

WEEKLY CURRENT

January 5-9, 2026

Issues Making a Splash This Week

- **All's Fair in Love and War:** President Trump is heightening scrutiny of defense contractors and has called for a \$1.5 trillion defense budget in FY27, though Democrats' increasing leverage due to their expected win of the House majority in the midterm elections makes a big boost in Pentagon spending more challenging. [Read more here.](#)
- **Putting the "AI" in PAInful Bills:** The White House is split, trying to simultaneously put the pedal to the metal on AI buildout while also managing the political consequences of rising electricity prices. A forthcoming rulemaking from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission permitting tech companies to bring their own generation to the grid holds the promise of resolving both of these issues. [Read more here.](#)
- **Little Marco:** Once assailed with skepticism from the MAGA base, Secretary of State Marco Rubio has rapidly risen from "Little Marco" to one of the most powerful players in President Trump's orbit. The secretary's rise was capped off last week with the capture of Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro, a longtime personal campaign of Rubio's and a symbol of his influence within Trump 2.0. [Read more here.](#)

DEFENSE DISRUPTION UNDER TRUMP: President Trump issued an [executive order](#) (EO) on Tuesday seeking to address perceived underperformance by defense contractors by targeting stock buybacks, dividends, and executive compensation. **The EO does not directly prohibit stock buybacks and dividends but rather gives Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth a cudgel to pressure contractors to meet the Pentagon's expectations regarding contract performance.** The EO directs Hegseth to conduct a review of defense contractors that are not adequately performing, failing to invest in production capacity or prioritize federal contracts, or producing too slowly. The Department of Defense (DOD), also known as the Department of War, will ask those that don't meet the grade and who have engaged in stock buybacks or made distributions to shareholders to submit a "remediation plan." If that plan is not accepted, Hegseth can take enforcement steps, including

using the Defense Production Act (which allows the White House to control industries on an emergency basis) and federal acquisition authorities. The EO also directs future defense contracts to condition stock buybacks, corporate distributions, and executive compensation on contract performance. In a Truth Social post, Trump specifically [criticized RTX \(RTX\)](#) as “the slowest in increasing their volume, and the most aggressive spending on their Shareholders.”

The executive order underlines the Trump Pentagon’s priority of reshaping procurement, the subject of a wide-ranging memo issued in November. Added pressure on legacy primes could create a wider path for Little Tech to win defense contracts. **Trump’s latest defense EO presents headline risk but should be seen as a bid to exert maximum leverage over the defense sector to realize the DOD’s new vision for acquisition.**

While Trump’s EO, signed on Tuesday, heightens scrutiny of defense contractors, he posted on Truth Social on Wednesday, [calling](#) for a \$1.5 trillion defense budget in FY27. This spending target is a reversal from the president’s first proposed defense budget for his second term. Trump’s FY26 budget request to Congress kept discretionary defense spending flat relative to FY25, which would amount to a cut in real terms. This fiscally austere approach likely reflects the influence of noted fiscal hawk Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought. Republicans gave the Pentagon a \$150 billion boost in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, but this was a one-time infusion of cash.

Trump’s defense spending aspirations for FY27 notwithstanding, Congress still has to finish FY26 appropriations. It’s not yet clear whether the Pentagon will end up with another year-long continuing resolution (CR) or whether Congress will pass a new FY26 defense spending bill. House Appropriations Committee Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) told Politico this week that a bipartisan defense spending bill would track with the National Defense Authorization Act (which was \$8 billion above Trump’s topline) or go higher than that. While Democratic defense hawks may support a boost to defense spending, the party is unlikely to allow a defense spending bill to pass without using their leverage for nondefense spending as well. “Defense and Labor-H will have to be paired together,” Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) told Politico, referring to the bill that funds the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. “The Dems are not going to let Defense move without having Labor-H go with it.”

Congress technically faces a September 30th deadline to pass FY27 appropriations, but lawmakers are likely to punt it until after the midterm elections, given the political realities of campaign season. Historical trends and current polling favor Democrats to win a majority in the House. The small number of competitive districts makes a wave unlikely, but House Speaker Mike Johnson’s (R-LA) razor-thin majority is likely to flip. If House Democrats win a majority as expected, they would have no incentive to cut a deal on FY27 spending in the lame duck session and would have even more leverage under divided

government. In that scenario, **Democrats would be likely to seek a return to parity in defense and nondefense spending increases. This would make a big boost for the Pentagon more challenging in FY27.** The DOD is unlikely to receive a large windfall beyond the \$150 billion from Republicans' reconciliation legislation, which is spread over multiple years.

AI AND AFFORDABILITY FIGHT OVER THE GRID: The Trump administration has incompatible priorities when it comes to energy. On the one hand, the White House is all-in when it comes to AI. It proudly touts data center investments at press conferences. One executive order states that "Continued American leadership in AI is of paramount importance to maintaining the economic and national security of the United States." Energy Secretary Chris Wright is comparing the AI race to the Manhattan Project. **On the other hand, the White House is "obsessed" with combating rising energy prices.** President Trump held a high-priority briefing last month, with the chief of staff and two Cabinet secretaries present, to discuss the administration's actions to reduce power costs, signaling that it had become "a top priority" for the president to politically combat affordability critiques.

AI is threatening to break the grid. ERCOT, Texas's power grid, ended 2025 with 233 gigawatts (GWs) of power demand in the queue from large loads seeking grid connection, a 269 percent increase from the year before. Data centers alone represent [77 percent](#) of this queue. For reference, **this is more than twice Texas's total installed generation capacity and almost three times its record demand.** Across the country, utilities are overwhelmed by interconnection requests. ERCOT's rules were written with the expectation that 40 or 50 large loads would be seeking entry at any one time, per a body executive, but the utility had received 225 new requests through November of last year. The long-term forecast of the country's largest regional grid, PJM, found that more than 90 percent of the new generation required through 2030 is due to data centers. **Nationwide, more than half of all demand growth in utility load forecasts is just data [centers](#).**

This unanticipated demand is already affecting markets and driving up electricity prices for everyone. Residential utility rates have risen by more than a [third](#) nationally on average since 2020, and electricity has broadly outpaced inflation since [2022](#). More than [24 percent](#) of households were unable to pay their energy bills in full in 2024, and [36 percent](#) of adults reported that the bills were a "major" source of stress in a poll last month. Data center forecasted load specifically accounted for [\\$21.3 billion](#) in costs for PJM's last three capacity auctions, or almost half the total. **This price surge is manifesting in politics. Democrats utilized spiking utility costs in Virginia, New Jersey, and Georgia last year as part of an affordability message to great effect.** In the first, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate insisted that centers "pay their own way and their fair [share](#)," while in New Jersey, both candidates dedicated between 25 and 30 percent of all ad spending on energy and climate [issues](#). Garden State Democratic

Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill ran on declaring a state of emergency on [Day One](#) and freezing utility rates. **Electricity became a “kitchen table issue” comparable to recent persuasive messaging on the price of eggs or [gasoline](#). The Trump administration’s focus on countering with its own energy affordability message is an implicit acknowledgment of the strategy’s success.** Pushback to data centers at the state and local level is ramping up: from March through June of this year, an estimated [\\$98 billion](#) in projects were blocked or delayed. **The anti-AI push** (or at least, data center power concerns) **is bipartisan**. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in recent days proposed a national moratorium on data center construction, but other critiques have also been raised by state and federal Republicans, including a state law in Texas last year imposing greater restrictions and requirements on large load customers.

Both state and federal regulators are trying to balance these competing interests. Around the country, there are at least 65 large-load tariffs, either pending or in place, in 34 states to resolve these issues, of which 46 were newly enacted in [2025](#). Common contract elements include obtaining commitments from data centers, which frequently submit multiple connection requests to different grids simultaneously to keep their options open. Politico reports that PJM intends to release a new forecast this month that will include “appreciably lower” projects, on the back of a more skeptical accounting of the demand for data centers. **The highest-profile deliberations have been taking place at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), where newly installed leadership reflects both the administration’s desire to build alongside price and reliability concerns. The body ruled last month that PJM’s rules regarding co-location — when tech companies build private generation alongside their on-site data centers — were unjust and unreasonable.** FERC directed the regional grid to revise its rules to accommodate co-location arrangements. PJM is required to submit tariff revisions to the different requested modifications by January 19th and February 16th.

Separately, FERC has also been requested to assert new power over the interconnection process by the Department of Energy (DOE) in a rare procedural move that requires the body to consider and vote on the administration’s proposal on an expedited timeline: April 30th. While FERC is not obligated to approve DOE’s proposed rule either in full or in part, it is largely sympathetic to its objectives and empowers it with legal justification to act quickly. **If the commission acts expeditiously to create a national framework permitting colocation, tech companies would have the greenlight to pursue their preferred solution for supplying their data centers, while the administration could say it protected households from being swept up in the AI electricity frenzy.**

VENEZUELA PUTS RUBIO IN THE SPOTLIGHT: [From the outside](#), Rubio’s ascension within the Trump administration is both surprising and meteoric,

particularly given its beginnings. The secretary of State, who's long been known for his hawkish views on foreign policy, was almost immediately stuck with an acting undersecretary of state who had previously [derided](#) him as "low IQ," thrust into a [battle](#) with Elon Musk over how to run his agency, and mocked for his body language during a now infamous Oval Office meeting between President Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. But only a matter of months later, it was Rubio who was serving not only as secretary of State but also as acting chief archivist, acting administrator of USAID, national security adviser, and, now, as a leader on the team overseeing Venezuela's leadership transition.

While Rubio's ever-expanding portfolio has become something of a running joke he himself [plays up](#) in Washington, it's also a symbol of the increasing amount of trust President Trump places in him. In May, Axios [reported](#) that, like Vice President Vance, Rubio had rapidly grown in Trump's favor, in part because of his ability to forge relationships beyond politics and in part because of his frequent defense of the administration on prominent Sunday talk shows. Behind the scenes, Politico [reported](#) that Rubio's willingness to jettison old positions in favor of some of the president's foreign policy stances also helped improve his standing in Trump's eyes.

All told, Rubio's been loyal to Trump, and that loyalty has paid off, making him a powerful secretary of State.

But when it comes to the latest US operations in Venezuela, the secretary of State is out on his front foot. Unlike some of the president's other major foreign policy initiatives, this one is Rubio's brainchild. According to [reporting](#) from CNN, "Rubio spent the months leading up to Saturday's operation huddled at the White House with Trump's deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller to craft the strategy." Both Rubio and Miller have held longtime hardline stances on Maduro and Venezuela, making them an unlikely duo, but one that ultimately helped tip Trump toward a military intervention.

Now, the Washington Post [reports](#) that "Rubio will play an outsized role in guiding U.S. policy as the Trump administration attempts to stabilize Venezuela." The secretary of State featured prominently on Sunday shows in the wake of the operation while also serving as the administration's [point of contact](#) with GOP lawmakers. In classified briefings to Congress, Rubio has laid out a three-part [plan](#) for governing Venezuela moving forward.

For Rubio, the new role offers plenty of upside. While the secretary of State has so far ruled out a presidential run, preferring instead to throw his support behind Vance, there's plenty of time between now and 2028. **A high-profile turnaround in Venezuela, paired with his proximity to Trump, would create a strong launching pad from which to campaign should he change his mind on his presidential ambitions.**

On the other hand, the operation includes several potential pitfalls for Rubio, beginning with the risk of failing to meaningfully stabilize the country without further military intervention. **Closer to home, overshadowing Trump's role could similarly risk Rubio's positioning within the administration, although the secretary of State has demonstrated his ability to navigate similar pressures so far.**

Unrelated to Rubio's presidential ambitions (or lack thereof), it's also worth noting that if it's believed to be too much on his plate, Rubio's stewardship of Venezuela's transition could be partially ceded to Miller. The Washington Post [reports](#) that "the White House is weighing giving Stephen Miller, Trump's deputy White House chief of staff and homeland security adviser, a more elevated role in overseeing post-Maduro operations in Venezuela." While Miller previously viewed Venezuela as a key component of his domestic deportation strategy, CNN reports that he came around to the view that military intervention was more important than strong relations for the sake of immigration policy. Even so, it remains an open question whether a Miller-led rebuild of Venezuela would lead to a return of Venezuela as a home for deportations.

A Quick Look Back

House

On Monday, the House was not in session.

On Tuesday, the House held a recorded vote on the quorum call to begin the second session of the 119th Congress.

On Wednesday, the House adopted a rule to allow floor debate on a three-bill minibuss package covering FY26 appropriations for Commerce-Justice-Science, Energy-Water, and Interior-Environment, and a bill that would extend expired Affordable Care Act premium subsidies for three years. The chamber also advanced a resolution providing for consideration of a bill that would extend the enhanced tax credits to purchase health insurance under the Affordable Care Act markets. The House also began consideration of a bill that would define a showerhead such that each head of a multi-head showerhead fixture is to be considered a showerhead that is allowed to spray up to 2.5 gallons per minute.

On Thursday, the House passed a minibuss that would provide FY26 appropriations for Commerce-Justice-Science, Energy and Water Development, and Interior and Environment, and a bill that would extend recently expired Affordable Care Act premium tax credits for three years. The House also failed to override the veto messages to accompany the Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act and the Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act.

Today, the House will reconvene at 9:00 a.m. and is expected to consider a bill that would repeal energy efficiency requirements for manufactured housing, effectively returning manufactured housing energy efficiency to standards set in 1994.

Senate

On Monday, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Keith Bass to be an assistant secretary of Defense.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to confirm the nominations of Joshua Simmons to be general counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency and Sara Bailey to be director of national drug control policy.

On Wednesday, the Senate held a procedural vote that failed on a resolution that would disapprove of an Environmental Protection Agency proposed rule relating to South Dakota's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan.

On Thursday, the Senate advanced a joint resolution that would direct the removal of United States armed forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress. The chamber also confirmed the nomination of Alexander Van Hook to be a judge on the Western District Court of Louisiana.

Today, the Senate will not be in session.

White House

On Monday, President Trump participated in a policy meeting.

On Tuesday, President Trump delivered remarks at the House GOP retreat at the Kennedy Center and participated in a policy meeting.

On Wednesday, President Trump signed executive orders.

On Thursday, President Trump participated in a photo opportunity with US attorneys. Later, the president received his intelligence briefing, and Trump participated in a policy meeting.

Today, President Trump will meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio at 11:00 a.m. At 1:00 p.m., the president will have lunch with Vice President Vance. At 2:30 p.m., Trump will meet with oil and gas company executives to discuss boosting Venezuelan oil production. The president will travel to Palm Beach, FL, later in the afternoon, where he will remain over the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Spotlight Review

Wednesday: [The Policy and Politics of Affordability](#)

On the Horizon

Macroeconomic

Today at 10:00 a.m., Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President Neel Kashkari will give welcome remarks and participate in a fireside chat before the virtual 2026 Regional Economic Conditions Conference hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

On Monday at 10:35 a.m., St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank President Alberto Musalem will speak on the US economy and monetary policy before an MNI webinar.

On Monday at 12:45 p.m., Richmond Federal Reserve Bank President Tom Barkin will speak at the North Carolina Bankers Association Economic Forecast Forum.

On Monday at 4:00 p.m., Richmond Federal Reserve Bank President Tom Barkin will speak at the CFA Society Washington DC.

On Monday at 6:00 p.m., the Council on Foreign Relations will hold a discussion titled “International Economics.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- John Williams, president and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of New York

On Wednesday at 9:50 a.m., Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank President Anna Paulson will speak on the economic outlook before the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia State of the Economy event.

On Wednesday at 2:00 p.m., the House Financial Services Committee Task Force on Monetary Policy, Treasury Market Resilience, and Economic Prosperity will hold a hearing titled “Striking the Right Balance Sheet.”

On Wednesday at 2:10 p.m., New York Federal Reserve Bank President John Williams will give opening remarks before the “An Economy That Works for All: Financial Inclusion” event organized by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

On Thursday at 12:40 p.m., Richmond Federal Reserve Bank President Tom Barkin will speak at the Virginia Bankers Association/Virginia Chamber Financial Forecast.

On Thursday at 3:00 p.m., the US Chamber of Commerce will hold its 2026 State of American Business event, focusing on “the state of the economy and top issues impacting the business community.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Suzanne Clark, president and CEO, US Chamber of Commerce
- Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO, JPMorganChase

- Christopher Nassetta, president and CEO, Hilton
- David Rubenstein, co-founder and co-chairman, Carlyle

Agriculture

On Wednesday at 2:30 p.m., the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee will hold a hearing on growing the small business agricultural economy.

Defense

Today at 3:00 p.m., the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft will hold a virtual discussion titled “Europe and Trump’s National Security Strategy.” [More information here.](#)

On Monday at 12:30 p.m., Georgetown University will hold a discussion titled “Europe and the US National Security Strategy: Friends or Foes?” [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Homeland Security Committee Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection will hold a hearing titled “Defense through Offense: Examining US Cyber Capabilities to Deter and Disrupt Malign Foreign Activity Targeting the Homeland.”

On Thursday at 9:30 a.m., the Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a hearing on the nominations of Lt. Gen. Francis L. Donovan to be general and commander of the US Southern Command, Lt. Gen. Joshua M. Rudd to be general and director of the National Security Agency, chief of the Central Security Service, and commander of the US Cyber Command.

On Thursday at 2:00 p.m., Defense One and Booz Allen Hamilton will hold a virtual discussion titled “Swarming the High Seas: How Autonomy Could Determine Mission Success.” [More information here.](#)

On Friday at 3:00 p.m., the Center for Strategic and International Studies will hold a discussion titled “Status of the Force,” focusing on the future of the Navy’s surface warfare efforts. [More information here.](#)

Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources

Today at 12:00 p.m., the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “Courthouse Steps Preview: Chevron USA, Inc. v. Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.” [More information here.](#)

Today at 12:30 p.m., the Council on Foreign Relations will hold a discussion titled “Nuclear Energy in Emerging Economies.” [More information here.](#)

On Monday at 3:00 p.m., the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “Chevron USA Inc. v. Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana,” focusing on oil and gas companies’ liability for damage to the Louisiana coast. [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Energy will hold a hearing titled “Protecting America’s Energy Infrastructure in Today’s Cyber and Physical Threat Landscape.”

On Wednesday at 9:15 a.m., the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a conference titled “Powering Prosperity and the New Electric Economy,” focusing on “renewable energy’s role in meeting demand, distributed solutions that bring power closer to customers, and new ways to finance the trillions in capital investment required to build the new electricity economy.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Peter Lake, senior director of power, National Energy Dominance Council

On Wednesday at 2:00 p.m., the United States Energy Association will hold a virtual discussion titled “CCUS (carbon capture, utilization, and storage) Demystified: CO2 Storage and EOR (enhanced oil recovery): Safe and Sound Underground.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Senator John Hoeven (R-ND)

On Wednesday at 3:00 p.m., Resources for the Future will hold an event titled “Big Decisions 2026,” focusing on “America’s energy and climate policy landscape.” [More information here.](#)

On Thursday at 10:30 a.m., the United States Energy Association will hold its State of the Energy Industry Forum. [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Chris Wright, secretary, Department of Energy
- Maria Korsnick, president and CEO, Nuclear Energy Institute
- Mike Sommers, president and CEO, American Petroleum Institute
- Jason Grumet, CEO, American Clean Power Association
- Ray Long, president and CEO, American Council on Renewable Energy

Financial Services

On Tuesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on Digital Assets, Financial Technology, and Artificial Intelligence will hold a hearing titled “Delivering for American Consumers: A Review of FinTech Innovations and Regulations.”

On Thursday at 7:00 p.m., the Economic Club of Washington, DC will hold a discussion on “the future of digital money.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Jeremy Allaire, co-founder, CEO, and chairman, Circle

Geopolitical

Today at 11:00 a.m., the Atlantic Council will hold a virtual discussion titled “Iran at a Crossroads: Protests and What Comes Next.” [More information here.](#)

On Monday at 10:00 a.m., the Center for Strategic and International Studies will hold a discussion titled “Next Steps for the US-Japan Alliance: Deterrence, Cybersecurity, and Indo-Pacific Partnerships.” [More information here.](#)

On Monday at 1:30 p.m., the Center for Strategic and International Studies will hold a virtual discussion titled “Strengthening the US-India Partnership.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Rep. Rich McCormick (R-GA)
- Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA)

On Monday at 6:00 p.m., Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy will hold a discussion titled “US Policy in the Middle East.” [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 9:30 a.m., the Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a closed briefing on Operation Absolute Resolve.

On Tuesday at 10:00 a.m., the Middle East Institute will hold a virtual discussion titled “Israeli Formal and De Facto West Bank Annexation: Regional Consequences and US Policy Implications.” [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 12:00 p.m., the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs will hold a virtual discussion titled “Venezuela After Maduro: Power, Politics, and the Path Forward.” [More information here.](#)

On Wednesday at 8:45 a.m., the Center for Strategic and International Studies will hold a discussion titled “Indo-Pacific Forecast 2026.” [More information here.](#)

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on National Security, Illicit Finance, and International Financial Institutions will hold a hearing titled “Evaluating the Operations of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.”

On Thursday at 12:00 p.m., the Center for a New American Security will hold a virtual discussion titled “The Future of US Foreign Assistance.” [More information here.](#) Expected participants include:

- Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA)

Healthcare

On Tuesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Education and Workforce Committee Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education will hold a hearing titled “Who’s Watching the Kids? How Employers, Innovators, and Parents are Solving America’s Child Care Crunch.”

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing titled “Protecting Women: Exposing the Dangers of Chemical Abortion Drugs.”

Immigration

On Tuesday at 2:30 p.m., the Brookings Institution will hold a discussion titled “Assessing US immigration policy in the second Trump administration.” [More information here.](#)
Expected participants include:

- Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL)

On Wednesday at 2:30 p.m., the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittees on Border Security and Immigration as well as Crime and Counterterrorism will hold a joint hearing titled “Biden’s Afghan Parolee Program - A Trojan Horse with Flawed Vetting and Deadly Consequences.”

Manufacturing

On Tuesday at 2:00 p.m., the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade will hold a hearing titled “Examining Legislative Options to Strengthen Motor Vehicle Safety, Ensure Consumer Choice and Affordability, and Cement US Automotive Leadership.”

Political

On Monday at 10:30 a.m., the National Press Club Newsmaker Program will hold a discussion with Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) about “her blueprint for a Democratic Party with a coalition big enough to win elections and strong enough to stand up to the rich and powerful and deliver for working people.” [More information here.](#)

On Tuesday at 2:00 p.m., the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on Government Operations will hold a hearing titled “Curbing Federal Fraud: Examining Innovative Tools to Detect and Prevent Fraud in Federal Programs.”

On Wednesday at 2:45 p.m., the Common Good will hold a virtual Leadership Series discussion with Senator Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD). [More information here.](#)

Tech-Media-Telecom

On Monday at 1:00 p.m., the Hudson Institute will hold a discussion titled “Securing America’s Communications Infrastructure: A Strategic Agenda for US Leadership.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Olivia Trusty, commissioner, Federal Communications Commission

On Tuesday at 2:00 p.m., the House Ways and Means Committee Subcommittee on Trade will hold a hearing titled “Maintaining American Innovation and Technology Leadership.”

On Wednesday at 9:30 a.m., the Georgetown University Institute for International Science and Technology Policy, Institute for International Economic Policy, and Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub will hold a virtual discussion titled “The National Security Risks of AI Chatbots.” [More information here](#).

On Wednesday at 9:30 a.m., the House Foreign Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled “Winning the AI Arms Race Against the Chinese Communist Party.”

On Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Subcommittee on Research and Technology will hold a hearing titled “Assessing America’s AI Action Plan.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Michael Kratsios, director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

On Wednesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Communications and Technology will hold a hearing titled “Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission.” [More information here](#). Expected participants include:

- Brendan Carr, chairman, Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- Anna Gomez, commissioner, FCC
- Olivia Trusty, commissioner, FCC

On Wednesday at 10:15 a.m., the House Education and Workforce Committee will hold a hearing titled “Building an AI-Ready America.”

On Thursday at 1:00 p.m., the Advanced Technology Academic Research Center will hold a virtual discussion titled “Securing Innovation: Modernizing National Lab Infrastructure for the AI Era.” [More information here](#).

Afterthoughts

Putting the Rib Back in the McRib: McDonald's is [facing](#) a class-action lawsuit over allegations that its McRib sandwich contains no real pork, a claim the case argues reasonable customers would not believe given the name and presentation of the menu item. The plaintiffs argue the sandwich instead has lower cuts of pork, including pork shoulder, heart, tripe, and scalded stomach. McDonald's has disputed the allegations, stating that the "sandwich is made with 100 percent pork sourced from farmers and suppliers across the US." It also said it does not use pork hearts, tripe, or scalded stomach, as they are not allowed in McDonald's pork products.

Who Me?: As college freshmen, there are often lots of fun or surprising experiences, with the new tastes of freedom. However, a less common surprise is finding yourself helping resolve a fight over electoral districts. Still, this was [the world](#) that college freshman Daniel DiDonato found himself in when he found out that one of his submitted maps for redistricting Alabama's state Senate had been selected by a federal judge. DiDonato told The New York Times that it was "surreal" to have his map chosen. The outcome also surprised others following the case, with expectations being that the team that had redrawn Alabama's congressional districts in 2023 would triumph again. We're not sure what the NBA equivalent of redistricting in the US is, but based on this early success, we think DiDonato should consider being a one-and-done college student, looking to take his talents to the next level.



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