

State Legislators for Legal Immigration

State Legislators for Legal Immigration (SLLI) is an aptly named coalition of nativist lawmakers, purposed with promoting anti-immigrant legislation at the state level. Founded in 2007, SLLI is but one component of a larger grouping known as the John Tanton Network, a constellation of anti-immigrant organizations founded, funded, or otherwise supported by renowned white nationalist John Tanton.

SLLI maintains a working relationship with two organizations at the apex of this network, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Network's legal arm, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI)—both of which Tanton established. FAIR, IRLI, and Tanton himself have all garnered controversy for their questionable motives. FAIR has solicited contributions from the notorious Pioneer Fund, a foundation that finances pseudo-scientific ventures attempting to prove the genetic superiority of white, European-descended peoples. IRLI is credited with drafting Arizona's SB 1070 and Alabama's HB 56, two laws that have stripped the basic civil and human rights of immigrants and people of color in those states. Tanton himself has decried a "Latin onslaught," worrying that it would instigate a demographic shift in the United States. Clearly, SLLI finds no qualm in the company of extremists.

Worse still, SLLI's founder, Pennsylvania State Representative Daryl Metcalfe (R-12), has built his career on similarly sinister platform. From underhanded use of taxpayer money to a sprawling bigotry that derides gays, Muslims, and Latinos, Metcalfe has repeatedly proven himself to be a nativist torch bearer rather than a representative of the Pennsylvania people.

According to Metcalfe, SLLI's strategy is simple: it created a "working partnership with the Immigration Reform Law Institute," which supplies SLLI members with model laws to introduce in their respective states. This, in Metcalfe's words, streamlines "reform solutions that any state lawmaker can introduce to effectively shut off all economic attractions and incentives for illegal alien invaders."

SLLI has thus imported the Tanton Network's bigoted attitude about immigrants into state lawmaking bodies, introducing anti-immigrant legislation that runs the gamut—from making it illegal to give an undocumented immigrant a ride to sanctioning racial profiling. It comes as

no surprise, then, that an organization created to introduce such divisive measures would attract scrutiny on behalf of its adherents.

- At a press conference not long after its founding in 2007, SLLI cemented its relationship with the Tanton Network; Daryl Metcalfe, SLLI's founder, shared the stage with Mike Hethmon, general counsel for the Immigration Reform Law Institute, and the president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, Dan Stein. Stein once asked, "Should we be subsidizing people with low IQs to have as many children as possible, and not subsidizing those with high ones?" Hethmon, for his part, has repeatedly targeted the 14th Amendment and other civil rights for immigrants.
- Metcalfe has been noted for his prolific gay-bashing. He has refused tax appropriations earmarked for attracting gay tourists to Philadelphia, saying that it would "promote immoral behaviors"; he has spoken of a conspiratorial "homosexual agenda"; and he has referred to homosexuality as a "sinful lifestyle."
- Metcalfe has collaborated with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an organization known for populating for-profit prisons with immigrants and trying to prevent people of color from voting. On numerous occasions, Metcalfe apportioned tax revenues for ALEC-related expenses. In one instance, he took part in a meeting hosted by ALEC, which allocated about \$50,000 of Pennsylvania state monies to pay for food.
- In June of 2010, Metcalfe spoke in Arizona at an anti-immigrant rally organized by Daniel Smeriglio of the Pennsylvania group Voice of the People USA. Other speakers were Rosemary Jenks of the Tanton Network group NumbersUSA, former SLLI member Russell Pearce, and Tom Tancredo, the founder of the House Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC), which has strong ties to the Tanton Network. The rally started with a procession from the White Boy Society, a white power biker gang. Metcalfe has spoken at rallies organized by Daniel Smeriglio on numerous occasions in both

Pennsylvania and Arizona. Smeriglio's rallies have hosted white nationalist attendees and speakers such as former Klansman Steve Smith.

- SLLI has fostered Islamophobic sentiments since its inception. In 2008, Metcalfe refused to vote for a resolution honoring a Pennsylvania Islamic group on the grounds that Muslims “do not recognize Jesus Christ as God.” Members of SLLI have also taken part in the growing anti-Sharia movement. Leo Berman (R-TX), Charles Key (R-OK), and Randy Terrill (R-OK), all SLLI members, have authored or co-authored their states’ anti-Sharia efforts.
- Arguably the most extreme of right-wing state legislators, the former Arizona state senator Russell Pearce was a member of SLLI. Pearce is credited as the author of SB 1070, the divisive Arizona law that sanctions racial profiling. Additionally, Pearce often cordially met with Arizona’s premier neo-Nazi and former member of the National Socialist Movement, J.T. Ready (now deceased)—even going so far as to personally ordain him into the Church of Latter Day Saints. In 2006, Pearce also circulated an email to his constituents that espoused Holocaust denial and racist diatribes, originally composed by the neo-Nazi organization National Alliance. Pearce was recalled in 2011, popularly regarded as a disavowal of his vehement nativism.