

# Amid Trump's shake-up, many wondering 'what's coming next'

By ADAM GELLER and MATT SEDENSKY  
AP National Writers

Donald Trump's determination to recast the role of government has a whiff of Reaganism, and his plays on divisions are reminiscent of Richard Nixon, a historian says. But many Americans have a simpler assessment of the opening days of the new administration's governing-by-upheaval: It's unsettling, even to some who voted for the shake-up that Trump promised.

"We're in a very fragile state right now," said Margaret Johnson of Germantown, Maryland, who runs a small translation business. "We don't know what's coming next. The country's divided. There's a lot of fear. And I think we're kind of at that point where things can go any kind of way, and it's really hard to say which way they're going to go."

That uncertainty finds an echo in Pastor Mike Bergman's church in Adrian, Missouri, 40 miles south of Kansas City, where many congregants count themselves as conservatives and embrace the new administration's order cutting off funding to international groups that provide abortions. But as church members consider another order — restricting refugees — worries about security are tempered by concern about the needs of refugees and whether Trump's rhetoric is widening the gulf between Americans, Bergman said.

"There is worry about some of the political rhetoric ... about how all that is going to cause the divide in the community to deepen and more bitterness to spring up between the people of our country. I wouldn't say we're really optimistic right now," he said.

Trump is hardly the first president to take office promising wholesale change in the face of substantial skepticism. But Kevin Boyle,



In this Jan. 29 file photo, a protester waves a U.S. flag as another holds a sign that reads "Let Them In" during a march and rally to oppose President Donald Trump's executive order barring people from certain Muslim nations from entering the United States, in downtown Seattle.

a professor of American history at Northwestern University who compared Trump to Reagan and Nixon, said the clashes set off by the administration are unique.

"I cannot in my adult life think of a moment that compares to this," he said. "The level of tension between these two competing visions of the country needs to be resolved in some way or another."

Trump's actions have unsettled Suzanne Kawamleh, 24, a graduate student born in Chicago to parents who emigrated from Syria. On Saturday night, Kawamleh said, she joined protesters at O'Hare International Airport to protest the executive order stopping Syrian refugees from entering the country.

The next day, she told a crowd gathered at the county courthouse in Bloomington, Indiana, about how her relatives had fled Syria by boat and ended up in a refugee camp before finding refuge in Germany.

Last year, Kawamleh said, she and her father were taken



In this Jan. 28 file photo, President Donald Trump holds up a signed Presidential Memorandum in the Oval Office in Washington. The document directs his administration to "develop a comprehensive plan to defeat ISIS."

off a flight for questioning when they returned from Lebanon to do relief work in a refugee camp. But that scrutiny, she said, pales with Trump's executive order, which forced a family friend from Syria who had flown to the U.S. to visit a sick relative to return to the Middle East on Saturday.

"Immediately after the

order, everything changed. There wasn't a chance to plead your case," she said. "It seems like everything is very in flux. People don't know what's going on."

Over the last week, teacher Dee Burek has led discussions with the seventh- and eighth-graders in her debate and journalism classes about Trump's first

days as president. Students were dismayed when they read about false statements by White House press secretary Sean Spicer and by an interview with Trump adviser Steve Bannon in which he compared himself to Darth Vader.

When one girl compared Trump to Dolores Umbridge — a character from the Harry Potter series who provokes a student revolt after issuing a series of harsh decrees — classmates nodded in agreement, Burek said.

"As a teacher I'm trying to present both sides, as I always have to, and when I deal with the children and I'm reading articles to them (about the Trump administration), their faces are in shock," said Burek, who teaches in Allentown, New Jersey. "They just keep coming back to, 'We're America. How could this happen?' And I say I just don't have the answers."

Many Americans say that Trump's moves since taking office are exactly what the country needs. Nonetheless, they are taking note of the pushback.

Juan Villamizar, a 52-year-old flooring business owner in West Hartford, Connecticut, said he supports Trump's executive order restricting refugees and immigration from seven countries as a way to protect Americans from terrorism. But while he believes the country is headed in the right direction, he is disheartened to see a negative response to Trump's actions.

"I just think that the people of this country, the citizens of this country, need to take a really deep breath and read the Constitution," he said.

During the presidential campaign, Brenda Horvath strapped a "Make America Great Again" sign to her Logan, West Virginia, front porch. While supportive, she thinks the new president could do a better job at presenting his plans with compassion, in a way that doesn't alienate so many.

She believes Trump is off to a rocky start, but believes he deserves more time to get on track.

"You can listen to the wrong people and do the job wrong. I'm hoping and praying that he'll start listening to the right people," she said.

Yatziri Tovar, a 24-year-old college student in New York who emigrated from Mexico as a toddler, saw the response to Trump in a different light. Though troubled by the initial days of the new administration, she was encouraged to see the activism it has spurred. She felt a duty to speak, too, addressing a weekend rally that she helped organize as a member of an immigrant advocacy group, Make the Road New York.

"It's a moment that has a lot of confusion, it has some scary times, but at the same time it has become a time of unity," said Tovar, a part of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which President Barack Obama instituted to allow young people brought into the country illegally as children to stay and obtain work permits.

Others hold the protesters, not Trump, responsible for the discord.

John Fusaro, an immigration officer in Dallas who voted for Trump, said the media and protesters should ease up.

"They're trying to sow seeds of doubt and keep stirring the pot," he said.

Fusaro said the upheaval represents a "new normal" of constant protests. While he's dubious of the protesters' message, the presence of a niece in their ranks reminds him of the wide gulf in Americans' political views.

"She's standing against Trump, out there yelling and stuff, and I'm honestly thinking you don't know the whole picture. I sent her a message: Give it time. It'll sort itself out."

So far, he said, she hasn't responded.

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