



## Trump travel ban should make room for refugees

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The courts will eventually decide whether President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration is constitutional. It is up to each of us to decide whether it's right.

The answer is important. This is not just about who we are, but about who we want to be.

Assuming few people believe our borders should be completely open or completely closed, the debate is over limits. If you see immigration as an economic issue, you want to let the right people in. If your concern is homeland security, you want to keep the bad people out. If you come from a humanitarian perspective, you want to let the most people in.

None of those views is wrong, but the one you choose will determine how you judge Trump's order to suspend refugee resettlement in the United States and block individuals from seven majority-Muslim nations from entering the United States.

Trump's primary focus is national security and economics. He surged in the Republican primaries and won the general election by promising to build a wall to keep undocumented workers from flowing in from Mexico. He also pledged to go after Islamist terrorists with various versions of a travel ban and extreme vetting.

In his first two and a half weeks in office, the president has taken definitive steps to keep both campaign promises. He signed executive orders directing the construction of the wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, boosting border patrol forces, and increasing the number of immigration enforcement officers who carry out deportations.

He also signed the order suspending the nation's refugee program and sharply curtailing travel from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia. That is the order that an appeals court rejected Thursday (Feb. 9) and is at the heart of the current debate.

A federal appeals court panel on Thursday ruled to maintain the freeze on President Donald Trump's controversial immigration order, meaning previously barred refugees and citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries can continue entering the United States.

Secure borders are essential to any sovereign nation. Taking the time to review vetting procedures is reasonable, and the seven countries identified for special scrutiny are logical choices. The problem is Trump's order on the refugee program.

It would suspend all refugee admissions to the United States for 120 days and bar Syrian refugees indefinitely. It also would reduce the number of refugees to be admitted to the United States this year from 110,000 to 50,000.

The United Nations has identified 13.5 million Syrians requiring humanitarian assistance. That includes more than 6 million who have been forced from their homes but remain in Syria. They are fleeing war, persecution, natural disasters, environmental crises and poverty.

They are the kinds of people many Americans believe we should be helping.

Supporters of Trump's plan say the refugee program can be used as a Trojan horse to get terrorists into the country. But these refugees are already the most vetted group to enter the country, and there has been no connection to terrorism.

The ban's supporters like to use the example of a bowl of Skittles or M&Ms or peanuts or grapes placed in front of you with the knowledge that some number are poison. Would you eat any of them?

Ignoring the point that we are talking about people and not candy, nuts or fruit, the analogy is not even close to reflecting reality. Experts at the CATO Institute estimate that the chance of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack caused by a refugee is 1 in 3.64 billion per year, while the chance of being murdered in an attack committed by an illegal immigrant is an astronomical 1 in 10.9 billion per year. That's a mighty big bowl.

By contrast, the institute said, the chance of being murdered by a tourist on a B visa, the most common tourist visa, is 1 in 3.9 million per year.

As with any complex issue, the lines of support and opposition do not always fall cleanly in the immigration debate. Many evangelicals and Catholics, voting groups that helped Trump get elected, are opposed to the refugee order.

A group of prominent evangelical leaders, including Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, Christian author Ann Voskamp, Bill and Lynne Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, and preacher and author Max Lucado, sent a letter to President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence this week urging reconsideration of the refugee program's suspension.

"As Christians, we have a historic call expressed over two thousand years, to serve the suffering," the letter says. "We cannot abandon this call now. We live in a dangerous world and affirm the crucial role of government in protecting us from harm and in setting the terms on refugee admissions. However, compassion and security can coexist, as they have for decades. For the persecuted and suffering, every day matters; every delay is a crushing blow to hope."

The courts can decide what is legal, what is allowed. We must decide what is right, what is just.

