



Despite policy moves to the contrary, Trump says he now favors more legal immigration

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WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says he’s now in favor of more legal immigration because of economic gains on his watch.

Trump raised eyebrows in his State of the Union speech when he said he wanted people “to come into our country in the largest numbers ever, but they have to come in legally.” His policy positions to date do not reflect that wish.

Asked Wednesday during a meeting with regional reporters whether the line represented a change in policy, Trump said it did.

That’s according to a transcript tweeted by a reporter from The Advocate newspaper in which Trump is quoted saying: “I need more people coming in because we need people to run the factories and plants and companies that are moving back in.”

It’s difficult to know just how many jobs will be added by newly planned mills. Construction spending on factories has yet to take off significantly after having been in decline between 2016 and much of 2018. Construction spending on factories has been flat in the past year, according to the Census Bureau.

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Trump has proposed several policies that would severely restrict legal immigration, including limiting immigrants’ ability to sponsor family members to join them. He has also slashed for the last two years the number of refugees the U.S. will accept.

The Cato Institute, which favors more open immigration policies, estimated the immigration plan Trump has proposed would cut the number of legal immigrants by up to 44 percent, the largest cut to legal immigration since the 1920s.

The White House did not immediately respond to questions about how it might be translating Trump’s new thinking into its policy stances and proposals.