

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



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Trump targets visa program

He says hurts American workers

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Turning back to the economic populism that helped drive his election campaign, President Donald Trump signed an order Tuesday he said should help American workers whose jobs are threatened by skilled immigrants.

At the headquarters of hand and power tool manufacturer Snap-on Inc., Trump signed an order that asks the government to propose new rules and changes that will stop what he called abuses in a visa program used by U.S. technology companies. Dubbed "Buy American and Hire American," the directive follows a series of recent Trump reversals on economic policies.

"We are going to defend our workers, protect our jobs and finally put America first," Trump declared, standing in front of an American flag fashioned out of wrenches.

Much like some prior orders, however, Trump's executive action Tuesday essentially looks for detailed reports rather than making decisive changes.

In this case, the reports are about granting visas for highly skilled foreign workers and ensuring that government purchasing programs buy American made goods as

required by law. Trump chose to sign the directive at Snap-on Inc., based in Wisconsin, a state he narrowly carried in November on the strength of support from white, working-class voters. Trump currently has only a 41 percent approval rating in the state.

He campaigned last year on promises to overhaul U.S. trade and regulatory policy, but his executive orders on those issues reflect the administration bowing somewhat to the limits of presidential power. Also, he has recently reversed several populist promises, including standing up to China, which he contended was manipulating its currency and stealing American jobs, and eliminating the Export-Import Bank, which he billed as wasteful subsidy.

But Trump returned to Tuesday to the economic tough talk of his campaign, saying: "We're going to make some very big changes or we are going to get rid of NAFTA for once and for all," referring to the Clinton-era U.S. trade pact with Canada and Mexico.

In his new directive, the president is targeting the H-1B visa program, which the White House says undercuts U.S. workers by bringing in large numbers of cheaper, foreign

workers and driving down wages. The tech industry has argued that the H-1B program is needed because it encourages students to stay in the U.S. after getting degrees in high-tech specialties — and because companies can't always find enough American workers with the skills they need.

The new order would direct U.S. agencies to propose rules to prevent immigration fraud and abuse in the program. They would also be asked to offer changes so that H-1B visas are awarded to the most-skilled or highest-paid applicants.

The number of requests for H-1B visas declined this year by about 15 percent, or roughly 37,000 applications, but the total was still nearly 200,000, far more than the 85,000 limit.

Tuesday's order also seeks to strengthen requirements that American-made products be used in certain federal construction projects, as well as in various grant-funded transportation projects. The commerce secretary is to review how to close loopholes in existing rules and provide recommendations to the president within 220 days. The order also asks agencies to assess the use of waivers.

The trip brought Trump to the congressional district of House

Speaker Paul Ryan, but Ryan was out of the country on a congressional trip. The president was greeted by Gov. Scott Walker outside Snap-on's headquarters.

During his remarks, Trump weighed in on another economic issue, promising to find a solution to a trade dispute with Canada that has left dairy farmers in Wisconsin and New York without a market they had for their product.

Trump said Canada has been "very, very unfair" to dairy farmers and "we're going to start working on that."

Canada has decided to impose import taxes on ultra-filtered milk, a protein liquid concentrate used to make cheese. It had been duty free but Canada changed course after milk producers there complained. About 70 dairy producers in both U.S. states are affected.

As for the visa program, Democratic lawmakers and organizations ranging from the pro-business Chamber of Commerce to the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation say they welcome proposals to improve the visa program, though not always in line with Trump's ideas.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., urged Trump to skip further



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study and support her bill to rebuild U.S. infrastructure with American iron and steel. The Chamber of Commerce added that it would be a "mistake to close the door on high-skilled workers" who can contribute to the growth and expansion of American businesses and make the U.S. more competitive around the world.

Trump has long pledged to support American goods and workers, but his own business record is mixed. Many Trump-branded products, like clothing, are made overseas. His businesses have also hired foreign

workers, including at his Palm Beach, Florida, club.

Snap-on makes hand and power tools, diagnostics software, information and management systems and shop equipment for use in agriculture, the military and aviation. In addition to 11 factories in the U.S., financial disclosures show it has plants in China, Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

During his tour, Trump was shown metal boxes where cremated ashes are deposited. He called it "very depressing."

U.S.: Human rights violations drive conflicts like Syria

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley said Tuesday that human rights violations have triggered conflict in Syria, stifled dissent in Burundi and led to repression in Myanmar — and the next international crisis could come from North Korea, Iran or Cuba where human rights are widely disregarded.

But Russia and China disputed her contention that human rights violations are a main driver of conflicts. And Human Rights Watch questioned the Trump administration's decision to focus on human rights at the U.N. Security Council in light of its own actions.

The United States holds the U.N. Security Council presidency this month and Haley was determined to hold a meeting to focus on the importance of human rights to international peace and security. It took place Tuesday after the U.S. addressed a key objection from Russia, China and other council members, and was the first meeting solely on human rights.

The United States initially wanted the debate under a new agenda item for the council entitled "Human Rights and International Peace and Security" — which would mean that item could be raised again and again in the council. But



United States' Ambassador United Nations and current Security Council President Nikki Haley opens a Security Council meeting on the situation in Syria, Friday, April 7, 2017 at United Nations headquarters. (AP PHOTO/MARY ALTAFFER)

many council members didn't want the U.N.'s most powerful body, which is charged with ensuring international peace and security, to also focus on human rights.

So in a compromise, the U.S. Mission agreed to hold the meeting under an old agenda item: "Maintenance of international peace and security," with a focus on "human rights and prevention of armed conflict."

That still didn't leave at least

half a dozen council members happy, which was reflected in their statements.

Russia's deputy U.N. Ambassador Evgeny Zagaynov said the Security Council has no mandate to consider human

rights which are discussed elsewhere at the U.N.

He objected to the U.S. contention that rights violations are "a main precondition for armed conflict" and to its assertion that protecting human rights is "a key instrument" to prevent conflict.

"Indeed prevention and settlement of armed conflicts are the main prerequisites for correcting human rights situations, and not vice versa," he said.

China's U.N. Ambassador Liu Jieyi never mentioned the words human rights and dismissed the U.S. statement that rights violations cause conflicts.

China is committed to addressing the root causes of conflicts, he said, and they include "extreme poverty and balanced development, shortage of resources and ethnic and tribal conflicts."

But Haley warned the council that if it fails to take human rights violations and abuses seriously, "they can escalate into real threats to international peace and security."

"The Security Council cannot continue to be silent when we see widespread violations of human rights," she said. "Why would we tell ourselves that we will only deal with questions of peace and security, without addressing the factors that bring

about the threats in the first place?"

"We are much better off acting on the front end, standing for human rights before the absence of human rights forces us to react," she said.

But Akshaya Kumar, the deputy U.N. director at Human Rights Watch, said that "unless the United States is prepared to seriously address human rights abuses committed by its allies — like Saudi Arabia and Iraq — a theoretical debate about human rights issues at the Security Council won't improve the council's work."

"If the Trump administration wants to burnish its reputation on rights it should address problems at home such as its discriminatory travel ban on people from six Muslim majority countries," she said.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the council that "human rights concerns are intrinsic to maintaining peace and security and essential to informing Security Council deliberations and decision-making" — especially to avert mass atrocities.

He stressed that "the issue today is not that human rights violations undermine every aspect of our shared values and common work, but rather how the United Nations responds."

FNM team hearing concerns of residents on the campaign trail

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ownership in the tourism industry. Starting with this small seed, you never know where it will end up," Turnquest said.

"As we move into the next leadership, we will pay more attention through the Ministry of Tourism, to promoting and supporting small Bahamian owned boutique resorts and bone fish lodges so that we can foster and facilitate this kind of activity, so that we can take advantage of what God has given us."

"Right now, if you were to go further east, with regard to some of the Cays out here you would find some tremendous natural resources and beauty

that people just do not know exist.

"If we can continue to have these small boutique type developments created along the coast, it will make the tours of such areas more economical and available for guests. We are happy to be here to support and continue to throw our two cents behind this Coconut Festival," noted Turnquest.

Iram Lewis, candidate for Central Grand Bahama said that moving forward, in the next three weeks in preparation for the 2017 general elections, "We are going to be on the ground. First of all, encouraging people, if they have registered, to vote because that is their voice. As our motto says, 'It is the people's time.'

"We are here to do our best to bring Grand Bahama, not back to what it used to be, but even beyond that because the potential exists. We are here, knocking on doors, touching people and encouraging them to participate in the resurgence of Grand Bahama because we believe that it is going to happen. But it is going to take the full participation of everyone."

"There is a lot of voter absentees, a lot of persons are discouraged but we are asking them to just hold on, give us a chance and we can assure them that there will be a big turnaround on the island of Grand Bahama. We are going to continue to knock on doors, we are going to continue to solicit support and we are going to continue to support local

events, such as this to empower our people."

Rev. Frederick McAlpine, candidate for Pineridge said the people can expect a "voice."

"What they can expect from me is a voice, because for a very long time, despite having PLP and FNM members of Parliament and Senators, it seems like there has been a silence for the last five years."

"We have gone through so much — economically, socially and environmentally, but we have heard very little from representation. What you need is someone who is bold enough, bodacious enough and strong enough to stand up and say, 'I am going to stand up for the people.' It is time that someone speaks for the people and

not for self interest; this time, McAlpine."

West Grand Bahama and Bimini candidate, Pakesia Parker-Edgecombe, the lone female running in GB noted that along with her colleagues, she intends to continue to listen to the cries of persons residing in the various communities and do their best to address the issues and bring relief.

"What we have been hearing on the ground is that they are really dissatisfied with representation. I think that it is very important that once we get into the government, that we let the people know right away that we are there to hear their concerns, and we are going to ensure that we work towards addressing those concerns."

"A lot of what has to happen in our communities begins with that caring factor. People get left behind, because we do not show enough care. I think that once we start to show them that we are invested in their lives and the success of their lives and that of their children, we will have better communities throughout our country."

Parker-Edgecombe concluded by stating, "We are definitely doing our best here on Grand Bahama to actually address those concerns that are being expressed right now. We are going to be knocking on a lot of doors, we want to hear from our community, because in hearing from our community we know how to address the issues effectively."