

Trump signs first executive orders

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Just over two weeks into his presidency, President Donald Trump has signed seven executive orders and 11 presidential memoranda, fulfilling several of his more popular and controversial campaign promises.

The executive orders include a first step in repealing the Affordable Care Act, an expedition of environmental reviews for infrastructure projects, the construction of a wall on the border with Mexico, increased prosecution of undocumented immigrants, increased investigation of immigrants with potential ties to terrorists, an ethics pledge to executive employees and a requirement that each new federal regulation be followed by a repeal of two others.

The presidential memoranda include a cease of funds to organizations that support abortion, a withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a freeze on hiring executive branch employees, approvals for the Dakota Access and Keystone Pipelines, a reduction of regulation on the manufacturing industry, rebuilding the U.S. military, a plan to defeat ISIS and a policy on the presidential advisors.

Arguably the most contentious of these issues in the media are policies relating to immigration. Since the beginning of his campaign, Trump has voiced his desire for stricter immigration practices and a crackdown on undocumented immigrants. Perhaps even more pressing than the border wall is the possibility of deportation investigations in West Chester.

West Chester has had a growing Hispanic population the last several decades, which, according to the American Community Survey, is tallied at 207,000 as of 2010, making up over one fifth of the West Chester population. Of these 207,000, 132,000 are immigrants.

This could make West Chester a busy place for investigators, who may target our community to search for undocumented immigrants, and potentially even result in police harassment based on race.

An anonymous Hispanic West Chester student described in an interview how, in their hometown, which has a large Hispanic population, there are regular checkpoints where all cars are stopped and questioned by police to find undocumented immigrants, which is a violation of civil rights and a huge traffic inconvenience.

In addition to the focus on deportation, the travel ban on Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen is also stirring up conversation. The travel ban, which will last 90 days, has resulted

in nearly 1,000 people with visas being denied boarding on their flights to the U.S. in just the first week, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Some of the travelers are U.S. citizens who had to apply for a waiver in order to return. An anonymous, foreign-born, pre-medical student at West Chester revealed that one of their classmates is stranded in one of the banned countries, where she was visiting family and was scheduled to return just two days after the ban was enacted.

The proclaimed purpose of the ban was to prevent potential terrorists from coming to the U.S. from the listed countries, although no fatal terrorist attacks have been committed by a person from the banned countries in the past 40 years, according to the Cato Institute.

Another controversial issue is that of the executive branch's employment practices, which will have different effects for those in the military and those who seek to work in other federal organizations. With regards to the military, one of Trump's memorandums is a promise to "rebuild" the military.

Since the U.S. military is measurably by far the largest and most expensive in the world, this could more accurately be read as an "expansion" of the military. This memorandum includes directives to the Secretary of Defense to assess military readiness and the capacity of nuclear and ballistic missiles, as well as to create a plan to improve military readiness by fiscal year 2019.

This may mean more opportunities for ROTC students at West Chester, as the military may set higher targets for recruitment in the future. In addition, Trump's executive order for a plan to wipe out ISIS could mean ROTC recruits will be seeing full-scale combat soon after their graduation.

Trump has also discussed increasing the benefits to those in the military, so the ROTC program may become an even better means of paying for college and getting health insurance and housing.

High school ROTC graduate and aspiring pilot John Milliron and an anonymous WCU graduate returning from active duty gave their thoughts on how the military will change with Trump's actions.

"President Trump was calling for more deployments before the election," the anonymous soldier said. "There would definitely need to be higher quotas on the subject of recruitment if the expansion is as large as he wants it to be."

"We will probably see a full-scale occupation of Syria," Milliron said, "but it probably won't be foot soldiers doing most of the combat, but small teams and coordinated air strikes. We shouldn't repeat the mistake of Iraq where we left as soon as we won, creating a power vacuum. We may have to stay there and help create a new government and protect it for a while after the combat is over."

With regards to incentives to join, both Milliron and the anonymous soldier have their concerns.

“The VA is horribly mismanaged right now,” Milliron said. “People get arbitrarily different compensation for certain treatments depending on where their body is damaged, and this may not actually reflect the cost of their operations. Plus, most people take the GI Bill plan focusing more on education costs, so they may struggle even more with healthcare.”

“Increasing benefits may help people on the brink [of joining the military] actually decide to join,” said the anonymous soldier. “It would also help if the benefits of joining were more advertised than the current ‘go fight for your country’ ads that are running.”

However, those who plan to work in other executive departments may have their prospects limited in the long term. The hiring freeze for federal employees will last until Trump’s budget advisors create a long-term plan to significantly reduce the size of the federal government, the plan for which must be presented within three months of the order.

This could potentially limit career prospects and upward mobility for those in political science, public health, economics, pre-law and other majors interested in working for the federal government as available positions shrink.

Although the opinions of these executive actions are quite divided, it appears that Trump is using the powers of his office to quickly fulfill his campaign promises, and only time will tell how this will affect the nation and the world.