

CEOs push back against Trump temporary immigration ban

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In this April 4, 2016 file photo, General Electric Co., CEO Jeff Immelt speaks during a news conference in Boston. The heads of Apple, Ford and Goldman Sachs said that they don't support the executive order that President Donald Trump signed last week, which bans immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. Google said it is donating cash to organizations that support immigrants. Immelt said the industrial conglomerate would make its "voice heard" with the new administration and Congress. (AP Photo/Steven Senne, File)

CEOs of some of the world's biggest companies are fighting back against President Donald Trump's temporary immigration ban, calling it un-American and bad for business.

The heads of Apple, Ford and Goldman Sachs said that they don't support the executive order the president signed last week, which bans immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. Google said it is donating cash to organizations that support immigrants. Other companies said they will help employees affected by the ban or, in the case of Starbucks, hire refugees.

Businesses already have a complicated relationship with Trump, who has been openly critical of companies planning to build plants in Mexico or charge what he sees as too much for fighter jets. Some have announced hiring plans and investments in the U.S., saying they like Trump's plans to reduce regulation and lower corporate taxes.

But the corporate reaction to the executive order was strong, quick and harsh.

"This is unprecedented," said Bill Klepper, an adjunct management professor at Columbia Business School in New York.

Trump said the executive order, signed Friday, was necessary to stop "radical Islamic terrorists" from coming to the U.S. It included a 90-day ban on travel to the U.S. by citizens of Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen, and a 120-day suspension of the U.S. refugee program. The White House did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

It could be risky for businesses to speak out publicly, since Trump likes to fight back and criticize companies from his Twitter account. But public-relations experts said businesses have no choice, especially if the ban negatively affects their employees or customers.

"No company has gone out of business putting their customers and employees first," said Matt Friedman, co-founder of Tanner Friedman Strategic Communications in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

CEOS SPEAK OUT

Executives at technology companies, which employ many immigrants, were some of the first to speak out. Tim Cook, the CEO of iPhone maker Apple Inc., told employees in a memo obtained by The Associated Press that his company does not support the order. "Apple would not exist without immigration," Cook said.

CEOs from e-commerce companies Amazon.com Inc., eBay Inc. and Etsy Inc. also said they did not support Trump's order, as did the head of video-streaming company Netflix Inc.

Coca-Cola Co. CEO Muhtar Kent said the soda maker was against the travel ban, and General Electric Co. CEO Jeff Immelt said the industrial conglomerate would make its "voice heard" with the new administration and Congress.

Ford Motor Co. said it does not support the policy "or any other that goes against our values as a company," according to a letter signed by the automaker's CEO Mark Fields and Executive Chairman Bill Ford. General Motors Co. sent a note to employees saying it will support any who can't return to the U.S. because of the ban. But other automakers, Nissan Motor Co. and Honda Motor Co., were silent.

The auto industry, a frequent target of Trump's ire for moving jobs overseas, is walking a fine line, trying to avoid punishing tariffs and hoping Trump gives them some relief on corporate taxes and fuel economy standards.



In this Dec. 7, 2016, file photo, Starbucks Chairman and CEO Howard Schultz speaks during the Starbucks 2016 Investor Day meeting in New York. Starbucks says it will hire 10,000 refugees over the next five years, a response to President Donald Trump's indefinite suspension of Syrian refugees and temporary travel bans that apply to six other Muslim-majority nations. Schultz said in a letter to employees Sunday, Jan. 29, 2017, that the hiring would apply to stores worldwide. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

And Goldman Sachs Group Inc., whose former employees are some of Trump's most trusted advisers, also pushed back.

"This is not a policy we support," said the bank's CEO, Lloyd Blankfein, in a voicemail to employees.

DONATING CASH

Google, the internet search company owned by Alphabet Inc., plans to give as much as \$4 million to four organizations that provide legal assistance and other services to immigrants. The crisis fund will consist of \$2 million from the company and \$2 million in employee donations. Google is worried that Trump's executive order will harm many of its current workers and their families, and will make it more difficult to hire technically skilled workers from outside the U.S. in the future.

Ride-hailing app Lyft said it will give \$1 million over the next four years to the American Civil Liberties Union. Lyft's co-founders, Logan Green and John Zimmer, said they "will not be silent on issues that threaten the values of our community."

EMPLOYEE HELP

Drugmaker Merck & Co. said it will offer legal advice and other assistance to its employees, as did furniture seller Ikea.

Uber, the ride-hailing app, said it will offer financial help to employees affected by the ban. The company's CEO, Travis Kalanick, is part of Trump's economic advisory group and said he will bring up the issue with the president on Friday in Washington.

Uber, however, already faced backlash on Saturday after Twitter users criticized the company and encouraged riders to delete the app for charging less than it could at JFK Airport in New York as taxi drivers had halted service for an hour to protest the ban. The move was perceived by some as an effort to profit off the protests as more passengers would need to seek alternatives to cabs.

HIRING REFUGEES

Starbucks Corp. said it will hire 10,000 refugees over the next five years

at its coffee shops around the world and focusing on employing those that have served with U.S. troops as interpreters.

But taking a position on political matters can be risky for companies: the hashtag #BoycottStarbucks was trending on Twitter Monday after the company announced its move. Starbucks said that it recognizes "that sometimes there are those who may disagree with us, and we respect these diverse points of view and will continue to listen."

CEO Howard Schultz said he plans to reach out to employees more frequently.

"I am hearing the alarm you all are sounding that the civility and human rights we have all taken for granted for so long are under attack," he said in a letter to workers.

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