

The Federalist Capers

Okay, nobody break the country, we worked really hard on it.

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FREE

How Trump is consolidating power

The President is strengthening himself by weakening these American institutions:

- **State Department**—He purged top leadership positions, leaving the department gutted and unable to challenge or guide his executive orders.
- **National Security Council**—He demoted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to an optional attendee, and added to the council Steve Bannon, his rabidly xenophobic chief adviser. Robert Gates—a former Secretary of Defense (and a Republican)—called the change “a big mistake.”
- **Environmental Protection Agency**—His EPA transition chief, who doesn’t believe in climate change, plans to cut funding in half and fire two-thirds of employees. The administration says it may censor scientific findings.
- **Intelligence community**—He publicly mocked the CIA’s report that Russia interfered in our election, calling it “ridiculous.” By undermining faith in American intelligence, he promotes his own version of the facts.
- **Journalism**—He has endlessly assaulted the credibility of both “the media” and individual journalists. Adviser Steve Bannon called them “the opposition party.” Again, this helps Trump promote “alternative facts.”
- **Elections**—He has repeatedly claimed, with zero evidence, that millions voted illegally in the 2016 election. This has been thoroughly disproven, but it’s a useful excuse to pursue voter suppression laws.
- **Individual free speech**—He publicly insulted Chuck Jones, leader of a local union in Indiana, because Jones had (correctly) called him out on a false statement. Afterward, Jones received death threats.

In a welcome contrast, his Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch—while conservative—seems to be sane, well-qualified, and genuinely loyal to the Constitution (rather than the President). Nevertheless, Republicans’ seven-month refusal to even consider Obama’s nominee remains an unprecedented disgrace.

Trump’s executive orders so far

Number 45 has hit the ground running with a flurry of executive orders and memorandums. (Executive orders carry slightly more weight than memorandums, are easier to track, and must be open to the public, among other differences.) Orders so far focus on the ACA (Obamacare), environmental review for certain projects, “public safety” (i.e., an immigration crackdown), the border wall, a travel ban, lobbying, and federal regulations.

The three most controversial—the ACA, the wall, and the travel ban—are all campaign promises that Trump said he would deliver on immediately. The vaguely worded ACA order allows any requirement of Obamacare to be waived if it is a fiscal burden. This means that penalties can be brushed aside, which all but guarantees the ACA’s eventual collapse—even though the promised replacement plan has yet to be outlined, much less implemented.

He also ordered a physical wall to be constructed immediately along the Mexican border, but left out any details of how funding should be provided. Further, the order directs the immediate construction of new detention facilities for illegal aliens, which expands the privatization of prisons—a troubling development in itself.

Lastly, his explosively controversial travel ban prevents the entry of persons (including refugees) from seven predominately Muslim countries for at least several months, perhaps indefinitely—even though the vetting process for refugees already takes several years. (Saudi Arabia—home of Osama bin Laden and most of the 9/11 hijackers—was strangely not included. Incidentally, Trump has business interests there.) The ban includes a clause about religion that explicitly gives preference to non-Muslims. The order was hastily issued with minimal input from Trump’s own departments, and it blocked green-card holders and valid visa holders as well.

The resistance



If Trump's actions and character are unprecedented, so are the size and swiftness of the grassroots opposition movement.

The day after inauguration, hundreds of thousands of nonviolent protesters took to the streets of D.C. in a Women's March. (Although it focused on the rights of women, men were also welcome.) Huge crowds gathered in "sister marches" on the same day—in Manhattan, in Los Angeles, across the nation, and around the world.

Since Trump ordered the travel ban, thousands more ordinary citizens have come out to protest. The ACLU—which successfully challenged the ban in court—has received a massive surge of support. In just the two days after the order, the ACLU received over \$24 million in online donations. For comparison, they normally receive just \$4 million in online donations *for an entire year*.

Silicon Valley also protested the ban. Many tech employees are immigrants, or close relatives of immigrants. Google co-founder Sergey Brin appeared in person at a protest on January 28. Brin himself is an immigrant.

In conservative circles, too, there are signs of dissent. The Koch brothers—who raise vast sums of money for conservative candidates—have voiced opposition to some of Trump's policies. "The travel ban is the wrong approach and will likely be counterproductive," said a spokesman for the Koch network. Ohio Senator Rob Portman, and Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham—all Republicans—issued similar statements.

The Archbishop of Chicago called the ban "contrary to both Catholic and American values." A spokesman for the Presbyterian Church (to which Trump still claims to belong) said they "are not afraid of this so-called terror threat ... because we profess a faith in Jesus, who entered the world a refugee." A top official in the Southern Baptist Church, which has some 17 million members, highlighted their tradition of "welcoming the stranger."

All this is exciting and encouraging. But a long fight remains ahead of us, and we can't afford to be complacent.

Quote of the month

"It [the travel ban] really is a massive success story in terms of implementation on every single level."

—Official statement by Trump administration, 1/29/2017. (Several federal courts have already blocked parts of the "massive success story," even as the Trump administration itself made conflicting statements about its scope. Meanwhile, sales of George Orwell's *1984* have skyrocketed. I wonder why?)

What can I do?

Protest, rally, march. The Trump Tax March (TaxMarch.org & [@taxmarch](https://twitter.com/taxmarch)) will demand the release of Trump's tax returns on Tax Day, April 15. The March for Science (MarchForScience.com & [@ScienceMarchDC](https://twitter.com/ScienceMarchDC)) will be Earth Day, April 22.

Join the ACLU. Membership in the American Civil Liberties Union has *doubled* since Trump was elected, from 500,000 to 1 million. But they still need your help. Go to aclu.org.

Sign the petition for Trump to release his tax returns. At over 400,000 signatures, it's already broken the record for the most ever on a WhiteHouse.gov petition, and it's still growing. Go to Petitions.WhiteHouse.gov and it'll be the top result. Deadline is February 19.

Vote. Register (if you haven't already) at vote.gov. Remember, there are elections in 2017. Mostly local stuff, but local stuff matters too. **This is the single most important thing you can do.**

For more ideas, go to BrianDBuckley.com and click "What can I do?" at the top of the page.

Comments, questions, suggestions, ideas, hateful diatribes? Email: buckley.d.brian@gmail.com

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