

Dear Honorable Members of Congress:

As former senior national security and foreign policy officials who have served during both Democratic and Republican administrations, we have devoted our careers to protecting the United States and promoting policies grounded in reason. Informed by our expertise, we urge Congress to support the NO BAN Act (H.R. 2214/S. 1123), which would overturn President Trump's discriminatory, nationality-based bans on people seeking to enter the United States from predominantly Muslim countries. By passing this bill, Congress would reverse and prevent such abuses of executive authority, prevent future discrimination based on religion, respect American ideals, and strengthen U.S. national security.

One week into his term, President Trump signed an executive order banning foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries. Courts blocked three different versions of the "Muslim ban," citing their discriminatory nature, but in June 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the third version, 5-4. (President Trump recently expanded the ban to include other countries with large Muslim populations, including some in Africa.) The humanitarian consequences have been grave. The ban has denied refuge and medical treatment to thousands of vulnerable people. It has also torn families apart; according to the Cato Institute, the ban has blocked 3,742 spouses/fiancés and 5,542 children adopted by U.S. citizens.

The Trump administration maintains that the ban is necessary to protect U.S. national security. It hasn't, however, provided evidence for this assertion, because none exists. In reality, the ban undermines U.S. national security.

The United States has the most rigorous vetting procedures in the world, which it applies to every applicant for entry to the country. Our national security and intelligence agencies have the capacity to screen all people seeking entry without resorting to discriminatory bans that inflict harm on innocents. Indeed, they have done just that for decades.

The ban is therefore unnecessary, but it is more than that—it is counterproductive. For one thing, it sends a message to the billion Muslims in the world that they aren't welcome here. This message echoes the propaganda of ISIS, which depicts the United States as hostile to Muslims. At the same time, the ban undermines U.S. support for its allies in the Middle East and Africa hosting a large number of refugees. The mass exodus from Syria is a potential source of instability in a strategically important region. The United States should be helping Turkey, Jordan, Kenya, and Lebanon shoulder the responsibility of hosting refugees; instead, because of the ban, it is doing the opposite. Finally, the ban saps our country's standing on the world stage. When our standing is compromised, so too is our ability to pursue our strategic and national security interests.

An effective remedy exists. The NO BAN Act would overturn President Trump's discriminatory orders and prevent such abuses by future presidents. The bill would ensure that restrictions on entry are tailored to meet a compelling national security interest, preserving the authority of presidents to deny entry in a manner consistent with past practice. The bill would also prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion when determining eligibility for entry under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The Muslim ban is simply discrimination. The NO BAN act would realign U.S. policy with American ideals and send a message of enlightened leadership to the world. Congress should pass it.

Sincerely,

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