

President Trump Signs Numerous Orders and Memos Just After His Inauguration

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During the first two weeks after his inauguration on January 20, U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration have made a busy start. President Trump energetically put into practice policies that have been controversial in and outside the United States. Specifically, he signed numerous executive orders and presidential memorandums that attracted much attention in and outside the United States and caused great ripples as explained below. By February 2, he signed seven executive orders and 11 presidential memorandums, including an executive order signed on his inauguration day to review the so-called Obamacare health insurance program, according to the White House website. On January 23, Trump signed and announced a presidential memorandum vowing to exit from the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which attracted much attention in Japan.

Executive orders or presidential memorandums are not law but orders or instructions that have binding power for the administrative branch of government. Ways to use such orders or memorandums have differed from president to president. Trump may be using executive orders for specific measures and presidential memorandums for demonstrating policies.

The 18 executive orders and presidential memorandums cover basic policies that Trump has promised since the presidential election campaigns, including the Obamacare review and the exit from the TPP. They also include the executive order for border security and immigration enforcement improvements (construction of walls on the border with Mexico), signed on January 25, and the presidential memorandum on a plan to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, signed on January 28. However, the most controversial in and outside the United States is the executive order signed on January 27 to protect the nation from foreign terrorists' entry into the United States.

The executive order bans entry into the United States by citizens from seven Middle Eastern and African countries -- Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Sudan and Somalia -- for 90 days and rejects the acceptance of Syrian refugees. As the executive order took effect immediately after the signing, authorities deported or detained citizens from these countries at U.S. airports. Airlines prevented alleged deportation targets from boarding flights to the United States, spreading confusion in the world. The executive order came under fire in the United States and foreign countries for running counter to American values such as humane views, freedom and equality, unleashing protests and criticisms. Even within the U.S. government, some officials criticized the order. Trump fired acting Attorney General Sally Yates for instructing the Justice Department to reject the

executive order.

The executive order has been criticized internationally. On January 30, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called for promptly repealing the measure. The seven countries subject to the order raised strong opposition to the order, including Iran that barred U.S. citizens from entering the country. U.S.-Iran relations will inevitably deteriorate. Despite international concerns and protests on the executive order, polls in the United States show that supporters for the order exceed opponents. A Reuters poll found that supporters accounted for 49% of respondents against 41% for opponents, indicating the complexity and depth of the problem.

Trump has also signed an executive order and three memorandums on energy policies. On January 24, the new president inked (1) a presidential memorandum instructing the State Department to promptly examine an application for a permit for the construction and operation of the Keystone XL pipeline for transporting Canadian oil sand to the Gulf of Mexico and decide whether to approve the application within 60 days; (2) a presidential memorandum instructing the secretary of the Army to promptly approve the resumption of the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline for transporting shale oil in North Dakota to Illinois (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the authority to permit the construction of river-crossing sections of the pipeline); (3) a presidential memorandum instructing the secretary of commerce to develop a plan within 180 days to use U.S.-produced materials and equipment as much as possible for future pipeline construction in the United States; and (4) an executive order instructing the chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to decide whether an infrastructure project qualifies as a "high priority" infrastructure project within 30 days and promptly examine priority projects.

The four are in line with the basic policy stance to which Trump has given priority. The first and second memorandums urge relevant government agencies to promptly screen the two pipeline construction projects that failed to be approved under the Obama administration due to environmental concerns, indicating a positive attitude on the construction. If the two pipelines are approved and constructed, the United States may expand its domestic oil production and supply from Canada to reduce imports from Latin America and the Middle East and diversify oil supply sources, contributing to its energy security, or energy independence and energy dominance. Pipeline construction is expected to create jobs to stimulate the economy. Backing up these two presidential memorandums are the other two. Particularly, the third one will support U.S. industry including manufacturers to create jobs, indicating the "Buy American and Hire American" policy he emphasized in his inaugural address.

Apart from executive orders and presidential memorandums, the White House put an "America First Energy Plan" on its website right after President Trump's inauguration, spelling out energy and environment policy priorities he has emphasized. One of the priorities attracted attention by vowing to repeal the Climate Action Plan developed by his predecessor, Barak Obama.

In the two weeks after his inauguration, President Trump thus embodied his basic policy pledges since the presidential election campaigns. His basic policies have taken shape or been

confirmed through these executive orders and presidential memorandums on constructing Mexican border walls, banning terrorists' entry into the United States, reviewing the Obamacare healthcare program, exiting from the TPP, promoting infrastructure and supporting shale and other oil and gas development. His radical campaign rhetoric has included policy pledges that are seen as difficult to implement. In the future, Trump's policy implementation will indicate how serious he is about implementing policy pledges and what his priorities are. Future developments will attract much attention.

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