



## **Cities, refugees and the president's flawed executive order**

February 1, 2017

Dan Horrigan, the Akron mayor, Ilene Shapiro, the Summit County executive, and 15 other community leaders got to the essence of why diversity matters. As they explained in a letter this week in the wake of President Trump temporarily barring travel from seven Muslim-majority countries, "diversity is an essential, treasured ingredient in any thriving and prosperous society."

For metropolitan areas, many like Akron in need of revitalization, the concept translates into new people, energy and ideas. Talent drives regional economies. Refugees and immigrants add to the pool.

Look no further than North Hill where new arrivals already have elevated the surroundings. Or to Columbus, where 9,000 Somalis have relocated.

That is one reason why Akron and other cities welcome and embrace newcomers. Another goes to a humanitarian duty. Syrians, for instance, are fleeing a devastating civil war. Many refugees are middle class, accomplished, seeking to rebuild lives now in ruins.

Might one of the "bad dudes" the president cites in tweets slip into the country? It is possible, though they could enter many other ways, too. The Cato Institute calculates the chance of an American dying in a terrorist attack committed by a refugee at one in 3.6 billion.

In 2011, the fingerprint of an Iraqi refugee in Kentucky traced to a roadside bomb. The Obama White House proceeded to redo the vetting of 59,000 Iraqi refugees. That slowed the processing

of new refugees. The task was accomplished without a ban, the screening made more rigorous or what the Trump team now wants.

The extraordinary dissent memo generated within the State Department, carrying around 1,000 signatures, expresses dismay at how the president's order departs from the precision required in countering terrorism. Why Iraq, for example? It is our ally in fighting the Islamic State. Our soldiers work with their Iraqi counterparts. Iraqi interpreters, who have aided our forces, still are waiting for visas. Put them at greater risk?

Relations with the seven countries have been strained, not to mention with Muslims elsewhere. Our closest partners have doubts and worries about the purpose, the nations under the ban without links to deadly terrorist attacks here.

In declaring that the Justice Department would not defend the executive order, Sally Yates accounted for the president's own words. He talked about targeting Muslims. He wants Christian minorities to receive priority. That amounts to discrimination on the basis of religion, something the Constitution does not allow.

In 1965, Congress prohibited blocking entry into this country based on nationality. The law hasn't changed since. So, in addition to the imprecision, the harm to the country's influence and the lack of appreciation for diversity, the president's executive order looks illegal.