

Speaker Series on Immigration Begins with Cato Institute Analyst

October 19, 2018

Mercersburg opened a three-week examination of the important topic of immigration October 19, when Alex Nowrasteh, a senior immigration-policy analyst at the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, spoke at a school meeting in the Irvine Memorial Chapel.

The event was a required appointment for Mercersburg students and faculty.

"As a school, we believe it is critically important to ask students to engage respectfully and thoughtfully with key issues facing our nation and our world," says Julia Stojak Maurer '90, Mercersburg's assistant head of school for academic affairs. "This series is the first in a set of discussions that we will conduct over the course of the year with students on pressing topics."

Nowrasteh's work has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and many other major publications, and he is a frequent guest on Fox News, MSNBC, Bloomberg, and numerous other television and radio stations. Nowrasteh is a coauthor of the 2014 booklet *Open Immigration: Yea and Nay*. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from George Mason University and a master's in economic history from the London School of Economics.

Nowrasteh addressed what he sees as deficiencies in current U.S. immigration policy, arguing that in many ways the framework is the polar opposite of the rest of the national's legal system.

"Dating back about a thousand years to when America was part of England, our legal system assumes everything is legal except that which is specifically prohibited," Nowrasteh said. "Immigration law is the exact opposite.

"There is no green-card category available for low-skilled workers. It doesn't exist. If you take the current system and apply it backwards in time, virtually none of us who are Americans would be here today, because virtually none of our ancestors would [qualify for a green card]."

The series continues Friday, October 26, when Rod Hissong, owner and operator of Mercer Vu Farms, will describe his experiences and offer his thoughts on the issue. Hissong has addressed the Pennsylvania Committee on Agriculture and is past president of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania. Mercer Vu Farms (located about a mile southwest of the Academy campus) produces more than 42 million pounds of milk each year, supports more than 170 agricultural jobs, and provides more than \$22 million of economic stimulus to the region.

The lectures by Nowrasteh and Hissong will follow a similar format, beginning with 15 to 20 minutes of remarks, followed by a 10 to 15 minute Q&A period led by Mercersburg students Eliza DuBose '20 and Ben Hedstrom '19, and finally time for general questions from the audience.

“I’m looking forward to us being able to host speakers with expertise on a similar topic—especially since they come from different perspectives,” says Will Whitmore, Mercersburg’s school minister. “Hearing from an immigration-policy expert [Nowrasteh] and someone who works with immigrants on a daily basis [Hissong] provides us with a variety of viewpoints and ways to see an issue that shapes our nation and our world.”

On Friday, November 2, the series will conclude with students gathering in small groups for discussions of the immigration issue to be moderated by faculty members. Groups will examine the various points raised by speakers and previous discussions and add context to the lectures.