

Immigration Reform Caucus

Founded in 1999, the Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC) is but one member of the John Tanton Network, a constellation of anti-immigrant organizations founded, funded, or otherwise supported by renowned white nationalist, John Tanton. The Tanton Network and its flagship, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), have endeavored to eradicate immigration to the United States and to systematically limit civil liberties. This has led to their regular collaboration with white nationalists, ethnic separatists, and other political extremists to advance this agenda.

Within this broad anti-immigrant initiative, IRC has the purpose of advancing federal legislation in compliance with the Network's ends—and has imported this legacy of bigotry into the US Congress.

IRC's founder, Tom Tancredo, a former US Representative from Colorado, built an entire congressional career out of his anti-immigrant views. Throughout his tenure, he received financial support from the Tanton Network, and he did the job they wanted—introducing and co-sponsoring anti-immigrant legislation. Tancredo is known for his outspoken and unapologetic nativism, exemplified by an instance in which he referred to Miami as a “third world country” because of its high immigrant population, a remark which caught the rebuke of such fellow Republicans as Jeb Bush. Tancredo has also written for VDARE.com, an anti-immigrant blog founded by cornerstone white nationalist Peter Brimelow. VDARE frequently hosts the opinions of Islamophobes, anti-Semites, and other nativists—including many other members of the Tanton Network.

In 2007, after Tancredo left the House for an ill-fated presidential campaign, US Representative Brian Bilbray (R-CA) assumed the duties of IRC's chairman. Like his predecessor, Bilbray has sponsored anti-immigrant legislation and harbors similar nativist views. At an event sponsored by another Tanton Network organization, NumbersUSA, Bilbray decried a demographic shift spurred by Hispanic immigration, stating, “We are creating a slave class that criminal elements breed in.”

During a previous hiatus from politics, Bilbray walked through Washington's notorious “revolving door,” taking a job as a lobbyist for FAIR. Between 2002 and 2005, that organization paid him almost \$300,000 for his services. Moreover, when he again assumed office in 2006, Bilbray retained a position on FAIR's advisory board, which he currently chairs.

Perhaps most menacing is IRC's essential bulldozing of civil rights in the national legislature. Recent attacks on the Fourteenth Amendment and popular attempts to prevent the hiring of undocumented immigrants are examples of legislation with IRC's nativist fingerprints. This is unsurprising for a coalition whose members include:

- US Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX), primary sponsor of the 2011 National E-Verify legislation (H.R.2164 and H.R.2885). E-Verify, also known as “Electronic Employment Eligibility Verification,” is a database that allows employers to check the immigration status of prospective hires. Smith's legislation would require all employers to use the system, which would criminalize the hire of undocumented workers.
- US Representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN), who has stated that she favored the US immigration policies that preceded the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This previous policy remains notorious for racial quotas and overtly professing the superiority of white Europeans; according to a [Washington Post](#) editorial, it “explicitly favored white immigrants from a handful of Northern European countries while excluding or disadvantaging Jews, Asians, Africans and practically everyone else.”
- US Representative Steve King (R-IA), who compared immigrants crossing the border to livestock when describing his vision of an electrified fence on the southwest border of the United States. In 2010, King defended Arizona's harsh anti-immigrant law, SB 1070—one that many condemned as state-sanctioned racial profiling. King vindicated this criticism by claiming that law enforcement would not use race, but rather “common sense indicators” to determine who might be an undocumented immigrant. These included their “shoes” and “the type of grooming they might have.”
- US Representative Sue Myrick (R-NC), a virulent Islamophobe who often collaborates with Act! for America, an organization that promulgates conspiracy theories claiming violent Muslim terrorists have infiltrated government institutions. Myrick has contributed to [The Social Contract](#), namely, the issue entitled, “The Menace of Islam.” [The Social Contract](#) is a white nationalist quarterly journal established by John Tanton.