

Coalition forms on immigration reform

By [Elizabeth Aguilera](#) 6:22 p.m. March 12, 2013

An unusually broad coalition of business, labor, law-enforcement, religious and civic leaders will launch a joint campaign for federal immigration reform Wednesday.

The group, called San Diegans United for Commonsense Immigration Reform, includes the founder of Qualcomm, the company's chairman and CEO, the county district attorney, the county sheriff, the police chiefs for San Diego and Chula Vista, Malin Burnham of the Smart Border Coalition, the head of the county farm bureau, the leader of the region's biggest labor union, the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and two former state lawmakers.

They plan to gather at Qualcomm headquarters to announce their core principles, new website and other efforts.

"Groups on all sides of the immigration debate agree that we are at an inflection point in history — we have a unique opportunity to achieve the type of reform that has eluded us for generations," the coalition's members said in a statement.

The coalition's push comes as congress and the White House continue to debate what could be the biggest immigration reform package since 1986.

Lawmakers are grappling with a complex and wide-ranging set of issues, including whether to give unauthorized immigrants living in this country a chance to gain U.S. citizenship, how best to secure the nation's borders, whether to increase the number of visas for high-skilled workers and whether to create special programs for farm laborers and guest workers.

President Barack Obama and a bipartisan, eight-senator group have announced separate proposals for immigration reform. A similar effort is underway in the House.

Legislation is expected to be introduced in the spring, and political observers predict passage of an immigration bill or bills by mid-summer.

The new regional coalition is being chaired by Nathan Fletcher, a former candidate for San Diego mayor who is now the senior director of corporate development for Qualcomm. Fletcher worked with the San Diego American Civil Liberties Union to assemble a countywide group of leaders who support the immigration-reform campaign.

Last month, Qualcomm chairman and chief executive Paul Jacobs visited the White House with other business executives to discuss immigration reform, and he recently spoke on the topic during a local real estate conference.

Jacobs has said the economy could face tough times if immigration reform does not take place because some companies are having difficulties recruiting qualified workers.

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/mar/12/immigration-reform-aclu-qualcomm-group-fletcher/>