



## **White House on Trump order to block migrants: 'Action is necessary'**

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A plan by President Donald Trump to temporarily close off U.S. borders to migrants during the coronavirus crisis has stirred criticism and confusion about how and when it will be implemented.

Administration officials met Tuesday to begin crafting the language of the president's executive order, which he announced in a tweet late Monday. Senior White House officials and legal experts conferred at the White House to iron out the details of the plan, The Washington Post and CNN reported.

Trump said the move to suspend immigration is focused to stem the spread of the coronavirus disease and "protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens."

During a briefing by the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Trump said the ban will remain in effect for 60 days at which point he will evaluate the need for any extension based on economic conditions at the time. He added the order would apply only to individuals seeking a permanent residency in the United States.

"By pausing immigration we will help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens," he said.

Trump said the order is being drafted and would likely be signed on Wednesday. The legal grounds for the order were not immediately clear.

"President Trump is committed to protecting the health and economic well-being of American citizens as we face unprecedented times," White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Tuesday.

"As President Trump has said, 'Decades of record immigration have produced lower wages and higher unemployment for our citizens, especially for African-American and Latino workers.' At a time when Americans are looking to get back to work, action is necessary."

Trump also said the administration will examine implementing additional immigration restrictions moving forward.

"We want to protect our U.S. workers and I think as we move forward we will become more and more protective of them," Trump said.

The plan has drawn criticism from some who argue Trump is using the coronavirus crisis to try for his promised "Muslim ban." Prior efforts to bar U.S. entry to certain refugees and visitors have met with resistance in federal court.

"This is not about the policy. It is about the message the president wants to send," Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, tweeted. "He wants people to turn against 'the other.'"

"And, regardless of the valuable contributions immigrants are making to the response and recovery, he sees immigrants as the easiest to blame."

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries called Trump the "xenophobe in chief" while Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-Texas, said the order is an "authoritarian-like move" to take advantage of the crisis and advance an "anti-immigrant agenda."

The Cato Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, said Trump's move "doesn't make sense" as a means to fight the virus because it's "based on a misconception."

"There is no correlation between immigrant share of a county's population in the United States and its rate of cases or deaths from COVID-19," the institute said in a statement, adding that other research has previously proven travel bans are ineffective at stopping spread of the coronavirus.

In another tweet Tuesday, Trump lauded his administration's handling of the national health emergency.

"Ninety-six percent approval rating in the Republican Party," he wrote. "This must also mean that, most importantly, we are doing a good (great) job in the handling of the pandemic."