News Release

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Keynote Speaker Ken Gronbach Talks Housing, Immigration Impacts at FGIA Annual Conference

SCHAUMBURG, IL – The Fenestration and Glazing Industry Alliance (FGIA) heard from keynote speaker Ken Gronbach in an address entitled, “Demography is Destiny” during the 2024 FGIA Annual Conference in Amelia Island, FL. Gronbach, a demographer who forecasts societal, commercial, economic, cultural and political phenomena, touched on topics ranging from the housing crisis and immigration to generational differences and artificial intelligence.

Gronbach noted that the Baby Boomer generation is aging while “the largest housing and construction market is headed for [your industry] because of Generations Y and Z.” However, to take advantage of these opportunities, Gronbach said companies need to embrace change and diversity. “Our culture is changing. You may want things to remain the same, but they cannot, and you cannot,” he said.

Gronbach described Generation X as a “hole” in the generational fabric of America: a smaller group of around 9 million people making up about 11.5 percent of the population. There were not enough people within Generation X to fill out the workforce in the U.S. after Boomers began exiting their working years. “Without immigration, we would not have been able to do so,” he said.

Population is also driving housing needs. Gronbach said a record 170 million people under 40 need housing in the U.S. “Plus, half of marriages fail, and single moms and dads need houses,” he said. “Baby Boomers are retiring one every eight seconds. How many condos will they need? And when it comes to healthcare and elder care, Boomers are causing a strain on the healthcare system. We need to build more hospitals.”

Gronbach moved on to talking about how demographics impact other countries as well, such as Russia and China. “The war in Ukraine has cost Russia 350,000 men. That will impact population there. Russia has no young people,” said Gronbach. “And I have been warning people for 20 years about the population crisis in China because of the one child policy.”

Lastly, Gronbach spoke about artificial intelligence (AI) and advised participants against being left behind. “When it comes to AI in manufacturing, invest widely in technology,” he said. “Embrace it. Get an AI expert into your organization and spend money on it.”

He added that innovative thinkers will succeed in business by being willing to try doing things outside of the norm. “If you are not thinking outside of the box, you are cooked,” said Gronbach. “McDonald's never used to serve breakfast, but the Egg McMuffin® is a trillion-dollar idea. What is your Egg McMuffin?”

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