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# Lehnert: Immigration bans threaten economy

Makes U.S. unattractive to world's best and brightest

Tim Lehnert Thursday, February 09, 2017

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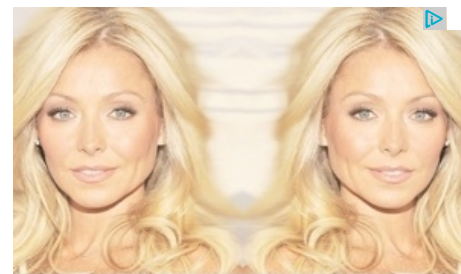
For more than 15 years I have been crafting petitions for “aliens of extraordinary ability” and “outstanding researchers” so that they can obtain green cards. Who are these “aliens”? Turkish nuclear physicists, Russian brain surgeons, British pharmacologists, Chinese physiologists, Canadian mathematicians, you name it.

These are not your poor huddled masses: All of them possess M.D. or Ph.D. degrees and are employed by the likes of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Caltech, Argonne National Laboratory, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. In most cases, the hospitals, universities and labs are the clients — not the scientists themselves — and all of these institutions have departments devoted to assisting foreign scholars in complying with U.S. immigration law.

Immigrants are the lifeblood of many U.S. hospitals and research universities, and making life more difficult for them will be profoundly damaging to American medical research and health care, not to mention industries including energy, pharmaceuticals, and high-tech (agriculture, hospitality and construction go without saying). In major medical centers, immigrants are doing everything from emptying bedpans and changing IVs, to leading multimillion-dollar National Institutes of Health-funded grant projects.

In addition to its several dozen major research universities, the U.S. has many government agencies and private companies engaged in high-level scientific research.

[http://www.bostonherald.com/opinion/op\\_ed/2017/02/lehnert\\_immigration\\_bans\\_threaten\\_economy](http://www.bostonherald.com/opinion/op_ed/2017/02/lehnert_immigration_bans_threaten_economy)



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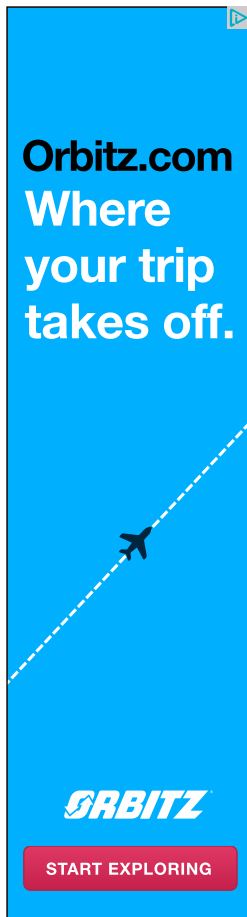
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This is a draw for the world's best and brightest, and some researchers, after completing a Ph.D., medical residency, post-doctoral appointment or visiting professorship in the U.S., seek to remain here.



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## PATRIOTS FAN SHOP



The scholars and doctors whose applications I prepare at the law firm I work for have impressive resumes. If they didn't, it wouldn't be possible to qualify them under the "extraordinary ability" or "outstanding researcher" categories with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

These people don't *need* to be here; they are a highly educated and mobile group of professionals who will probably land on their feet, if not in their homeland, then in a third country. Canada, Australia, Germany and others are plenty happy to snap up the world's scientific elite.

The Trump administration's policies are cruel to the most vulnerable immigrants: refugees, economic migrants, and citizens of the banned seven Muslim-majority nations, but they will also have a chilling effect on immigration regardless of provenance. The actions of the Trump administration thus far have been punitive, arbitrary, uninformed and mostly illegal. Who knows where it will end, or what countries or classifications of people will be added to those deemed unacceptable? Even those from places nowhere near the countries on the Trump hit list are certain to think twice about coming here, particularly scientists and doctors who have more options than most.

Scientists and medical professionals are coming to U.S. institutions for a reason: to further their education, to engage in scientific research, or to pursue a medical or academic career. They seek opportunity, and yet, the administration is undermining education, attacking science, and degrading medical care. All of this — in addition to anti-immigration statements and ill-conceived executive orders — is making the U.S. profoundly unattractive to the world's top minds, and will undermine the American

economy and society. We will lose scientists and doctors who are already here and who can't (or don't want to) remain, as well as countless others who won't come in the first place.

Trump's immigration policy is failing in terms of justice, fairness, and compassion, but even if the human factor was ignored entirely, it is a disaster that will end up punishing the United States and its citizens at least as much as it hurts those from abroad.

Tim Lehnert is a writer, editor and legal assistant who lives in Cranston, R.I. Talk back at [letterstoeditor@bostonherald.com](mailto:letterstoeditor@bostonherald.com).



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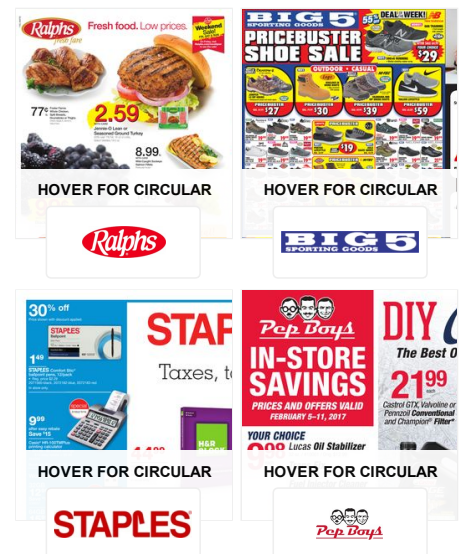
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