

The Washington Post

Trump says he will temporarily suspend immigration to U.S.

Teo Armus

April 20, 2020

President Trump tweeted Monday night that he will sign an executive order to temporarily suspend immigration to the United States, though it was not immediately clear what Trump was referring to or if such an order would be possible.

The president said he would be signing the order “in light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens.” The White House declined to provide further details.

Last week, Trump declared that he had “total” authority to reopen the nation’s economy, before backtracking amid heavy criticism from governors.

Trump has used emergency powers during the coronavirus pandemic to suspend laws that protect minors and asylum seekers, such that the government can immediately deport them or turn them away from the southern U.S. border.

Alex Nowrasteh, director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, told The Washington Post that there are at least two legal justifications for Trump to close the border to all immigration.

Title 42 of the U.S. Code enables the president to halt immigration for health reasons, while a recent Supreme Court decision upholding his travel ban gives him unlimited authority on immigration.

If such an order were in fact signed, it would be unprecedented in American history, Nowrasteh said. In 1918, the worst year of that flu pandemic, the United States allowed tens of thousands of immigrants to enter the country.

And during World War II, the country continued to grant visas and allowed migrant workers from Mexico to enter through the bracero program.