

SPECIAL REPORT

SECURING NORTH AMERICA'S FUTURE

BY



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Introduction

On April 23, 2025, the inaugural *North Capital Meridian Diplomacy Forum* convened a dynamic and diverse network of leaders at the Meridian International Center in Washington, DC. Born from the strategic merger of the *North Capital Forum* and the *Meridian Diplomacy Forum*, this invitation-only gathering—co-hosted by the U.S.-Mexico Foundation and Meridian International Center—marked a milestone in trilateral dialogue across North America.

Set against the backdrop of shifting political landscapes and an approaching USMCA review, the forum offered a timely platform for addressing the region's most pressing challenges. From economic and food security to labor mobility, supply chain resilience, cybersecurity, and trade policy, the day's agenda prioritized both urgent concerns and long-term opportunities for collaboration.

This white paper captures key insights from the forum's discussions—offering a roadmap for stakeholders committed to advancing a more integrated, secure, and prosperous North American region. As this critical dialogue continues, the ideas and relationships forged represent a foundation for shared leadership and regional innovation in the years ahead.

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GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

Legislating Across Borders: The Role of Legislators in North American Diplomacy



Affiliates: U.S.-Mexico Foundation and Meridian International Center

Experts and practitioners alike agree that legislative diplomacy should play an increasingly vital role in addressing regional and cross-border challenges such as trade, migration, and emerging technologies. Legislative bodies in the United States, Canada, and Mexico offer consistency, representation, and public trust that executive branches alone cannot provide, and legislators themselves are uniquely positioned to build long-term relationships with their international counterparts, influencing national agendas and ensuring domestic laws align with global realities. At present, legislative diplomacy is underutilized across North America, and more attention is needed to fully harness its power and potential. Importantly, successful legislative diplomacy requires more than high-level meetings; it must deliver tangible results

to constituents, which ultimately lies at the core of the work of legislators.

Recommendations

Trilateral Legislative Compact

Develop a U.S.-Mexico-Canada Legislative Compact, targeting key areas like migration, trade, AI, and energy. This compact would establish working groups composed of members of national legislative bodies from all three countries, civil society actors, and technical experts to develop coordinated policy proposals and foster sustained dialogue.

Binational Interparliamentary Fellowship or Exchange Program

Launch a U.S.-Mexico Interparliamentary

Fellowship or Exchange Program to address the need for relationship-building and mutual understanding among legislators. This program would facilitate travel, mentorship, and joint sessions between U.S. and Mexican lawmakers (especially new members), allowing them to collaborate on small-scale initiatives and better connect policymaking to constituent concerns.

Legislative Diplomacy Toolkit

Recognizing the importance of public buy-in, a public education and engagement toolkit for Legislative Diplomacy would help legislators better explain the impact of international cooperation to their constituents. This toolkit could include templates for town halls, local media op-eds, and digital campaigns highlighting how foreign relationships support domestic economic and security goals, tailored to regional priorities.

Bridging Borders: The Power of Subnational Diplomacy in North America

Affiliate: Meridian International Center

As another layer of government and leadership, subnational entities possess significant competencies to engage internationally, and are doing so every day. Across the continent, mayors, governors, provincial leaders, and their staff are building economic, political, cultural, and tourism bridges across borders that deliver real benefits in local communities. These partnerships, driven by reciprocity and tangible results, integrate the public and private sectors seamlessly. Local governments are champions of North American integration. In the United States, coalitions of cities and governors advance causes relating to international trade or collaboration with relevant federal authorities, and Mexican states regularly partner with US federal officials via the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City to promote shared interests. This past year has highlighted that amidst leadership changes at the national level across the continent, connections between local government leaders serve as a ballast for dialogue and partnerships.

Recommendations

Subnational Diplomacy Matchmaking

A pilot program for state-to-state and city-to-city partnerships could develop meaningful ties between communities across North America based on industry complementarity and geared towards expanding economic and market opportunities. The program would identify shared priorities and assets across FDI, trade, innovation, culture, education, and more, to identify high-potential matches and provide sustained support.

Sports Host Cities Network

With upcoming global sports events in North America including FIFA 2026 and the 2028 Olympics, sports diplomacy will meet subnational diplomacy. Sporting events provide opportunities to accelerate transformational progress and attract investment and innovation. A networking and exchange platform would enable host cities to connect with each other, share lessons, innovation, and best practices.

Subnational Diplomacy Toolkit

Local governments are rapidly innovating on the international front, developing sophisticated trade and FDI attraction strategies and leveraging innovation, culture, and sports to maximize their global appeal. A *Toolkit for Subnational Diplomacy* would document tools and practices to better equip local leaders in maximizing the benefits of international engagement and navigating geopolitical risks.



About the North Capital Meridian Diplomacy Forum

The North Capital Meridian Diplomacy Forum, a collaboration between the US-Mexico Foundation and Meridian International Center, merges the North Capital Forum and the Meridian Diplomacy Forum into a single, invitation-only event.

With shifting priorities across North America, diplomats, business leaders, and policymakers tackle actionable solutions for regional security, inspire innovation, and ensure North America's long-term success in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

About US-Mexico Foundation

The U.S. Mexico Foundation (USMF) is a binational non-profit, non-partisan, organization dedicated to fostering cooperation and bilateral understanding between the United States and Mexico. Rooted in the North America Free Trade Agreement, the organization was founded in 2001 and began operations in 2004 with seed capital from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, Carnegie Corporation and FUNDEMEX. The USMF is governed by a binational board consisting of business and civic leaders, with extensive networks in the U.S. and Mexico. The USMF embarked on a new chapter in 2018, with a compelling agenda that prioritizes policy and advocacy. The organization is focused on creating new strategic alliances, educating important stakeholders, and providing a voice on the most relevant issues concerning the U.S.-Mexico relationship.

About Meridian International Center

Meridian is a nonpartisan center for diplomacy founded in 1960 and headquartered on a historic campus in Washington, DC. Our mission is to empower the next era of leaders to advance diplomacy for a better future. Our programs strengthen American leadership by accelerating collaboration on shared challenges, increasing economic competitiveness, and building geopolitical resilience. We equip leaders from business, science and technology, cities and states, culture and sports with insights, networks, and resources to navigate a complex world.

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Report Contributors: Selva Astudillo, Carolina Barroso, Max Bouchet, Connor Brain, Emmanuel Carrasco, Jessica Duhon, Josh Eliot, Priscilla Godinez, Samirah Hussain, Tamara Katzman, Sofia Potes, Ricardo Smith, and Joseph Tufo

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