

## WEEKLY CURRENT

January 27-31, 2025

### **Issues Making a Splash This Week**

- **How Trump Could Adjust Biden’s Semiconductor Strategy:** The Biden administration pursued a “promote” and “protect” agenda for the semiconductor industry, and while the Trump administration may make some changes, the general philosophy will likely continue. *Read more [here](#).*
- **Money’s One Heck of a Drug:** Statements from both RFK Jr. and the agency running Medicare’s drug price negotiation program offers the clearest evidence yet that President Trump’s vision isn’t to scrap the program entirely but rather to run it his way. *Read more [here](#).*
- **Reining in Spectrum Auction Ambitions:** Senate Commerce Committee Chair Ted Cruz (R-TX) is hoping to include his bill to reauthorize the Federal Communications Commission’s spectrum auction authority in a reconciliation package, but only a slimmed-down version of the legislation that steers clear of the Pentagon’s spectrum operations can likely find consensus within the GOP. *Read more [here](#).*

---

**TRUMP’S SEMICONDUCTOR STRATEGY:** While the Trump administration has not laid out its vision for the semiconductor industry, there are indications that it will adopt a similar philosophy as the Biden administration, pursuing a twin-pillar “promote” and “protect” agendas. **The goal will be to try to increase domestic US semiconductor manufacturing and to limit further access to advanced chips and chipmaking technology by foreign competitors, particularly China.** However, in pursuing these objectives, it is becoming clear that the Trump administration may make several important changes to how the Biden administration sought to achieve these ends, with not all adjustments likely to be the most industry-friendly.

The central part of the “promote” agenda for the Biden administration was the CHIPS Program. Despite President Trump’s attacks on it, Commerce Secretary-designate [Howard Lutnick’s comments](#) in his confirmation hearing this week suggest that the program will not be scrapped entirely. Still, **changes are likely coming to**

**the CHIPS funding rules and how the Trump administration tries to incentivize companies to build in the US.** The most likely reform to CHIPS from the Trump administration will be to remove some of the strings attached to the funding connected to social goals, such as the childcare and labor requirements. Other provisions, such as the limits on expansion in China, will likely remain.

However, **Lutnick's description of CHIPS as an "excellent down payment" and Trump's attack on the program suggest that a CHIPS 2.0 might not be likely in the near term.** While the approach remains popular in Congress, **Trump seems more interested in using tariffs to encourage companies to move operations to the US.** [He floated duties](#) as high as 100 percent earlier this week and singled out Taiwan, but for now, we see these threats as attempts to build US leverage. While Trump has not outlined his specific goals for these potential negotiations with Taiwan and **TSMC (TSMC)**, it is likely that agreements to increase production or investment in the US that he could tout, similar to the Stargate [announcement](#) last week, could satisfy his complaints and create enough of a win for him to tout.

The Trump administration may make its mark most felt on the semiconductor industry with its changes to the Biden administration's export controls, which are likely to remain central to the "protect" agenda. **We expect the Trump administration to take a more hawkish approach to export controls, with semiconductors being a central component of that.** There are [already signs](#) that those processes are starting, with administration officials considering even more restrictive rules governing **Nvidia (NVDA)**. While in the early stages, these discussions are considering potential limits on the company's H20 chips, scaled-down chips intended to comply with current US regulations for sales to China. The Biden administration considered such changes but ultimately passed on the issue. However, **such a change by the Trump administration would represent how it may look to expand the "yard" of the "high fence, small yard" metaphor used to describe US export controls.**

**In his confirmation hearing on Wednesday, Lutnick appeared supportive of more restrictive export controls,** which he would have jurisdiction over, especially when pressed on potential concerns about DeepSeek. "We need to drive our innovation, and we need to stop helping them.... If they are going to compete with us, let them compete, but stop using our tools to compete with us," he said. Furthermore, China hawks are using this moment to call for the White House to impose increased restrictions. The leadership of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party [urged](#) National Security Advisor Mike Waltz to address alleged loopholes that allow Chinese AI companies to access certain advanced technology despite US export controls. **The letter from Reps. John Moolenaar (R-MI) and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) pointed to Nvidia's H20 chip as a potential point of concern and called for "strict licensing requirements" on countries like Singapore.** Notably, the lawmakers did not address the leasing of server space, [one of the loopholes](#) the current US export controls are most commonly criticized for.

**Critically, this scrutiny from Trump administration officials and China hawks in Congress is that the changes that the Trump administration may make to [Biden's AI chips rule](#) that would set country-level caps may not be overly meaningful.** While it is unlikely the finalization of that rule will address regulations around Nvidia's H20 chip, the current push appears to be for greater control of the technology rather than less. This could mean that the changes made by the Trump administration are relatively minor, making a full repeal an unlikely outcome.

---

**MEDICARE DRUG PRICE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: The fate of the Medicare drug price negotiation program hangs in the balance.** Established by the Democratic Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), it lifts a long-standing restriction and permits Medicare to negotiate the prices it pays for its most expensive eligible drugs. Two weeks ago, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) **announced the next [15 drugs](#) selected for Medicare price negotiations. Novo Nordisk's (NVO) blockbuster weight-loss drug Ozempic/Wegovy noticeably made the list.** Over a one-year period, **these drugs were used by over five million Medicare Part D participants and represented \$41 billion** (or 14 percent) of total gross covered Part D spending. **But the entry of a new administration raises major questions for the program — first and foremost, whether it will continue to exist at all.**

**Many Republicans in Congress are absolutely opposed to the program.** In the upper chamber, new Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) has called the provision “price controls;” Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) and former Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) sponsored [legislation](#) to repeal the program in its entirety. New House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY) has his own legislation giving almost all drugs a few more years on the market before they become eligible for negotiation. The House Ways and Means Committee raised (unspecified) changes to negotiations as part of a [master list](#) of programs under review for change as part of the Republicans' tax cuts push.

**That said, there are two big reasons to believe that the IRA drug price negotiations have a good chance of sticking around. First of all, it saves the government money.** Repealing or scaling back the program would mean higher Medicare spending. The full cost of implementing the GOP's number one priority — extending the expiring provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act — has risen to a hefty \$4.6 trillion. The GOP by and large may abhor the IRA's drug provisions but given the party would already be struggling to find enough pay-fors to fill (part of) this hole, could they really afford to dig themselves even deeper? **Keeping the current negotiation program or replacing it with a similar one (like the one from President Trump's first term) may be required to achieve other party priorities.** In fact, doing both would allow even more tax cuts to be preserved.

**The second reason is that the rise of Trump and MAGA ideology in the GOP**

**have put Big Pharma in Republicans' sights. Republicans' positions on healthcare are defined by the dynamics of the internal disagreement between pre-Trump conservatives and post-Trump populists.** The former, free-market, Reaganesque group is determined to continue its long-running fight to get the government out of the way as much as possible, believing privatization is the answer to better health outcomes. By contrast, the MAGA crowd is much more willing to use the powers of the government to get what it wants and to saber-rattle against drug manufacturers for listing high drug prices. While the latter group is defined by a difference more in tone than in substance, they're not an overlapping Venn diagram. **While he doesn't typically care about policy, drug pricing is one of the few areas where Trump has put his thumb on the scale,** going out of his way to support an idea otherwise loathed by traditional Republicans (Vice President Vance also [supported](#) the idea when running for Senate in 2022). There's a throughline all the way back to his first run for president on negotiating prescription drug prices, perhaps because the idea of bartering with companies for a better price strongly plays into the brand he tries to project as a dealmaker. **At the end of his first term, Trump unveiled a proposal to tie Part B drugs to international prices that was ultimately never implemented. Trump's former HHS secretary said he might keep the current programs and "try to out-IRA the Biden-Harris administration on negotiating" if elected,** appealing to his predilection for making deals. Others close to him say he'll likely retain some of these IRA policies, at least until the pharmaceutical industry can provide a more persuasive [alternative](#). **During confirmation hearings, HHS secretary-designate RFK Jr. revealed that an executive order was in the works to support and lay out implementation for the program under the new administration. A [statement](#) released by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services indicates that Trump will keep the current 15 drugs but wants "greater transparency" in how drugs are selected and prices are chosen, a repeated criticism of the pharmaceutical industry. This comes after a former Trump official raised the possibility that Trump may be able to modify the list of drugs selected for this year. The targeted firms have until February 28th to decide if they wish to enter negotiations or not. Negotiations to find the maximum fair price begin in July and last until November — these prices will take effect starting in 2027.**

**A possible compromise between GOP factions might be to scale back the program.** Guthrie's Ensuring Pathways to Innovative Cures Act would extend small molecule drugs' period on the market before negotiation eligibility from seven to eleven years, ending the "pill penalty" and creating parity with other types of drugs. The bipartisan ORPHAN Cures Act would keep orphan drugs exempt from negotiations even if a drug is also approved for other conditions. This would presumably apply to just-selected **Teva's (TEVA) Austedo**, used to treat both dyskinesia and Huntington's disease. **The price of modifying the program in this fashion remains unknown. Whether the pill penalty bill passes depends on the Congressional Budget Office's estimate for how much it will cost.** The more expensive such a provision would cost, the more difficult it would be to pay for and

would require sacrificing other parts of the reconciliation bill.

---

**SPECTRUM AUCTION IN PLAY:** The long-running fight over the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) spectrum auction authority is bubbling up again in Congress now that Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) has been promoted to chair of the Senate Commerce Committee. Sympathetic to wireless industry concerns over a lack of available spectrum, Cruz, alongside Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) and Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), introduced [legislation](#) last March to restore the FCC's spectrum auction authority. Cruz's bill would not only reauthorize the FCC's authority, but also require the agency to auction a minimum of 1,250 megahertz of spectrum for commercial wireless use within the next six years. **As with anything in Congress, reauthorizing the FCC's spectrum auction authority won't be as simple as putting Cruz's bill up for a vote. In fact, we view the March 2024 proposal as fairly unlikely to pass as it's currently written.**

Taking a step back, the FCC's spectrum auction authority lapsed in March of 2023 for the first time since it was first authorized and hasn't been reauthorized since. **While there is a partisan element to the political divide that has prevented Congress from taking action to restore the FCC's spectrum auction authority, the real dividing line is between congressional allies of the Department of Defense (DoD) and congressional allies of the wireless industry.** DoD uses the 3.1 GHz-3.45 GHz spectrum band, known as the lower 3GHz, for military radar tracking, search and rescue operations, and navigation. The Pentagon has been [opposed](#) to moving from the band since before the FCC's spectrum auction authority first lapsed. DoD argues that it would cost hundreds of billions of dollars and take many years to successfully shift its operations. Pentagon officials have instead [called](#) for an innovative solution to [sharing](#) the spectrum, which does not currently exist, although a spokesperson more recently suggested that the agency could move some future operations to a new band. **The wireless industry, on the other hand, is lobbying hard for DoD to give up some of the band. Complicating matters, major industry players like Verizon (VZ) and AT&T (T) prefer exclusive spectrum licenses to sharing proposals, something DoD is all but certain to oppose.**

Despite the ongoing debate, Cruz told [Politico](#) this month that he's looking into the possibility of including his spectrum auction reauthorization proposal in the GOP's reconciliation package. That's an appealing proposal since it would count as a revenue raiser, something that's in short supply. **The problem for Cruz is that powerful members of his own party aren't on the same page. The key members to watch in this fight are Senators Deb Fischer (R-NE) and Mike Rounds (R-SD), both members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as House Armed Services Committee Chair Mike Rogers (R-AL). All three have expressed serious reservations about including Cruz's spectrum reauthorization bill in reconciliation.** Fischer told Politico earlier this month, "I

don't know how that would fit in reconciliation...I'm not in a big hurry to move on it." Rounds similarly [poured](#) cold water on the idea in a separate interview earlier this month.

**Still, the low likelihood that Cruz's specific proposal, or any proposal that creates a spectrum pipeline that touches the lower 3 Ghz, advances in reconciliation doesn't mean that the GOP won't mandate an auction or two in the larger package.** In fact, Congress mandated just that in last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which [approved](#) AWS-3 auctions to fully fund the Rip and Replace program. **Similar to last year's NDAA, GOP lawmakers could steer clear of any DoD spectrum issues by simply including instructions for the FCC to auction bands such as the AWS-3 that don't touch the Pentagon's allotted spectrum. The party could also do a clean reauthorization of the FCC's authority without mandating any specific bands for auction, something [Politico](#) reports that Rogers is open to.** The latter option may be less likely given the desire from both Senate Commerce Committee and Armed Services Committee members to create a long-term solution to the matter. In any event, either would serve as an offset to the party's tax cut and spending ambitions, making a slimmed-down reauthorization an appealing option.

**If a full reauthorization is punted past reconciliation, future negotiations will come down to Cruz, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, and Commerce Secretary-designate Howard Lutnick.** Lutnick made clear in [testimony](#) this week at his confirmation hearing that he wants to return DoD spectrum to industry, but Hegseth separately made clear in his own testimony that he will go to the mat to protect it for the Pentagon.

## A Quick Look Back

### House

The House was not in session this week.

### Senate

On Monday, the Senate voted to confirm the nomination of Scott Bessent to be secretary of the Treasury and held a procedural vote on the nomination of Sean Duffy to be secretary of Transportation.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to confirm the nomination of Sean Duffy to be secretary of Transportation and held a procedural vote, which failed, on the Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, which would impose sanctions with respect to the International Criminal Court engaged in any effort to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute any protected person of the United States and its allies.

On Wednesday, the Senate voted to confirm the nomination of Lee Zeldin to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and held a procedural vote on Doug Burgum's nomination to be Interior secretary.

On Thursday, the Senate voted to confirm the nomination of Doug Burgum to be secretary of the Interior and held procedural votes on Christopher Wright's nomination to be secretary of Energy and Douglas Collins' nomination to be secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Today, the Senate will not be in session.

## **White House**

On Monday, President Trump delivered remarks at the House GOP Retreat at the Trump National Doral Golf Club in Miami, FL and signed executive orders related to the military.

On Tuesday, President Trump signed an executive order related to transgender transitioning by minors.

On Wednesday, President Trump signed the Laken Riley Act into law and signed executive orders related to education and expanding migrant detention operations at Guantanamo Bay.

On Thursday, President Trump held a press briefing on the midair collision near Reagan National Airport, had lunch with Vice President Vance, signed an executive order related to aviation safety, and indicated that he intends to impose tariffs on Mexico and Canada on Saturday.

Today, President Trump will sign executive orders at 3:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m., the president will depart the White House en route to Palm Beach, FL, where he will arrive at his Mar-a-Lago resort at 7:50 p.m. and will remain over the weekend.

## **Spotlight Review**

**Tuesday:** [AI Under Trump 2.0](#)

**Thursday:** [Reconciling the GOP's Reconciliation Ambitions](#)

## **On the Horizon**

### **Macroeconomic**

Today at 8:30 a.m., Federal Reserve Governor Michelle W. Bowman will deliver remarks

titled “Brief Remarks on the Economy, and Perspectives on Mutual and Community Banks” at the Northern New England CEO Summit.

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Small Business Committee will hold a hearing titled “Hope on the Horizon: Prioritizing Small Business Growth in the 119th Congress.”

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Kelly Loeffler to be administrator of the Small Business Administration and several bills.

On Friday at 5:00 p.m., the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “The Economic Consequences of President Trump.” [More information here.](#)

## **Agriculture**

On Wednesday at 10:30 a.m., the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee will hold a hearing titled “Perspectives From the Field: Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agricultural Economy, Part 1.”

## **Antitrust and Consumer Protection**

On Tuesday at 1:00 p.m., the American Bar Association will hold a virtual discussion on the antitrust agenda of Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (R-WI) who was recently named chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Administrative, Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust. [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Thomas Blanford, legislative director for Rep. Fitzgerald

## **Cybersecurity**

Today at 10:00 a.m., the Hudson Institute will hold a discussion titled “Updating US-Japan Cybersecurity Cooperation.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Takashi Michikata, director, Japanese Office of the Director General for Cybersecurity

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Homeland Security Committee will hold a hearing titled “Preparing the Pipeline: Examining the State of America’s Cyber Workforce.”

## **Defense**



Today at 10:00 a.m., the National Institute for Deterrence Studies will hold a virtual seminar titled “The Middle East Missile Update and the Iranian Nuclear Threat.” [More information here.](#)

## **Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources**

On Monday at 10:00 a.m., the Henry L. Stimson Center will hold a virtual discussion titled “Atoms and Algorithms: A View from the Regulator.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Matt Dennis, senior data scientist, Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

On Wednesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Energy will hold a hearing titled “Powering America’s Future: Unleashing American Energy.”

On Thursday at 1:00 p.m., the Cato Institute will hold a virtual forum titled “Exploring Energy Policy under the Trump Administration.” [More information here.](#)

## **Education**

On Wednesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Education and Workforce Committee will hold a hearing titled “The State of American Education.”

## **Financial Services**

Today at 12:00 p.m., Commodity Futures Trading Commission Commissioner Christy Goldsmith Romero will participate on a panel titled “Market Structure Developments” at the American Bar Association Business Law Section’s Derivatives and Futures Law Committee Winter Meeting. [More information here.](#)

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Financial Services Committee will hold a hearing titled “Make Community Banking Great Again.”

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled “Investigating the Real Impacts of Debanking in America.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Nathan McCauley, co-founder and CEO, Anchorage Digital
- Evan Hafer, founder and CEO, Black Rifle Coffee Company

On Thursday at 2:00 p.m., the House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on National Security, Illicit Finance, and International Financial Institutions will hold a hearing titled “Operation Choke Point 2.0: The Biden Administration’s Efforts to Put Crypto in the Crosshairs.”

On Thursday at 2:30 p.m., the Atlantic Council will hold a discussion titled “Navigating the Future of Payments.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Christopher Waller, governor, Federal Reserve Board

## Geopolitical

On Monday at 9:00 a.m., the Atlantic Council will hold a virtual discussion titled “What’s at stake in the US-Germany relationship in 2025.” [More information here](#).

On Monday at 10:00 a.m., the Wilson Center Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “Donald Trump’s Second Term: Thinking Through the Transition,” focusing on foreign policy. [More information here](#).

On Tuesday at 12:00 p.m., the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft will hold a virtual discussion titled “Europe and the Trump Administration.” [More information here](#).

On Tuesday at 5:00 p.m., the Asia Society Policy Institute will hold a discussion titled “A New Era for US-Japan Economic Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges Under New Leaders.” [More information here](#).

On Thursday at 9:30 a.m., the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission will hold a hearing titled “Made in China 2025 - Who Is Winning?” - addressing the extent to which China met the goals and targets outlined in its Made in China 2025 industrial policy document. [More information here](#).

## Housing

On Wednesday at 2:00 p.m., the Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a virtual discussion on affordable housing. [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Governor Tina Kotek (D-OR)

## Immigration

On Tuesday at 2:30 p.m., the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “What’s Next for Birthright Citizenship?” [More information here](#).

## Judicial

On Tuesday at 10:30 a.m., the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing titled “The Poisoning of America: Fentanyl, its Analogues, and the Need for Permanent Class Scheduling.”

On Thursday at 10:00 a.m., the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing titled “Combatting Existing and Emerging Illicit Drug Threats.”

## Labor

On Tuesday at 1:00 p.m., the Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a summit titled “America’s Workforce: Creating a Blueprint for the Future.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)

On Wednesday at 12:00 p.m., the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “Litigation Update: Amazon, the NLRB, and ‘Captive Audience’ Meetings.” [More information here](#).

On Thursday at 2:00 p.m., the House Ways and Means Committee Subcommittee on Work and Welfare will hold a hearing titled “Time’s Running Out: Prosecuting Fraudsters for Stealing Billions in Unemployment Benefits from American Workers.”

## Political

From today through Saturday, the National Association of Secretaries of State will continue its 2025 Winter Conference.

From today through Saturday, the Democratic National Committee will continue its winter meeting.

On Monday at 12:00 p.m., the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a briefing titled “The Congressional Review Act: Process and Procedure.” [More information here](#).

On Wednesday at 8:00 a.m., Axios will hold a discussion on “plans for action on top legislative business in the year ahead, opportunities for bipartisan collaboration, and what they’re looking to get done in the first 100 days of the Trump administration.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Rep. Lisa McClain (R-MI)

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee will hold a hearing titled “Rightsizing Federal Government.” Expected participants include:

- Governor Kimberly Reynolds (R-IA)

On Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., New York University, Washington, DC Brandeis Center will hold a discussion titled “The First 100 Days: Inside American Politics Panel in DC,” focusing on “immigration, tax and tariff policies, the escalating tensions in the Middle East, the approach to China, and Russia and NATO.” [More information here.](#)

## Tech-Media-Telecom

On Monday and Tuesday, the Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society will host a conference titled “AI at work: Building and Evaluating Trust.” [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 12:00 p.m., the Washington Space Business Roundtable will hold a discussion titled “New Year, New Look at Space Cyber Security Issues.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Dianne Poster, senior adviser, National Institute of Standards and Technology

On Wednesday and Thursday, Privado AI will hold its 2025 Bridge Privacy Conference. [More information here](#)

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Howard Lutnick to be Commerce secretary and several bills, including the TICKET Act. [More information here.](#)

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee will hold a hearing titled “The State of US Science and Technology: Ensuring US Global Leadership.”

On Thursday at 10:00 a.m., the Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing to consider the nomination of Jamieson Greer to be the United States trade representative. [More information here.](#)

On Thursday at 12:00 p.m., the Center for a New American Security will hold a virtual discussion titled “Biopower: Securing American Leadership in Biotechnology.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Senator Todd Young (R-IN)

## Transportation

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will hold a hearing titled “America Builds: Maritime Infrastructure.”

## Afterthoughts

**Mona Lisa? More like Mona Leaving!:** With his time as president of France coming to an end in 2027, Emmanuel Macron has announced a massive [renovation of the Louvre](#). The project most notably includes the relocation of the Mona Lisa to a new exhibition space, which will be accessible separately from the rest of the museum with its own ticket, allowing visitors who come to the museum to see the piece to view it specifically, and it alone. Roughly 80 percent of the Louvre’s crowds – sometimes reaching 30,000 per day – come for the Mona Lisa exclusively, a fact visible to any visitor who has stood in a jumble of jostling tourists with phones overhead hoping to see the famed smile. As one French heritage expert put it, while the Louvre may be the biggest museum in the world, “tourists only come to see five works of art.” As the world’s most visited museum, the Louvre’s entrance will also be given a makeover, built to welcome half the current visitors. Along with other renovations, Macron shared that the project would be completed by 2031, at the latest, a deadline that would outlast Macron’s presidency by years. And perhaps most devastatingly for visitors outside the EU, fees will be raised from the existing €22.

**Let’s Stick Together:** In one of the newest viral trends: sticks? A worldwide phenomenon, [“Stick Nation”](#) has amassed a community of millions of fans and participants. Also known as StickTok (at least for as long as TikTok remains), Stick Nation represents a curious, joyful, and ultimately wholesome movement of participants finding sticks in nature and posting them with accompanying descriptions, often to the response of (surprisingly kind, at least for social media) reviews in the comment section. Stick Nation began in 2023, created by two hikers on a Utah Trail. However, when the [New York Times](#) reported on their account in 2024, their following skyrocketed, and Stick Nation’s relevance has only grown. Boone Hogg and Logan Jugler – the hikers who created the account – seek to use their community of “Stickheads” to broaden the impact of their movement, encouraging people to go outside and disconnect from the online world, motivated by the hunt for the perfect stick. And while perhaps just a mere internet obsession, Stick Nation – a multicultural, transnational community – has come to create space for unity and simple pleasures among online spaces clogged with divide and vitriol. As one commenter put it, “Our ancestors would be so proud.”



Website



Twitter



LinkedIn



Email

