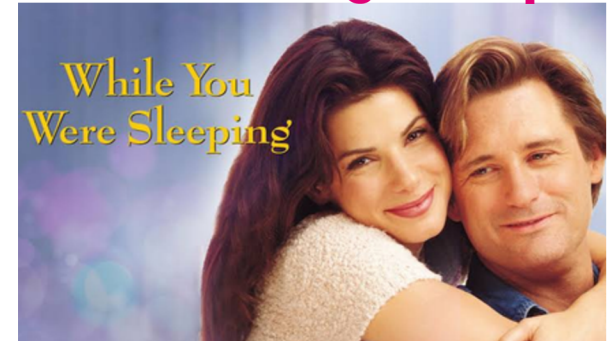


Kevin Miner, Sarah Peterson, Alexandra Holland

Stay ahead of the latest developments in employment-based immigration. Panelists will cover emerging trends, including extreme vetting of H-1B applicants, visa wait times in India, the weighted H-1B lottery, and other anticipated policy shifts. The session will provide timely updates on current regulations and practical strategies, helping practitioners navigate changes in caps, adjudication practices, and other critical developments affecting employment-based petitions.

2:00pm-3:00pm

Late-Breaking EB Topics



3:05pm-4:05pm

Advising Employees

Traveling

Internationally

the Holiday



Ian MacDonald & Fauzi Amlani

Navigate the challenges noncitizen employees face when traveling abroad. Panelists will cover visa issuance and renewal, port-of-entry issues, and evolving policies such as travel bans, extreme vetting, and CBP searches. The session will provide practical guidance for advising businesses and employees on travel planning, risk management, and strategies to minimize delays or complications at consulates and borders.

Bruce Buchanan, Kerri-Ann Griggs, Dawn Lurie

Explore the evolving landscape of ICE raids and audits, I-9 compliance, and employer obligations, focusing on how to coach clients through both everyday compliance matters and unexpected enforcement actions. Expect a mix of practical guidance and strategic planning to help make sense of the highs, lows, and “we need to talk” moments of modern worksite enforcement.



4:10pm-5:10pm

Immigration Compliance

WORKPLACE CRASHERS

Family Track

Room assignment:

11:00am – 12:00 pm

Family Emergency Planning



Katie Beno-Valencia, Jenifer Contreras, Bernadette Olmos

With detention on the rise, practitioners must help families prepare for sudden separation. This panel offers practical strategies for emergency planning, including powers of attorney for children, property, and medical care; financial and property access planning; and informed consent around guardianship risks. Panelists will address real-world logistics such as school pickups, ICE encounters in the community, retrieving property from detention, and supporting families during deportation or prolonged detention. Designed to help lawyers guide clients through proactive, trauma-informed planning.

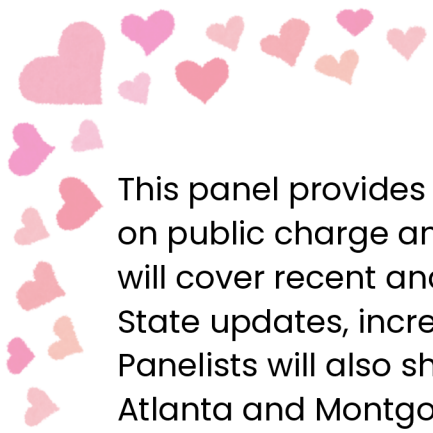


Hannah MacNorlin, Dustin Baxter, Socheat Chea

Naturalization practice is shifting—again. This panel covers recent changes affecting eligibility and adjudication, including developments in testing standards and good moral character determinations. Speakers will address the pause of ceremonies and adjudications for nationals of travel-ban countries, the end of same-day ceremonies, and increased vetting practices such as neighborhood and social media checks. Learn how these policies are playing out in practice and how to advise clients navigating longer, more scrutinized naturalization processes.

12:05pm–1:05pm New Naturalization Requirements





Ashley Deadwyler-Heuman & Stacy Ehrisman

This panel provides a timely update on adjustment of status practice, with a focus on public charge and I-864 developments as policies continue to shift. Speakers will cover recent and anticipated public charge regulatory changes, Department of State updates, increased interviews, and emerging trends in discretionary denials. Panelists will also share strategies for strengthening difficult cases—particularly in Atlanta and Montgomery—and navigating discretion when financial admissibility and totality-of-the-circumstances factors are under heightened scrutiny.

2:00pm-3:00pm

Adjustment, Public Charge, & I-864

Updates

Materialists

3:05pm-4:05pm

View from the Inside with Former ISOs

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN



Carolina Antonini & Nicole Weitnauer

To file or not to file? This panel dives into I-130 marriage-based filing eligibility, pre, during and post proceedings considerations, and the evolving risks of those filings amid heightened enforcement. Speakers will discuss the fundamentals of I-130 marriage-based practice and the benefits and risk factors that may trigger enforcement. The session will address timing, counseling through uncertainty, and practical tips on filing marriage-based I-130s during the Trump Era.

Carrie Toth, Nathan Nelson, Hong Nguyen

Hear directly from former USCIS Immigration Services Officers on how adjudications work. This moderated panel will offer candid insight on discretion, practical filing tips—whether cover letters are read, how much formatting matters, best practices for electronic filing, and explores changes to the potential impact of new vetting initiatives to help practitioners advocate more effectively.

4:10pm-5:10pm

I-130s

**there's
something
about**

marry-ing



Humanitarian Track

Room assignment:

11:00am - 12:00 pm
SIJS Changes

13.
going
on 30



Anna Erwin, Helen Vagas-Crebas, Andrea Landers

Stay current on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) amid evolving policy and legal shifts. This panel covers recent administration updates, approaches to deferred action, and handling discretionary terminations for minors in removal proceedings. Speakers will discuss intersections with juvenile dependency orders, local court practices across counties, and the new equitable caregiver statute. The session will also explore strategies for more complex cases, including single-parent scenarios, deceased parents, and children whose parentage was never legally established.



Kristen Shepherd, Sonal Shah, Nicole Weitnauer

From crimes and fraud to unlawful presence, this advanced waivers lab shows how to win § 212(h), § 212(i), § 212(d)(3), I-601/I-601A, and I-212 cases, with tactical guidance on screening, evidence, consular strategy, and the latest adjudication trends.

12:05pm-1:05pm

Advanced Waivers



2:00pm-3:00pm

The Fall of Gender- and Family-Based Protection



Amir Naim, Will Miller, Anne Peterson

Explore the recent limits on family- and gender-based asylum claims. Speakers review the current landscape, highlight emerging trends in adjudications, and offer strategies for reframing cases to distinguish them from unfavorable precedent. Attendees will gain practical guidance for preserving viable claims and advocating effectively for clients facing narrowed pathways to relief.



3:05pm-4:05pm

Asylum Procedural Updates



Eddie Lopez-Lugo, Mara Peng, Sarah Vidal

Focused overview of the rapidly evolving procedural challenges shaping asylum practice in 2025. Panelists will examine key gatekeeping issues—including pretermission for incomplete applications under Matter of C-A-R-R-, expanding use of Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACAs), and strategies for overcoming the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways rule. The session will outline practical strategies for identifying and curing filing defects, mitigating ACA-based risks, and preserving arguments before DHS or EOIR can foreclose a claim at the threshold.



Tracie Morgan, Massiel Silva-Tadeo, Kat Hoyos

Timely updates on U visas, T visas, and VAWA petitions in a shifting policy landscape. Speakers will cover recent changes affecting U adjustment, prima facie determinations, and current adjudication trends, including delays or pauses. Panelists will share practical strategies for representing clients in removal proceedings and navigating complex applications, helping practitioners advocate effectively despite evolving regulations and procedural uncertainty.

4:10pm-5:10pm

U / T / VAWA Updates

CRUEL INTENTIONS

Practice Management Track

Room assignment:

11:00am - 12:00 pm

Starting Your Own Law Firm

HOW TO BE
SINGLE



**Gio Diaz, Johanna Cochran,
Ashley Deadwyler-Heuman**

Ready to hang your shingle? Our experts will talk you through their journey to solo success. Discussion topics to include: when to make your move, branding/advertising, corporate structures, hiring decisions, building your client base, and more!

12:05pm-1:05pm

Navigating the Multi-Generational Firm

HAROLD
AND
MAUDE

**Christine Rodriguez, Janora Hawkins,
Amanda Johns, Ken Days**

For Boomers, Gen Z, and everyone in between. Modern immigration law firms are composed of attorneys and legal professionals from varying generational backgrounds, who bring mixed views on best practices related to communication, professionalism, time management, remote work, and other areas of legal practice. How do we effectively communicate across age gaps in the workplace? How do work styles and communication styles differ between the generations? How should managers take age differences into consideration to be most effective? This panel will share their experience navigating the evolving workplace as partners, managing attorneys, and associates. It will also explore methods to create a harmonious work environment.



2:00pm-3:00pm

Meditation for Lawyers

Much
Ado About
Breathing

Marshall Cohen & Douglas Johnson

Douglas Johnson (E-RYT 500, YACEP, OM) is a senior yoga and meditation teacher with 30 years of experience and more than 1,000 hours of formal training. He began teaching Zen meditation in his twenties and continues to draw on three decades of sustained practice. Founder of Mahāpatha Yoga, his work integrates movement, meditation, breathing practices, and sound-based techniques, emphasizing practical, embodied approaches to stress regulation, focus, and resilience in demanding professional environments.



Joanna Delfunt, Asiyah Sarwari, Will Adams

Making sense of the new fees and the increased fees – how and when and where to pay them, who they apply to, where fee waivers are available, etc. How EOIR vs. USCIS are implementing the fees, and any arguments to make.

3:05pm-4:05pm

OBBBA / HRI Fees

THE
MONEY PIT

How EOIR vs. USCIS are implementing the fees, and any arguments to make.

4:10pm-5:10pm

Media for Immigration Lawyers

Sarah Owings, Meredyth Yoon, Sophia Qureshi, Gabriela Henriquez

Moderated panel of immigration advocates and press. How can immigration advocates use the media to help clients? What kinds of cases / stories are likely to garner press attention? What is the goal of using the media? Discussion of crafting narratives, contacting reporters, working with reporters, confidentiality concerns, etc.

A
STAR
IS
BORN

