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The (Unintended) Business Consequences of President Trump's Muslim Ban

This weekend, we felt the first effects of President Trump's executive order banning immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries. Spontaneous protests exploded at airports, as Green Card holders living and working in the U.S. were initially barred from reentering the United States after visiting their home countries. Chaos and questions of implementation abounded, and news stories of individuals thwarted by the ban flooded the media. Americans across the nation were chilled to hear how [a 77-year-old Syrian grandmother was detained](#) as she tried to visit her son and grandchildren in Dallas; or to learn that [an Orthodox Christian Syrian family](#) was sent back to Qatar, even though persecuted Christians are promised protection from the ban.

The ban raises many issues: Are we upholding our country's core values? Does the ban rip the heart out of freedom of religion? Does it promote safety (given that [experts argue that it will increase tensions between U.S. and the Middle East](#))? And does it help terrorist groups like ISIS recruit more followers? These are all important questions. But there is another question that is getting less traction. Is the ban bad for business?

The United States has always benefitted from the economic impact of immigrants. [In New York City, today, immigrants account for 46% of the workforce](#)—and about half of the city's financial analysts, tech workers and engineers are immigrants. This is a significant pool of people who contribute to the U.S. economy through their labor, by creating new businesses, and adding tax revenue.

Immigrants and the descendants of immigrants are also responsible for, and/or leading, some of the most notable American companies. [Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, was the son of a Syrian immigrant. Farooq Kathwari, the CEO of home furnishing firm Ethan Allen, is a Muslim immigrant from India. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and CEO of Facebook, recently shared](#) that he and his wife descended from immigrants and opposed the ban, noting how the U.S. benefits by attracting the best and brightest from around the world.

Not surprisingly, CEOs from a diverse set of corporations and unions, [including Microsoft, Apple and Google](#), are likewise speaking out on the ban both as a matter of principle and on sound business grounds. They are concerned that it will affect many of their employees who have been working legally in the U.S., and that it will limit their ability to access the best talent. [Google CEO Sundar Pichai, for example, sent out a note to employees](#) saying that over 100 Google employees were affected by the ban, recalling employees travelling abroad to the U.S., and vowing to speak out publically about the importance of immigration to their business.

The ban is also having some unpredictable marketplace consequences. While a movement to boycott the ride-sharing company Uber because of its involvement with the Trump administration began to circulate, [its competitor Lyft donated \\$1 million to the ACLU](#)—likely attracting new customers in the process.

Already, we are seeing examples of what it means to lose talent due to the executive order. [Samira Asgari, an Iranian national living in Switzerland](#), was not allowed to board her plane from Frankfurt to Boston, where she was planning to start a postdoctoral fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital to study how genetics effect treatment for tuberculosis. Dr. Asgari is exactly the kind of person we should be encouraging to come to the United States, and that is exactly the kind of person we stand to lose now.

Joyce S. Dubensky
CEO, Tanenbaum