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BUSINESSES TO CLOSE AMID ONE-DAY STRIKE BY IMMIGRANTS AGAINST TRUMP

'A Day Without Immigrants' calls on foreign-born workers to stay home to demonstrate their impact on economy

By Miriam Jordan and Charles Passy
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Restaurants, bakeries and other businesses around the country will close Thursday as thousands of foreign-born workers participate in a one-day strike to protest President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

Dubbed a "Day Without Immigrants," the nationwide effort orchestrated by immigrant-advocacy groups calls on foreign-born workers to stay home, avoid shopping and shutter their businesses to demonstrate their impact on the economy.

Immigrants from all parts of the country are expected to participate in the walkout, according to organizers and business owners.

New York-based Bromberg Bros. Blue Ribbon Restaurants plans to close seven restaurants Thursday. The company said it didn't come to the decision lightly, since the loss of revenue will be in the six digits.

Eric Bromberg, one of the owners, said it was important to "support our staff and our community," noting that at least 15% of its workforce is foreign-born.

It is the latest protest against the immigration policies of Mr. Trump, who has pledged to secure the nation's borders and ramp up the deportation of illegal immigrants. Last week, federal agents arrested more than 680 undocumented immigrants in an enforcement operation that spanned six states.

Mr. Trump's executive order banning nationals of seven majority-Muslim countries, citing terrorism concerns, sparked nationwide protests and provoked legal challenges that led to the suspension of the order pending further litigation.

About eight million out of the 11.1 million immigrants unlawfully in the U.S. participate in the labor force in a range of industries like construction, agriculture and hospitality. Often these workers use fictitious Social Security numbers to secure employment, which makes them a priority for removal from the country under criteria that Mr. Trump outlined in a Jan. 25 executive order.

The restaurant industry, which boasts a higher concentration of foreign-born workers than the overall U.S. economy, is likely to be hardest hit by Thursday's planned strike. Nearly

one-quarter of restaurant workers in 2016 were foreign-born compared with 18.5% for all sectors, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics compiled by the National Restaurant Association.

James Monahan, a New York-based restaurant publicist and consultant who is also a supporter of Mr. Trump, says employees who don't show up on Thursday are just making it tougher for those who are willing to work.

"That's not respectful," said Mr. Monahan, who also said he doubted the protest would have a lasting effect on raising awareness to the immigrant issue. "Two days from now, nobody will be talking about it," he said.

The Colorado Restaurant Association President Sarah Riggs said that the trade group "has long supported responsible immigration reform because foreign-born workers are critical to our industry."

The association distributed a notice to members about the potential disruption. Among other things, the notice said that workers are allowed by law to engage in "concerted activity for mutual aid and protection." Therefore, "you should not discipline workers," it advised.

Prominent Spanish-born chef José Andrés, who is based in Washington, D.C., and has been a vocal critic of Mr. Trump, said on Twitter that he will be closing three of his restaurants for the day. On the social-media forum, he said the decision was in "support of our people." Mr. Andrés couldn't be reached for comment.

In Philadelphia, Alma Romero said that she and her immigrant co-workers wouldn't show up Thursday at Marco's Fish Market, which sells fresh fish and seafood to individual buyers and restaurants.

"Our clients are African-American, white and Asian," said Ms. Romero, between helping customers Wednesday. "There won't be anyone here tomorrow to serve them. We'll be closed."

Ms. Romero, who has lived in the U.S. 18 years and has two U.S.-citizen daughters, said that the last time she stayed home from work was for a similar event in 2006.

At Silver Moon Bakery on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, signs in the windows and at the cash register informed customers of the Thursday closure. The small business employs African immigrants to bake bread and Latin Americans to prepare pastries, said bakery manager Jennifer Kronner.

Whether recent immigrants or descendants of immigrants, she said: "We believe everyone in this country is basically an immigrant, so we support this."