

Update from Ben Wideman, a Mennonite pastor in Pennsylvania about a visit to his Republican senator's office:

Just got back from a visit to Senator Pat Toomey's (R-PA) Johnstown office with 15 other Borough of State College & Penn State area people to talk about the immigration ban. Here are my takeaways.

1. Everyone we spoke with was rattled. They have never experienced this much constant feedback. The phones haven't stopped since the Inauguration and they admitted they can't check voicemail because there is no pause to do so.
2. Letters are the only thing getting through at this point [Note: I've heard that postcards are better because they can impound letters for five weeks to check for contaminants]. Regional offices are a much better mail destination because they compile, sort, and send everything. DC mail is so backed up right now it takes twice as long to send things there.
3. Toomey's staff seem frustrated with Trump. They said his barrage of Executive Orders are not how government is supposed to work, and was what they hated during moments of the Obama era. One of them said, "we have a democratic system and process. Trump needs to stop behaving like a Monarch."
4. OUR REPRESENTATIVES ARE LISTENING BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE RAISING THEIR VOICES. THIS FEELS LIKE NO OTHER POLITICAL MOMENT IN RECENT TIME FOR THEM.
5. Toomey's staffers are far more empathetic than I assumed. Also far more technology illiterate (one asked me how to use twitter, and how we already knew about Toomey's published statement). They resonate that the immigration ban feels immoral and unAmerican.
6. Regional offices are not designed to handle this volume of unrest.
7. Personal stories matter. Tell the stories of people being impacted by arbitrary religious and ethnic legislation. Staffers want to know.
8. Don't stop. Do whatever small part you can do to keep raising your voice to your representatives. Not just this issue, but every way marginalized people are being (or will be) exploited under this President.