

# **The Daily Item**

*More for You!*

## **Put refugee fears on hold**

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Valley conservatives and liberals both agree with the world's faiths: we should love our neighbors and welcome strangers. We also believe that, as a nation of immigrants, it is fundamentally American to welcome refugees fleeing war and poverty. Our Isaiah 6:8 Group: Finding the Way, strongly opposes the current travel and refugee ban. But, we wonder how we can calm the fear that overwhelms welcoming.

Americans regret previous times when fear led us to restrict and push away certain groups. For example, in 1939, the St. Louis, a boat carrying Jews escaping the Holocaust, had to take them all back to Europe, some to their deaths, because the United States refused to admit them. Also, we imprisoned Japanese Americans in concentration camps during WWII because we were afraid of possible sabotage. My father, who fought in WWII, was angry when he later found out about the camps, because they were so contrary to the values he had been fighting for. As Americans we are now ashamed that we talked ourselves into fearing an entire nationality.

We all were shocked by the 9/11 attack, but how afraid should we be now? Immigration vetting has increased dramatically. The Cato Institute reports 24 terroristic deaths 2001-2015 by foreign born terrorists, and none by refugees.

By comparison, in 2016 more than 3,000 Pennsylvanians died of a drug overdose, with 36 from our 3 counties.

We urge calls to Sen. Toomey (855-552-1831) and Sen. Casey (866-802-2833) to end the travel ban as soon as possible. Fix any vetting that needs to be fixed. Restore Syrian refugee immigration, which consists mostly of women and children.

We need to carry on the American tradition of reassuring our immigrant neighbors that they are welcome here, just as there were those who welcomed our own immigrant relatives in spite of opposition from others.

A stroke of the pen can stop refugees. We need to put our fears on hold and think this through.