

Let's Talk about

Current Trends in Immigration



Hosted in partnership with SUNY Westchester Community College



Meet our Panelists: **Robert J. Rodriguez** **New York Secretary of State**



Robert J. Rodriguez is currently serving as the Secretary of State. He was nominated by Governor Kathy Hochul to serve as New York's 68th Secretary of State. Mr. Rodriguez is a uniquely accomplished leader and former legislator, with civic and legislative successes that have been focused strategically on investing in and developing public-good infrastructure projects, creating good-paying jobs and addressing financial disparities for historically underrepresented minorities and low-income communities. Mr. Rodriguez has specialized in providing advice to state and local governments, and transportation issues in the Northeast and Midwest focused on financial planning, credit rating strategy, managing and executing debt issuance transactions, asset-liability management and public-private partnerships.

As a legislator, Mr. Rodriguez served as a member of the New York State Assembly 11 years, representing Assembly District 68. During his time in the Assembly, he focused on protecting and creating affordable housing, bringing good jobs into the community and ensuring children received a quality education. He served as Co-Chair of the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment, founding Chair of the Assembly sub-committee on Infrastructure and Member of Committees on Ways and Means, Housing, Labor, Banking, Corporations and Authorities and Mental Health.

In the private sector, Mr. Rodriguez served as a Director at Public Financial Management, the leading municipal financial advisor in the nation. Prior to PFM, Mr. Rodriguez was a Vice-President at A.C. Advisory, Inc. and held various management and operations roles at Bloomberg LP. As a civic leader, Mr. Rodriguez served on a number of volunteer boards including as Chairman of Manhattan Community Board 11 and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.

Mr. Rodriguez is a graduate of Yale University, where he received a B.A. in History and Political Science and New York University Stern Business School where he received an MBA in Finance. He is also an emerging leader of the New America Alliance, and the Council for Urban Professionals (CUP) Fellow.

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Meet our Panelists: Belinda S. Miles, Ed.D.

President, SUNY Westchester Community College



In the first decade of Dr. Miles' presidency her leadership transformed SUNY Westchester Community College, the County's largest higher education institution serving over 20,000 students annually. Since her arrival, the college more than doubled its graduation rates, improved college readiness, increased retention, and achieved unprecedented fundraising levels.

Dr. Miles has galvanized cross-functional teams at SUNY Westchester Community College to realign college structures, policies, and procedures to reflect an agile organization committed to more directed and supportive pathways for students. A recognized thought leader in community college education, Dr. Miles leads efforts that result in pathways for community members seeking higher education, workforce training, and access to economic mobility. She firmly believes that community colleges reflect the democratic ideals of equity, inclusion, and access for all.

Dr. Miles is a highly regarded regional and national leader, speaker, mentor, and advocate for community colleges and the students they serve. She serves on several boards focused on workforce development, expanding mobility, and the impact of technology on the future of work.

Regionally, she is a member of the Board of Directors for the Business Council of Westchester, the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Investment Board, and Hudson Valley Patterns for Progress. Her national leadership includes board or advisory roles at the Block Center for Technology and Society at Carnegie Mellon University and the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.

A member of The Westchester County (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, Dr. Miles earned master's and doctoral degrees from Columbia University Teachers College and a Bachelor of Arts degree from CUNY York College.

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Meet our Panelists:

Robert P. Weisz

Chairman and CEO of RPW Group



Robert P. Weisz is Chairman and CEO of RPW Group. Born and raised in Montevideo, Uruguay, Mr. Weisz received a degree in Business Administration from Getulio Vargas Foundation in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Upon graduating, he moved to the United States where he started a wholesale and distribution furniture company. In 1980, he purchased a warehouse in Weehawken, New Jersey, to house his furniture business and rented out the excess industrial space. That experience led him to eventually sell his furniture enterprise in 1985 and dedicate himself exclusively to the ownership and development of real estate.

Since that time, Mr. Weisz has acquired and repositioned over 60 office and industrial buildings spanning Westchester County, Fairfield County, Suffolk County, Manhattan, and New Jersey. More recently, working alongside his son, Andrew, Mr. Weisz has expanded into the residential market constructing 303 units in White Plains, NY with another 200 units slated in Harrison, NY.

His approach has remained simple and steadfast – find undervalued properties that can be transformed with creativity and capital into successful and viable projects. Mr. Weisz is proud to say that his handshake is his bond and his 45 years in the industry proves it. His lenders will attest that he never reworked a loan and he has never made a mortgage payment late in his entire career.

Mr. Weisz is the recipient of many awards from US Congress, US Senate, Westchester County Government and many municipalities. He is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Commercial Science from Mercy College. He is currently a Board Member of the Inner-City Scholarship Fund of the Archdiocese of New York and Reaching U, a nonprofit organization that supports the education of underprivileged children in Uruguay. He is a former board member of the Westchester County Association and ArtsWestchester.

He lives in New York City and East Hampton, New York with his wife, Cristina, of 38 years and has two adult children, Andrew and Alexandra.

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Meet our Panelists: **Carola Otero Bracco** **Executive Director of Neighbors Link**



Carola Otero Bracco, Executive Director of Neighbors Link, has a strong personal connection to the Neighbors Link mission of strengthening the whole community through the healthy integration of immigrants. As a first generation American born of immigrant parents from Bolivia, Carola understands the challenges that accompany the immigrant experience in America and is dedicated to inspiring healthy integration in the community. Carola is bilingual and bicultural and is driven by her passion for empowering immigrant families and advocating for personal growth through education and economic development.

During Carola's tenure, Neighbors Link has become a leader in designing, implementing and directing community-based, bilingual educational and cultural awareness training programs. Furthermore, with her guidance and leadership, the organization has grown more than ten-fold since 2004 and the Neighbors Link model is being strategically scaled in communities that are ready to embrace our mission. Neighbors Link has centers in Mount Kisco, Ossining and Yonkers.

Before becoming Executive Director of Neighbors Link in April of 2004, Carola spent 12 years of her career gaining experience in financial management with General Electric Corporation, Ford Motor Company and Time Warner. She holds an MBA from Duke University and currently serves as the Board Chair for the New York Immigration Coalition. She previously served on the board of Northern Westchester Hospital, the National Council for Workforce Education and Nonprofit Westchester.

Carola is recognized as an expert on immigration issues in the New York Metropolitan area. She has received numerous awards and recognitions. Recently, she was recognized by Crain's New York as one of the Notables in Nonprofits and Philanthropy and was selected for City & State's Westchester Power 100 list.

Providing leadership and vision for Neighbors Link is something Carola sees as her life's work and she often says it is a privilege to be in her position as Executive Director.

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Meet our Moderator: Joe Torres

WABC Eyewitness News Weekend Anchor & Host of 'Tiempo'



Joe Torres is a full-fledged, purebred New Yorker. He was born in Brooklyn. He attended P.S. 198 until the sixth grade when his family moved to Northern Westchester County. He is a graduate of John Jay High School in Cross River. After high school, Joe continued his education at SUNY Brockport, where he earned a B.S. in Communications. Along with his wife Fran and their two boys, Joe still lives in the town where he grew up.

Joe joined the Eyewitness News team as a general assignment reporter in 1996. Throughout the last two decades he has established himself as one of the premier street reporters here in the nation's #1 television market. Versatility is his strength. Crime, politics, religion, education, transportation, business, whatever the subject, Joe has covered it all with an engaging and energetic style that fellow New Yorkers have come to know and love.

Perhaps most memorable for viewers has been Joe's extensive coverage of Pope's John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. Before the death of John Paul II, Joe followed the globe-trotting Pontiff on his trips to Cuba, Mexico, and the Holy Land, providing New Yorkers with local angles to worldly events. Joe was at the Vatican for the Pope's Silver Anniversary and for his death, when millions flocked to Rome to say goodbye to the spiritual leader. Joe was at St. Peter's Square in April of 2005 when the white smoke from the Sistine Chapel informed the world of the election of Pope Benedict the XVI. Three years later Joe provided in-depth coverage of Pope Benedict's visit to New York. Joe returned to the Vatican and St. Peter's Square in March of 2013 for the historic election of Pope Francis, the church's very first Pontiff from Latin America.

Two days a week Joe comes in from the street and heads to the anchor desk. Each Saturday and Sunday evening Joe serves as Co-Anchor of the 5, 6 and 11 o'clock editions of Eyewitness News This Weekend. Joe also serves as Host of 'Tiempo,' a 30-minute public affairs program aimed at the ever-growing Latino population in the New York metropolitan area. 'Tiempo' airs each Sunday morning at 11:30. Joe's distinctive storytelling ability garnered him a Peabody Award and the Edward R. Murrow Award for his reports on the world-changing events of September 11th. Joe also earned an Emmy Award for his coverage of the Greenpoint Gas Tank Implosions in 2001.

Joe started his television career in 1987 as an NBC Page in New York. His first reporting job was at WSAV-TV in Savannah, Georgia where he served as a general assignment reporter and beat reporter covering county government. Joe then moved to ABC affiliate WNEP-TV in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania to work as a Consumer Reporter, general assignment reporter and Weekend Anchor. In 1992 Joe landed a job as the Jersey Shore correspondent for Disney/ABC-owned WPVI-TV in Philadelphia.