

Statement on Trump Presidential Executive Order Montana State University Faculty Senate

On Friday January 27 the President issued a controversial executive order that (1) stops the admission of all refugees to the U.S. for four months, (2) bans entry into the U.S. of anyone coming from seven predominantly Muslim countries, including those who already hold valid US visas, for 90 days, and (3) suspends indefinitely and specifically the admission of all Syrian refugees. Members of the Montana State University faculty are deeply disturbed by this action and concerned not only for the people directly affected by the immigration ban, but with actions that foster a climate permissive of racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance and hostility.

Our faculty has a professional obligation to promote and protect the values of academic freedom and therefore strongly condemns any action by any government that prevents the free movement of scholars and students across international borders. This order is an infringement upon the academic freedom of individuals wishing to travel to and from the United States to conduct research, collaborate with colleagues, and engage in conferences and conventions. It will cause serious disruption in the lives of those who have already completed the complex and time-consuming process for obtaining the necessary authorizations for travel.

This order is also antithetical to the fundamental values of a democracy which, in turn, rest on a foundation of civility, respect, and the rule of law that functions to rein in the propensity of those in power to use power in a discriminatory manner. While discriminatory uses of power may not necessarily violate the law as currently held – indeed, our history of slavery and institutionalized racial and gender inequities attest to this – citizens pressing for adherence to moral values even when the law is silent or permissive of their violation, are equally essential for the defense of our democratic society.

Finally, absent a thorough review in or by the security community, this ban is also an affront to academic values and does not align with the best evidence to date about who is most likely to present a threat to our national security. As scholars, we take peer review and evidence-based action seriously, and that is part of why we are standing up as not only as citizens, but as responsible academics.

We stand unified and uncompromisingly for the protection of the human rights of all people, including our students, staff and faculty at Montana State University, who are offended and potentially directly impacted and harmed by this executive order.

Unanimously endorsed by the Montana State University Faculty Senate on February 1, 2017