News



President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally, Thursday, Jan. 9, 2020, in Toledo, Ohio. (AP/Jacquelyn Martin)

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The White House is considering expanding its much-litigated travel ban to additional countries amid a renewed election-year focus on immigration issues by President Donald Trump, according to four people familiar with the deliberations.

A document outlining the plans has been circulating the White House, but the countries that would be affected are blacked out, according to two of the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the measure has yet to be finalized.

The expanded ban could cover several countries that were included when Trump announced the first iteration of the ban by executive order in January 2017 but were later removed amid rounds of litigation. Iraq, Sudan and Chad, for instance, had originally been affected by the order; the Supreme Court upheld a watered-down version of it by a 5-4 vote.

The most recent iteration of the ban includes restrictions on five majority-Muslim nations: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, as well as Venezuela and North Korea.

The White House did not immediately respond to questions about the effort, which appeared timed for release in conjunction with the third anniversary of Trump's first travel ban, which was announced on Jan. 27, 2017.

That ban sparked an uproar, with massive protests across the nation against what many derided as a "Muslim ban" and chaos at airports, where passengers were detained.

The latest deliberations come as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi prepares to transmit to the Senate the articles of impeachment the Democratic-led House passed against Trump late last year, launching a formal impeachment trial just as the 2020 election year gets underway. Trump in December became just the third president in history to be impeached by the House. The Republican-controlled Senate is not expected to remove him from office.

Trump ran his 2016 campaign promising to crack down on illegal immigration and spent much of his first term fighting lawsuits trying to halt his push to build a wall along the southern border, prohibit the entry of citizens from several majority-Muslim countries and crack down on migrants seeking asylum in the U.S., amid other measures.

He is expected to press those efforts again this year as he ramps up his reelection campaign.

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