

Trump to ‘suspend immigration into the United States’ by executive order amid coronavirus

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UPDATE, April 21, 2020, at 6:58 p.m. ET: President Trump has clarified that his 60-day immigration pause, at least for now, will apply only to people seeking permanent residence in the United States.

Original story below:

President Trump announced late Monday he will soon sign an executive order “to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States,” in what appeared to be a drastic escalation of his efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic and boost the economy.

The declaration came hours after U.S. equity markets plunged, with oil prices turning negative for the first time in history. Also on Monday, three states — Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina — revealed plans to begin reopening some businesses.

“In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!” the president tweeted.



Donald J. Trump@realDonaldTrump

In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!

The precise contours of the president’s planned executive order were not immediately clear. The White House did not immediately elaborate on Trump’s

tweeted announcement.

Politico reported that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was still working out the details of the executive order and that an exemption for temporary guest workers, including farmworkers, was under consideration.

A top DHS official told the outlet that “22 million unemployed Americans and counting due to COVID-19” had prompted Trump to act.

Due to the pandemic, almost all visa processing by the State Department, including immigrant visas, has been suspended for weeks.

Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Arizona, applauded the planned executive order and suggested a total immigration suspension should continue indefinitely. “Thank you, @realDonaldTrump!” he wrote. “All immigration to the United States should halt until every American who wants a job has one!”

“Given tens of millions of Americans are out of work right now and we’re battling a virus that spreads through human-to-human transmission I am dying to hear one coherent argument against this,” wrote Spectator USA’s Washington editor Amber Athey.

Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., meanwhile, said Trump was looking for “someone to blame for his own failure.”

“Immigration has nearly stopped and the US has far more cases than any other country,” Beyer wrote, without adjusting his statistic to consider the larger population in the United States. “This is just xenophobic scapegoating.”

Added Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif.: “Trump failed to take this crisis seriously from day 1. The abandonment of his role as president has cost lives. And now, he’s shamelessly politicizing this pandemic to double down on his anti-immigrant agenda. Enough, Mr. President. The American people are fed up.”



Rep. Paul Gosar, DDS@RepGosar

Thank you, @realDonaldTrump! All immigration to the United States should halt until every American who wants a job has one!
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1252418369170501639> ...

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Aside from the pending immigration ban, the U.S. has already enacted a slew of entry restrictions. The U.S. recently agreed with both Canada and Mexico to extend border restrictions on nonessential travel for another 30 days, through May 16 and May 19, respectively.

However, people with temporary work visas, students and business travelers were exempted, along with emergency personnel.

The president has also already has blocked most travel from other hotspots, including most of Europe, Iran, South Korea, and China.

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More than 750,000 Americans have come down with COVID-19 and more than 42,000 have died. On Monday, the U.S. government said it will continue to quickly expel migrants it encounters along the border with Mexico for at least another month in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.



Jeanette Vizguerra wears a face mask during a car protest calling for the release of detainees at the GEO Immigration Detention Center because of the dangers

posed by the new coronavirus Friday, April 17, 2020, in Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

Under the U.S. policy change spurred by the virus, the U.S. government has sent some 10,000 Mexicans and Central Americans back to Mexico, according to data from the U.S. Border Patrol.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) says that more than 100 migrants at 25 detention centers have tested positive for COVID-19. Guatemala claims that 44 migrants deported from the U.S. tested positive.

Monday's immigration suspension was likely to draw legal challenges and reignite an already heated debate over travel restrictions. On Jan. 31, Trump issued the "Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons who Pose a Risk of Transmitting 2019 Novel Coronavirus," blocking most travel from China — and at the time, Democrats harshly criticized the move.

Within hours, Joe Biden campaigned in Iowa and told the crowd that Americans "need to have a president who they can trust what he says about it, that he is going to act rationally about it. ... This is no time for Donald Trump's record of hysteria and xenophobia - hysterical xenophobia - and fearmongering to lead the way instead of science."

Months later, Biden said he supported the China travel ban.

Fox News' Andrew O'Reilly and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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