

One Hundred and Fifteenth Congress

Jan. 3, 2017-Jan. 3, 2019

Administration of Donald John Trump

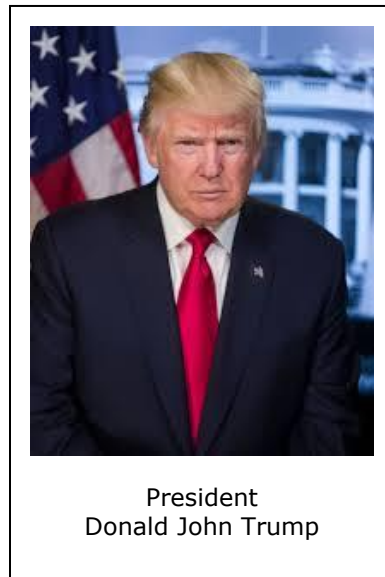
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Historical Background

Following the surprising results of the embattled 2016 Presidential election, Donald Trump, former businessman and television personality, was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States on January 20th, 2017. To protest his election to office, worldwide protests, called the Women’s March, took place on January 21st.

During the 2016 Presidential campaign, one of the most vehement campaign pledges made by the future-President involved the United States Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem. Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1949, the United States, while supporting the fledgling Jewish state, favored an international administration over the city of Jerusalem due to the sacred importance of the site to the Jewish, Christian and Islamic communities. For that reason, along with most other country who recognized Israel, the United States officially recognized Tel Aviv as the Israeli capital and located its embassy in the coastal city, in spite of the fact that the Israeli government was largely operated from Jerusalem.

In October 1995, the 104th Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, which became law weeks later without a Presidential signature. The law officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and called for it to remain an undivided city, challenging Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. The Act included a provision granting the President the authority to invoke a waiver on implementation of the law on a semi-annual basis, which every President had done since the law was enacted. President Trump, similarly invoked the waiver in June 2017. However, on December 6, 2017, the President announced the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and ordered the relocation of the U.S. embassy to the contested city. On May 14, 2018, the United States Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem officially opened.



House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (241 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (52 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (194 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (46 seats)
Other Parties: 0	Other Parties: Independent (2 seats)
Speaker of the House: Paul D. Ryan	Majority Leader: Mitch McConnell

The move to relocate the embassy was met with immediate condemnation internationally. The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency meeting in December 2017 to address the issue, with 14 of the 15-member states voting to condemn the United States, though the measure was vetoed by the U.S. The move was also roundly rejected by the major Palestinian factions, including the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority based in Ramallah in the West Bank, as well as the Hamas-led government in Gaza. In response, Hamas called for a renewed intifada to protest the move, sparking demonstrations along the Israel-Gaza border and a renewal of rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel.

On January 27, 2017 President Trump following up on campaign promises signed Executive Order 13769 restricting entry, including Syrian refugees, from seven Arab nations. Described by critics as a “Muslim ban”—a label rejected by the administration—the order was immediately met with large-scale protests and legal challenges. A nationwide temporary restraining order was issued on February 3, 2017, stopping enforcement of certain portions of the order and re-validating visas that had been previously revoked. On March 6, 2017, the President issued Executive Order 13780, a revised version of EO 13769. Though the latter order was crafted to avoid the legal issues that stymied the first order, it, too, was subjected to court challenges and several of its provisions were blocked. The administration tried again with Presidential Proclamation 9645, issued on September 17, 2017. This was challenged by the state of Hawaii, joined by other states and non-governmental organizations and a U.S. District Court issued a preliminary injunction against the order, which was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. On January 19, 2018, the United States agreed to hear the case on appeal from the Trump Administration and on June 26, 2018, the court reversed the decision of the Court of Appeals and vacated the injunction, allowing the measure to proceed.

During the 115th Congress, the United States experienced several mass shooting incidents. The first of these to occur during the 115th Congress was the Las Vegas mass shooting incident of October 1, 2017, the deadliest in U.S. history with 59 fatalities, including the perpetrator, and over 800 injuries, some 420 of which were the result of gunfire. The incident was conducted by Stephen Paddock, a professional gambler living in Nevada. Paddock, who was a regular at several of the casinos in the city, checked into a suite at the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino with windows overlooking the Route 91 Harvest music festival, and opened fire on the festival’s attendees before killing himself. The motive for the massacre remains unknown. The Las Vegas incident was followed on November 5, 2017 with the Sutherland Springs Church shooting, in Texas, in which 27 were killed, including the perpetrator, and 20 injured, the February 14, 2018 Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, in which 17 were killed and another 17 injured, the May 18, 2018 Santa Fe High School shooting in Santa Fe, Texas, in which 10 were killed and 14 injured, the October 27, 2018 Tree of Life – Or L’Simcha Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in which 11 were killed and six injured, and the November 7, 2018 Thousand Oaks shooting in California, in which 13 were killed, including the



Senate Majority Leader
Mitch McConnell



Speaker of the House
Paul D. Ryan

perpetrator, and another 25 injured. These incidents were carried out by perpetrators guided by a range of motivations, though in many cases these were obscure. Most of the firearms used were obtained legally and thus the incidents sparked a renewal of public pressure to enact tighter restrictions on gun ownership. As with previous gun control debate, policymakers disagreed on the effectiveness of gun control measures to stop individuals intent upon doing harm as well as the constitutionality of such measures, resulting in sharp partisan divide.

Source:

Committee on the Judiciary. House. *[Preventable Violence in America: An Examination of Law Enforcement Information Sharing and Misguided Public Policy]*. Pre-Published Hearing. Mar. 20, 2018. 115th Congress, 2nd Session. ProQuest Congressional. H52-20180320-01

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War or Peace?

Syrian Civil War

As the civil war in Syria entered into its eighth year, the United States came face to face with the byzantine ethno-national and religious complexities involved in the conflict. Through 2016 and 2017, the U.S. and its allies saw continued success in the campaign to root out the Islamic State (also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or by the Arabic acronym *Daesh*) from the territories it had occupied in Iraq and Syria in 2014. However, the various players in the campaign each came to the table with their own interests and agenda. These players include regional state partners such as Turkey and Iraq, the various quasi- or non-state militia such as the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq and the Syrian Kurdish militia (YPG), and the various Iranian-backed, Iraqi Shia militia and Lebanese Hezbollah.

The difficulty for the United States is summed up in the Congressional Research Service (CRS) report *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, which states “U.S. officials and Members of Congress continue to debate how best to pursue U.S. regional security and counterterrorism goals in Syria without inadvertently strengthening U.S. adversaries or alienating U.S. partners.” This latter concern became especially acute in late-2017 and early-2018 as the interests of U.S.-allied Kurdish forces in Syria (YPG) were perceived to conflict with those of Turkey, a NATO member state.

The Kurds are an ethno-linguistic group indigenous to the region who are otherwise distinct from the Arabs, Turkic and Iranian peoples among whom they live. Numbering roughly 30 million, the Kurds occupy significant

territory and are major minority populations in Turkey (14.3 million, 18% of the population), Iran (8.2 m, 10%), Iraq (5.6 m, 15%), and Syria (1.5 m, 9%). Without a state of their own, the Kurds have suffered severe repression periodically during the 20th and 21st centuries.

The relative cohesion of the Kurdish populations in Iraq, where they have administered a de facto autonomous region in northern Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, and Syria allowed the Kurds in both countries to have greater success in pushing back the Islamic State than other regional players. This fact, as well as a general lack of Kurdish involvement in Islamist groups such as ISIS and al Qaeda, led the U.S. to rely heavily on Kurdish militia in its efforts in the conflict. According to the CRS report “The Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran,” The Syrian People’s Protection Units (YPG) “is the leading force in the coalition of militia known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that are partnering with the United States against the Islamic State.” However, U.S. support for the YPG in northern Syria caused significant strain in the relationship between the U.S. and its NATO ally Turkey.

Turkey hosts the largest share of the Kurdish population, both in terms of sheer numbers and the percentage of the country’s total population. Occupying much of the southeastern part of the country, which includes the nuclear-armed NATO air base at Incirlik, the Kurds in Turkey have been engaged in a civil conflict with the government for decades. Since the 1970s, the Marxist-Leninist separatist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has engaged in a terrorist campaign against the Turkish government with the stated goal of achieving an independent Kurdistan. Though the United States has designated the PKK as a terrorist organization, it considers the YPG as a distinct organization with no terrorist ties. Turkey, on the other hand, makes no distinction between the PKK and the YPG and sees the territorial gains of the latter along the Syrian-Turkish border as a threat to its territorial integrity. Prior to the outbreak of civil war in 2011, Kurds in Syria were limited to three, non-contiguous zones around the cities of Afrin, Kobane, and Jazirah. At the outbreak of hostilities, however, the Syrian military withdrew from the region, allowing the Kurds to consolidate control over a vast swath of territory along the Turkish border, as far south as the city of Manbij, where U.S. troops in Syria are stationed.

The Turkish government protested U.S. inclusion of the YPG in its SDF coalition, arguing that it is a terrorist organization that threatens Turkish security. The U.S., however, continued its support of the YPG and, in January 2018, Turkey began an air and ground offensive to root out YPG forces at the Turkish-Syrian border in Afrin canton. The continued presence of U.S. forces in Manbij, fewer than 100 kilometers away from Afrin, raised the possibility of two NATO allied countries finding themselves on opposite sides of armed conflict.

North Korea

When President-elect Donald J. Trump met with outgoing President Barack Obama in the White House in December 2016, the sitting President warned that North Korea was likely to be the most serious security threat faced by the incoming administration. The former President's words proved to be prescient as North Korea, under 33-year old leader Kim Jong-un, demonstrated unprecedented gains in its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs throughout 2017.

Of particular concern was a nuclear test conducted on September 3, 2017, the most powerful to date, that the North Korean government claimed was a hydrogen bomb, along with a series of ballistic missile tests conducted between July and November 2017 that were widely estimated to have a range capable of targeting virtually the whole of the United States. Efforts by the U.S., China, and other regional powers to bring the North Koreans to the negotiating table failed due to the Kim regime's categorical refusal to give up its nuclear weapons. Aside from occasional threats of military action, the U.S. continued to rely on ever more restrictive sanctions against North Korea despite the failure of this strategy to bring about change in the rogue state's policies.

The New Unilateralism

President Trump, who characterized himself as a "nationalist," adopted the phrase "America First" to describe the guiding ethic of his foreign policy. While much of the President's distrust was aimed at international trade agreements and blocs, he viewed several national security regimes and agreements signed during previous administrations as weakening rather than enhancing U.S. national security.

Throughout the 2016 Presidential Campaign, then-candidate Trump expressed particular disapproval for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the agreement spearheaded by the Obama Administration and signed by the United States, Russia, China, the European Union (in addition to individual member states), and Iran to curb Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. The deal culminated a years-long effort to cool relations between Iran and the international community and revitalize the Iranian economy by putting an end to international sanctions against the country. In May 2018, the President announced that the United States would be withdrawing from the accord, to the dismay of several U.S. allies in Europe. U.S. withdrawal from the deal coupled with the reimplementing of sanctions against Iran in late-2018 threatened a rift in relations between the United States and its principal allies.

On October 20, 2018, President Trump announced that the United States would be withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987 and carried on by Russia after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., citing Russian non-compliance. Though the move was condemned by arms control experts in the United States and abroad, members of the Trump administration argued that the

treaty reflected Cold War realities that were no longer relevant and pointed to the fact that China had not signed the treaty as evidence that it was an insufficient arrangement for the 21st century.

Death of Jamal Khashoggi

On October 2, 2018, the self-exiled dissident Saudi journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi walked into the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey to obtain a certificate of divorce so he could marry his Turkish fiancée and never walked out. Over the coming days, as his fiancée contacted authorities in Turkey, setting off an investigation into Khashoggi's fate, suspicion immediately fell upon Saudi Arabia's powerful young Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. The crown prince had risen from near-obscurity into arguably the most powerful individual in the kingdom with remarkable speed after his father, Salman bin Abdulaziz, was crowned king. Championing himself as a reformer, the crown prince introduced numerous reforms, including allowing women to drive, curbing the authority of the religious police and radical clerics, and liberalizing and diversifying the economy for the inevitable draining of its vast oil reserves. Along the way the crown prince became the target of critics who alleged that he used threats and coercion as a means of consolidating his authority and imprisoning those deemed a threat, including senior members of the royal family. One such critic was Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent journalist and erstwhile confidant to numerous senior Saudi princes. As a result, Khashoggi opted to voluntarily leave the kingdom, moving to Virginia and working as a columnist for the *Washington Post*, through which he published numerous columns criticizing the crown prince and many of his policies, including the kingdom's disastrous war against Houthi rebels in neighboring Yemen.

In the days that followed Khashoggi's disappearance, Saudi Arabia submitted several conflicting explanations, first insisting that he had left the consulate alive within hours of entering, then allowing that he had unfortunately been killed during a botched interrogation and kidnapping attempt, before finally allowing that the murder was premeditated, but that it was a rogue operation by ambitious security personnel and was in no way authorized by senior members of the royal family, including the crown prince. Khashoggi's murder presented a particular challenge for the Trump Administration. The President and his foreign policy staff had drawn itself close to the Saudi regime, especially the young Prince Mohammed, early in his Presidency. As international calls for a full accounting of the affair mounted, the President was placed in the difficult position of evaluating whether one of his administration's key international partners had murdered one of its own citizens, along with the *realpolitik* and the fact of Saudi Arabia's position as a major source of petroleum and major customer for U.S. defense contractors. Meanwhile, as events unfolded, the Congress weighed its options for responding to what looked like an international assassination designed to silence a critic. These include imposing sanctions pursuant to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act or placing new restriction or

conditions upon Saudi Arabia's diplomatic activities conducted in the United States.

Sources:

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Economic Trends and Conditions

President Donald J. Trump took advantage of his first address before a joint session of Congress to outline his agenda for encouraging increased economic growth. The President promised an aggressive series of actions focusing on rectifying trade imbalances, lowering taxes, and curtailing government regulations. Of the latter issue, the President laid out his administration's policy: "We have undertaken a historic effort to eliminate job-crushing regulations, creating a deregulation task force inside of every government agency; imposing a new rule that mandates that for every 1 new regulation, 2 old regulations must be eliminated."

To that end, the Congress set immediately to work, passing legislation to undo many of the regulatory initiatives of the Obama administration. These include PL115-4, Congressional Disapproval of SEC Rule, which nullified a Securities and Exchange Commission rule relating to "Disclosure of Payments by Resource Extraction Issuers," and PL115-5, Congressional Disapproval of the Stream Protection Rule, which nullified the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's rule relating to the "Stream Protection Rule."

The President realized an even more significant achievement of his economic agenda with the passage of PL115-97, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, on

December 22, 2017. In addition to a roughly \$1.25 trillion reduction in taxes, the Act accomplished several other important goals of the governing Republican Party, including opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil drilling and eliminating the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act's individual health insurance mandate.

Perhaps the highest profile aspect of the President's America First agenda was his distrust of international trade agreements and commitment to protectionist economic populism. The President made good on his campaign promises to renegotiate trade deals and increase tariffs with a series of moves beginning with his announcement that the United States would be withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal negotiated during the Obama Administration. Also, in the early days of his administration, the President halted negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a proposed trade arrangement between the European Union and the United States.

Beginning in early-2018, the President announced a series of new tariffs and rate increases, beginning with a 25% tariff on steel and 10% tariff on aluminum imports. Later that month, the President introduced a series of trade actions aimed at China. These actions included new and increased tariffs representing \$50 billion in new tariff revenue. The move engendered a response from China, including new tariffs on American products and cancelling orders for American commodities. The new tariffs created tension between the U.S. and several of its allies, many of whom began considering announcing retaliatory actions. Economists, including members of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, were largely in agreement that the burgeoning trade war, far from reaping benefits for U.S. businesses, would create a drag on economic growth.

Throughout 2017 and into 2018, the U.S. economy continued the modest, but consistent economic growth that began during the previous administration. In early 2018, in addition to the continuing gains in economic production and decreases in joblessness, wages grew at an annual rate of 2.9%, the highest rate of growth since the 2009 recession. Though generally believed to be good news, the increase in wages led to concerns about the possibility of inflation, which in turn raised the specter of higher interest rates. These events culminated in a stock market selloff that began on January 31, 2018 and reached its peak on February 5, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 1,175.21 points, the largest single day points drop in the index's history.

Sources:

Trump, Donald J. [*Presidential Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, Message from the President of the United States*](#), GPO, Mar. 1, 2017, 115th, H. Doc. 115-1 (Y1.1/7:115-1). Congress 1st Session, ProQuest Congressional, H. Doc. 115-1

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Manuel v. City of Joliet, held that a person's Fourth Amendment right to freedom from unreasonable search and seizure should hold for the entirety of the legal process of a criminal case, including prosecutions in which arrests are made without probable cause, [580 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Pena-Rodriguez v. Colorado, held that evidence of overt racial bias may not be barred when proving violation of the Sixth Amendment, which guarantees the right to an impartial jury, [580 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

North Carolina v. Covington, held that imposing a shortened term and special election for legislators elected in districts that show evidence of racial gerrymandering was not case specific and therefore the decision of the lower courts was an error, [581 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Ashcroft v. Abbasi, held that (1) The limited reach of the *Bivens* action informs the decision whether an implied damages remedy should be recognized in this case; (2) considering the relevant special factors in this case, a *Bivens*-type remedy should not be extended to the "detention policy claims" -- the allegations that the executive officials and wardens violated the detainees' due process and equal protection rights by holding them in restrictive conditions of confinement, and the allegation that the wardens violated the Fourth and Fifth Amendments by subjecting the detainees to frequent strip searches -- challenging the confinement conditions imposed on the detainees pursuant to the formal policy adopted by the executive officials in the wake of the September 11 attacks; (3) the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit erred in allowing the prisoner-abuse claim against Warden Dennis Hasty to go forward without conducting the required special-factors analysis; and (4) the executive officials and wardens are entitled to qualified immunity with respect to respondents' claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1985(3), [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Hasty v. Abbasi, held that (1) The limited reach of the *Bivens* action informs the decision whether an implied damages remedy should be recognized in this case; (2) considering the relevant special factors in this case, a *Bivens*-type remedy should not be extended to the "detention policy claims" -- the allegations that the executive officials and wardens violated the detainees' due process and equal protection rights by holding them in restrictive conditions of confinement, and the allegation that the wardens violated the Fourth and Fifth Amendments by subjecting the detainees to frequent strip searches -- challenging the confinement conditions imposed on the detainees pursuant to the formal policy adopted by the executive officials in the wake of the September 11 attacks; (3) the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit erred in allowing the prisoner-abuse claim against Warden Dennis Hasty to go forward without conducting the required special-factors analysis; and (4) the executive officials and wardens are entitled to qualified immunity with respect to respondents' claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1985(3), [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Ziglar v. Abbasi (consolidated with Ashcroft v. Abbasi and Hasty v. Abbasi), determined that when filing claims against government officials for personal

violations of the Constitution, the plaintiffs must establish “new context”, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Matal v. Tam, held that trademarks that mock and disrespect the members of a racial or ethnic group are prohibited and in violation of the Disparagement Clause, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Murr v. Wisconsin, held that one party who owns land parcels which are legally separate but physically attached can combine them for the purpose of takings analysis, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Packingham v. North Carolina, held that keeping sex offenders from accessing social media websites is in violation of the First Amendment, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Pavan v. Smith, held that excluding the name of same-sex spouses on a child’s birth certificate is discriminatory and unconstitutional under the ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Sessions v. Morales-Santana, held that distinctions between physical presence requirements in derivative citizenship cases centered on unwed mothers as opposed to unwed fathers is in violation of the Equal Protection Clause, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer, held that precluding church-run preschools and daycares from federal, secular aid programs is in violation of the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause, [582 U.S. \(2017\)](#)

Minnesota Voters Alliance v. Mansky, ruled that prohibiting the wearing of political apparel and accessories at polling places is a violation of the First Amendment, as long as the apparel or accessories being worn are “reasonable”. [585 U.S. \(2018\)](#)

Oil States Energy Services v. Greene’s Energy Group, held that inter partes review of patents, which serves to review the issuance of pre-existing patents and invalidating them, does not violate the constitutional right of patent owners. [584 U.S. \(2018\)](#)

South Dakota v. Wayfair, overruled *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota* and *National Bellas Hess, Inc. v. Department of Revenue of Illinois* and held that sellers who do a certain amount of business within a state might be obligated to collect and remit taxes, even if they do not have a physical presence in the state. [585 U.S. \(2018\)](#)

Gill v. Whitford, found that the partisan gerrymandering issues presented by the plaintiffs failed to demonstrate individual harms, therefore the issue of whether this particular case systematically weakens the voting strength of Democratic voters. [585 U.S. \(2018\)](#)

Abbott v. Perez, held that the culprits of alleged racial gerrymandering in certain Texas districts were not given the “presumption of good faith” and reversed the need for the Texas Legislature to provide evidence of the intent

of racial discrimination; held that the district HD 90 in Texas was an impermissible racial gerrymander. 585 U.S. __ (2018)

Janus v. AFSCME, held that the removal of agency fees from public-sector employees who disagreed with the practice, violated the First Amendment; overruled *Abood v. Detroit Bd. of Education*. [585 U.S. __ \(2018\)](#)

Carpenter v. United States, held that the government needs a warrant to access information on the location and movements of cell phone users pursuant to the Fourth Amendment. [585 U.S. __ \(2018\)](#)

Lucia v. SEC, held that administrative law judges employed in the Securities and Exchange Commission are to be considered officers of the United States pursuant to the Appointments Clause. 585 U.S. __ (2018)

NIFLA v. Becerra, held that the California Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care, and Transparency Act, which requires that clinics give information to patients about contraception and abortion options, violated First Amendment rights of pro-life pregnancy service providers. [585 U.S. __ \(2018\)](#)

Trump v. Hawaii, held that the President's Proclamation (Executive Order No. 9645) is a lawful demonstration of the president's statutory authority under federal immigration laws and is not in violation of the Establishment Clause. 585 U.S. __ (2018)

Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, held that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission's evaluation of a cake shop owner's refusal to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple violated the Free Exercise Clause; held that religious and philosophical objections to same-sex marriage are protected under the First Amendment. [585 U.S. __ \(2018\)](#)

2017 Events

- **Jan. 21:** Women's March takes place in response to the inauguration of Donald Trump, including 420 marches in the U.S. and 168 in other countries
- **Jan. 27:** [President Trump signs Executive Order 13769, commonly known as the Muslim Ban or the Travel Ban, suspending the issuance of visas to citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries](#)
- **Feb. 11:** [North Korea test fires a ballistic missile prompting international condemnation](#)
- **Mar. 10:** [The UN warns that the world is facing the biggest humanitarian crisis with up to 20 million people at risk of starvation in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria](#)
- **Mar. 29:** [The United Kingdom invokes article 50 of the treaty of Lisbon, signaling its intent to leave the European Union and beginning the process of negotiating Britain's withdrawal, or "Brexit"](#)
- **May 22:** [A terrorist bombing at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England kills 22](#)

- **June 1:** [The United States announces its withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement](#)
- **June 5:** Montenegro joins NATO as the 29th member
- **June 5:** [A coalition of several Arab and Muslim nations led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates cut off diplomatic relations and begin a blockade against regional rival Qatar](#)
- **June 12:** [American student Otto Warmbier is returned home in a coma after spending 17 months imprisoned in North Korea for defacing a poster. Warmbier would be dead within a week](#)
- **June 25:** [The Saudi/UAE-led war in Yemen leads to a cholera outbreak; the World Health Organization \(WHO\) estimates that there are over 200,000 cases in the country](#)
- **July 10:** *Syrian Civil War* – Mosul is declared fully liberated from the Islamic State
- **Aug. 12:** [At the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, counter-protester Heather Heyer is killed when white nationalist James Alex Fields, Jr. plows into a crowd with his Dodge Challenger](#)
- **Aug. 21:** [Total solar eclipse is visible within a band across the entire U.S.](#)
- **Aug. 25:** An ongoing military operation targeting Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar is declared a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Sept. 1:** [President Vladimir Putin expels 755 diplomats in response to U.S. sanctions](#)
- **Sept. 3:** [North Korea conducts its sixth and most powerful nuclear test](#)
- **Sept. 6-10:** Hurricane Irma strikes the Caribbean and southern U.S.
- **Sept. 19-20:** [Just two weeks after Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria strikes a similar area](#)
- **Sept. 25-Oct. 20:** [Iraqi Kurdistan votes to secede from Iraq and form an independent state in a referendum, setting off a political crisis that culminates in a short-lived military conflict between the central government in Baghdad and Kurdish officials in Erbil](#)
- **Oct. 1:** Las Vegas shooting occurs when Stephen Paddock opens fire on a crowd killing 58 people
- **Oct. 17:** *Syrian Civil War* – [the Syrian city of Raqqa, the erstwhile capital of the Islamic State, is declared fully liberated](#)
- **Oct. 27:** [Catalonia declares independence from Spain](#)
- **Nov. 15:** [Long-time President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe is placed under house arrest as a military coup takes place](#)
- **Nov. 15:** *Salvator Mundi*, a painting attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, sells for \$450 million at auction; Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud is reported to be the purchaser
- **Dec. 6:** [The United States officially recognizes Jerusalem as Israel’s capital](#)

2018 Events

- **Jan. 20:** [Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announces a military offensive against Syrian Kurdish forces along the Turkish-Syrian border, setting up a potential conflict with the United States, Turkey's NATO ally](#)
- **Feb. 5:** [Stock market sell-off. Dow Jones Industrial Average loses 1,175 points, the largest single day point loss in the index's history](#)
- **Feb. 14:** A school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida results in the deaths of 17
- **Mar. 4:** [Former Russian intelligence operative Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia are poisoned with the Russian-developed Novichok nerve agent in England. The Russian government immediately falls under suspicion for the attempted assassination](#)
- **Mar. 11:** [The Chinese constitution is changed, removing term limits for leaders and granting premier Xi Jinping the status of President for life](#)
- **Mar. 18:** [Russian President Vladimir Putin is elected to a fourth term](#)
- **Apr. 8-14:** [Syrian Civil War – A sarin chemical attack is launched against the rebel-held town of Douma, prompting the governments of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom to order strikes against Syrian President Bashar al Assad](#)
- **Apr. 27:** [North Korean President Kim Jong-un crosses the demilitarized zone into South Korea for an historic summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in](#)
- **May 8:** [President Donald Trump announces his intention to withdraw the United States from the Iranian nuclear agreement](#)
- **May 24:** North Korea unilaterally destroys its nuclear test facility at Punggye-ri in advance of the planned summit meeting with U.S. President Trump
- **June 12:** President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un meet for an historic summit Singapore
- **June 19:** [Canada becomes the first major industrialized country to legalize cannabis for recreational use](#)
- **June 24:** Saudi Arabia allows women to drive
- **July 9:** [Eritrea and Ethiopia restore diplomatic ties and officially declare an end to their 20-plus year conflict](#)
- **Oct. 2:** [Dissident Saudi Arabian journalist and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi is murdered by Saudi security officials inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul, where he had arrived seeking documents related to his divorce, setting off the worst diplomatic crisis for the desert kingdom since the September 11 attacks in 2001](#)
- **Oct. 20:** 700,000 people march through London demanding a second referendum on the British withdrawal from the European Union ("Brexit")
- **Oct. 20:** [U.S. President Donald J. Trump announces the country will "terminate" the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty over alleged Russian violations](#)

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Major Acts

National Aeronautics and Space Administration Transition Authorization Act of 2017. Authorizes \$19.5 in funding in support of various NASA activities and goals, including the James Webb Space Telescope, the Space Launch System, the Asteroid Robotic Redirect Mission, the Orion crew vehicle, the International Space Station, the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope, the Mars 2020 rover, as well as technologies

necessary for a human mission to Mars. Authorizes NASA to provide care to astronauts to improve our comprehension of the effects of spaceflight on the human body. Approved Mar. 13, 2017 ([131 Stat. 16, PL115-10](#))

Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. Improved the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Approved June 23, 2017 ([131 Stat. 862, PL115-41](#))

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. Codifies certain sanctions previously imposed by the Executive Order and provided for new sanctions with respect to Iran, Russia, and North Korea. Established new congressional review procedures for terminating or waiving sanctions against Russia. Approved Aug. 2, 2017 ([131 Stat. 886, PL115-44](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Tax Law Revision. Reforms the tax rates for existing tax brackets. Temporarily modifies the exclusion of student loan discharges from gross income to exclude from gross income certain discharges on account of the death or total and permanent disability of the student. Doubles the estate and gift tax exemption amount for decedents dying or gifts made after December 31, 2017. Approved Dec. 24, 2017 ([131 Stat. 2054, PL115-97](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act. Lessens regulations implemented under the Dodd-Frank Act in order to assist financial institutions by increasing the threshold from \$50 billion to \$250 billion under which these financial institutions are considered to be too important to fail. Approved May 24, 2018 ([132 Stat. 1296, PL115-174v](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. Funds the Department of Defense and related national defense programs and initiatives including military construction and military personnel supplementation. Prohibits persons from supporting boycotts by foreign countries against Israel. Establishes procedures for dealing with the export control of emerging technologies. Updates the review process for the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. Increases access to commissaries and exchange programs for recipients of the Purple Heart and other honorary titles and medals. Approved Aug. 13, 2018 ([132 Stat. 1636, PL115-232](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act of 2018. Expands the provisions of the Church Arson Prevention Act to include a broader view of religious institutions to prevent the occurrence of hate crimes and threats against these properties. Approved Sept. 28, 2018 ([132 Stat. 3162, PL115-249](#))

FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. Reauthorizes the Federal Aviation Administration and related programs through 2023. Modifies restrictions on the supplementary fees of airlines and requires that the FAA create and

implement standards for airline seat sizes. Approved Oct. 5, 2018 ([132 Stat. 3186, PL115-254](#))

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