

As a Muslim Republican, I'm worried about Trump's immigration order

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An executive order prohibiting travelers coming from seven out of 60 Muslim-majority countries was said to fulfill a campaign pledge by President Donald Trump during his first week in office. The new administration cited immediate security concerns, but not all Americans buy that argument. The United States has never suffered a terrorist attack at the hands of any person from any of the seven banned nations (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen).

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, pointed out that not many people visit us from these countries (only 0.1 percent of all visitors). From 1975 to 2015, Nowrasteh specifies, the odds of an American being killed by a foreign terrorist on American soil was one in 3.6 million a year, whereas the likelihood of being killed by a fellow American was one in 14,000. Most relevant is the probability of being killed by a refugee was minuscule: one in 3.64 billion per year. Those seeking refugee status already go through stringent extreme vetting.

The resulting costs from such action far exceed the benefits: long-term loss of tourist dollars from these and other countries; universities lose students; strains on international relations, particularly with those who help fight ISIS, making us less safe.

And then there's the incalculable affect on our values. We're becoming the country that slams shut its doors on the most vulnerable: refugees fleeing from terror. Historically, refugees benefited our country. Apple's Steve Jobs, for example, was the son of a Muslim Syrian immigrant; imagine life without the iPhone.

As an immigrant from India, I present my own credentials: I've created employment by starting a business, contributing to our economy. As senior citizens, my wife and I spend a lot of time volunteering — my wife at the public library and I in civic work, whether it be conducting cultural-competency training for local law-enforcement agencies or building interfaith relations. Our kids graduated from Ivy League schools and contribute to America's greatness as professionals, raising families with American values of God, country and family.

As a Muslim-American, the charged political environment has bothered me. Fellow Republicans calmed me: Candidate-Trump won't act on his election talk when he's President Trump, they said. I was skeptical, but it gave me comfort since he modified a few of his campaign slogans, bringing a "total ban" down to "extreme vetting" for some travelers from Muslim countries. I'm for it. Acts of terror affect Muslims disproportionately, as we have seen in mosque burnings and

other attacks on Muslims. I want to see my grandchildren live in peace, not find themselves identified with demonized Muslim communities both here and abroad.

Changing demographics at home, scenes of refugees pouring into Europe, frightening images of ISIS, memories of 9/11 and the terror attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando are disconcerting. It's understandable why Trump's campaign rhetoric might be appealing to many. But that phase is over. It's time to govern. What the executive order on immigration does is appease people with simplistic views about Islam's link to terror.

One doesn't have to like Muslims to oppose such policy imperatives. Think about what's good for American security, the economy and our values.

Whether this policy is a Muslim ban or not, just the talk of it stokes prejudice toward those who have nothing to do with terrorism. Such actions are a recipe for division, not a counterterrorism policy.