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**For Immediate Release**

## St. Louis and more than 50 cities and counties honored at White House for local innovations to drive cultural vitality, prosperity, and competitive edge

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**ST. LOUIS (June 30, 2016)** - Today, St. Louis and more than 50 other U.S. cities and counties were honored at the White House for their innovative and proactive efforts to bring all residents into their community fabric. These communities understand that creating a welcoming environment where all can thrive is a necessity now for their survival, prosperity, and global competitive edge, and they are leading the way for the nation in immigrant integration.

These communities are part of the [Building Welcoming Communities Campaign](#), a partnership of The White House Task Force on New Americans, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and [Welcoming America](#), a national nonprofit organization with expertise in welcoming efforts, to encourage communities to engage in local immigrant integration efforts.

"It was an honor to receive the 2016 International Institute Award this week at its Annual Report to the Community," said St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay. "We continue to work hard to welcome immigrants and refugees to St. Louis because they add to the fabric of our community; both economically and culturally. The [International Institute](#) and the [St. Louis Mosaic Project](#) work to make this happen as we extend our welcome beyond our own region."

"The local governments being honored today represent the leading edge of a growing movement that recognizes that being more welcoming to all residents, including immigrants, is not only the right thing to do, but smart policy for economic growth and building more cohesive communities," said Welcoming America Executive Director David Lubell.

A special event was held at the White House today that recognized St. Louis and its new work bringing professional career paths to the many high-skilled immigrants and refugees who come to St. Louis for opportunity.

U.S. President Barack Obama has called on these communities to act on a set of principles to build inclusive, welcoming communities that allow all residents to thrive and advance integration efforts in three core areas: civic, economic, and linguistic integration.

ACCESS TODAY'S RECORDED PRESS CALL: Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, and Welcoming America Deputy Director Rachel Peric today offered media a first chance to hear about White House plans to honor them for innovative efforts to welcome immigrants.

Email [media@welcomingamerica.org](mailto:media@welcomingamerica.org) to access the press call recording or request an interview. Learn more at [www.welcomingamerica.org](http://www.welcomingamerica.org).



*International Institute of St. Louis Board Chair Amit Shah, right, presents a plaque to St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay honoring him for supporting refugees and immigrants. The plaque is on permanent display at the International Institute.*

### ***About International Institute of St. Louis***

The International Institute of St. Louis, established in 1919, is a pioneer in the field of diversity. Its comprehensive array of adjustment services reaches more than 7,500 immigrants and refugees from more than 75 countries. The purpose of the Institute is to be the St. Louis region's Welcoming Center for New Americans. Its programs are arranged in Three Pillars of Service: Immersion, Investment and Inclusion.

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