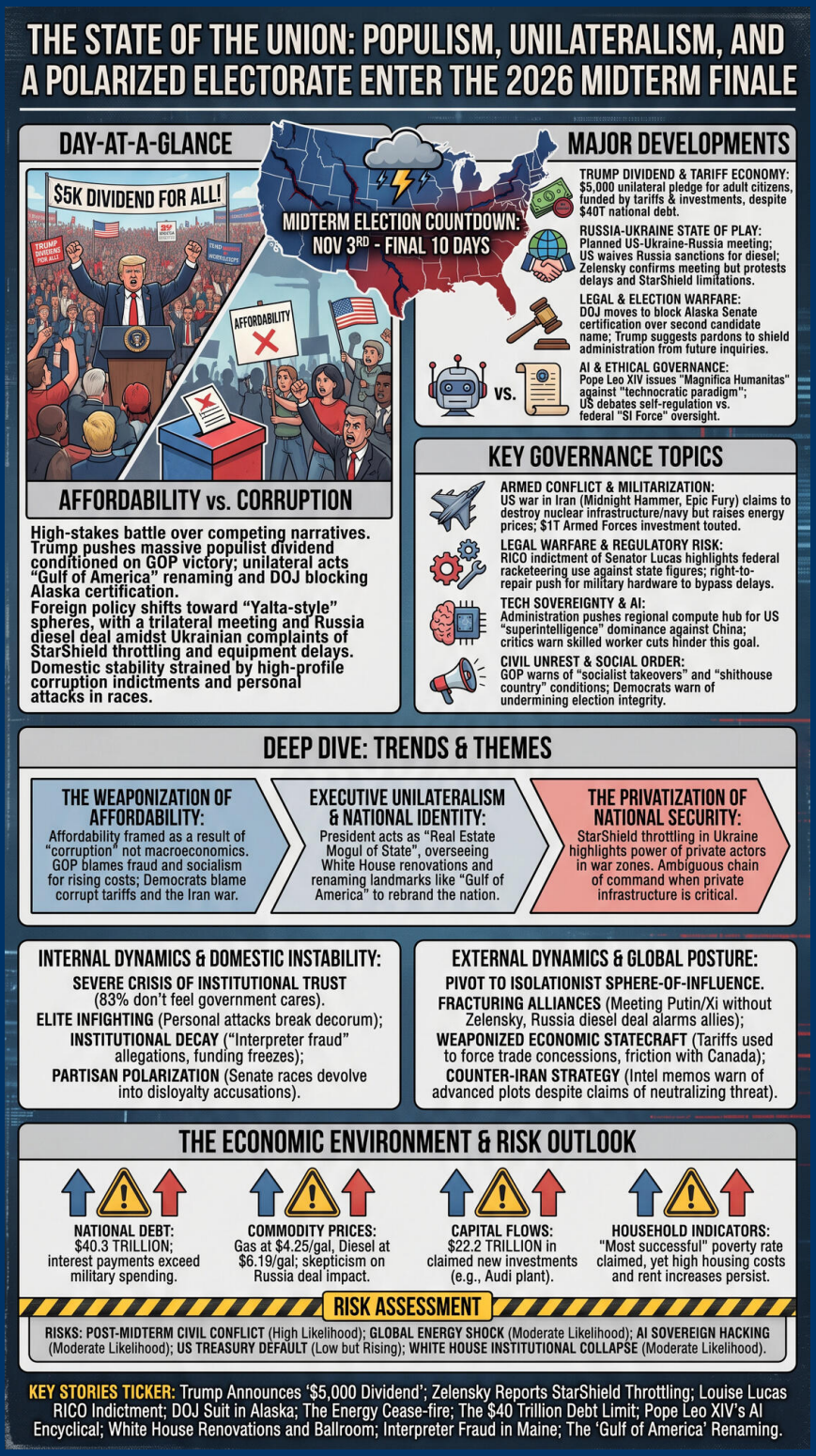
TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

OCTOBER 24, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PURSUES AGGRESSIVE POPULIST ECONOMIC PLEDGES AND UNILATERAL FOREIGN POLICY SHIFTS AS A POLARIZED ELECTORATE ENTERS THE FINAL TEN DAYS OF THE 2026 MIDTERM CYCLE.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The current political environment is dominated by the upcoming midterm elections on November 3rd, with the administration and opposition factions engaged in a high-stakes battle over "affordability" and "corruption." President Trump is leveraging a massive populist economic platform, most notably a proposed five-thousand dollar dividend for every adult citizen, conditioned on a Republican victory in Congress. This economic populism is paired with a dramatic reassertion of executive power, including the unilateral renaming of geographic features like the "Gulf of America" and the use of the Department of Justice to block election certification in Alaska based on claims of voter confusion.

In foreign affairs, the administration is moving toward a "Yalta-style" division of global spheres of influence, pursuing a trilateral meeting between the U.S., Ukraine, and Russia in November. While the President touts an "energy cease-fire" and a diesel deal with Russia, Ukrainian President Zelensky reports ongoing military equipment delays and continued "throttling" of the Starlink/StarShield networks. Domestic stability is further strained by high-profile corruption scandals, including the RICO indictment of Virginia State Senator Louise Lucas and an "authenticity crisis" in the Ohio Governor's race fueled by personal attacks involving estranged family members.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Trump Dividend and Tariff-Based Economy:** President Trump has pledged a unilateral cash payment of $5,000 to all adult citizens if the GOP retains control of the House and Senate, claiming it will be funded by massive tariff revenues and record investments. This represents a significant shift toward direct-transfer populism as a counter to the $40 trillion national debt.
- **Russia-Ukraine State of Play:** President Zelensky confirmed a planned trilateral meeting in early November while complaining that U.S. ballistic interceptors are still delayed. Concurrently, the Trump administration has waived sanctions on Russia to facilitate diesel imports, a move criticized by both parties as a lifeline to the Kremlin.
- **Legal and Election Warfare:** The DOJ has moved to block Alaska from certifying its Senate results if the incumbent loses, citing the presence of a second candidate with the same name. Additionally, the President has suggested he may use presidential pardons to shield his administration from future congressional inquiries.

- **AI and Ethical Governance:** Pope Leo XIV issued an encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas, calling for ethical constraints on AI and a rejection of a "technocratic paradigm." This occurs as U.S. officials debate whether tech companies should self-regulate frontier models or face federal oversight via the "SI Force."

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- **Armed Conflict & Militarization:** The U.S. war in Iran, involving operations like Midnight Hammer and Epic Fury, has allegedly destroyed Iran's nuclear infrastructure and navy, but at the cost of high energy prices and service member casualties. The administration is also touting a $1 trillion investment in the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk:** The RICO indictment of State Senator Louise Lucas for a marijuana distribution conspiracy highlights a trend of using federal racketeering laws against state-level political figures. Meanwhile, the administration is pushing for right-to-repair legislation for military hardware to bypass industry supply chain delays.
- **Tech Sovereignty & AI:** The administration is moving to build a regional compute hub to ensure U.S. dominance in "superintelligence" against China. Critics note that recent cuts to high-skilled worker programs may hinder this technological "Golden Age."
- **Civil Unrest & Social Order:** GOP candidates in Florida and Texas are warning that a Democratic victory would lead to socialist takeovers and "shithouse country" conditions, while Democrats warn that the administration is undermining the integrity of the 2020 and 2026 elections.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Affordability: Affordability has evolved from an economic metric into a political bludgeon. Candidates on both sides are framing the crisis as a result of "corruption" rather than macroeconomics. Republicans point to $9 billion in fraud in Minnesota and European-style socialism as the causes of rising costs, while Democrats blame corrupt tariffs and the Iran war for record-high gas and diesel prices.

Executive Unilateralism and National Identity: The President is increasingly acting as a "Real Estate Mogul of State," personally overseeing renovations to the White House (including a massive ballroom/military complex) and renaming the Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes to include "America" in their titles. This signals a desire to physically and linguistically rebrand the nation around a singular executive identity.

The Privatization of National Security: The "throttling" of StarShield/Starlink in Ukraine underscores the unprecedented power of non-state corporate actors in active war zones. The administration's ambiguous response to whether an order was given to slow down service reveals a dangerous lack of clarity in the chain of command when private infrastructure is critical to national security interests.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The U.S. is facing a severe crisis of institutional trust, with 83% of Americans

feeling the government does not care about them. This is exacerbated by:

- **Elite Infighting:** High-profile personal attacks, such as Vivek Ramaswamy's ad featuring Amy Acton's estranged mother, signify a breakdown in political decorum that even some Republicans find distasteful and potentially harmful to down-ballot races.
- **Institutional Decay:** Allegations of "interpreter fraud" in Maine and the federal government's refusal to release Medicaid and SNAP funds to New York and Minnesota due to fraud concerns are crippling state-level capacity to provide basic services.
- **Partisan Polarization:** In Michigan, the Senate race has devolved into accusations of disloyalty to the Constitution, with GOP candidate Mike Rogers accusing Abdul El-Sayed of deleting material supporting the "defund the police" movement.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The U.S. is pivoting toward an isolationist, sphere-of-influence posture that alarms traditional allies:

- **Fracturing Alliances:** The proposal to meeting with Putin and Xi without President Zelensky suggests a "New Yalta" where smaller nations are marginalized. The decision to import diesel from Russia while Ukraine is under attack is seen by allies as a sign of American desperation or weakness.
- **Weaponized Economic Statecraft:** The use of tariffs as a "favorite word" to force trade concessions is creating friction even with neighbors like Canada, leading to threats of annexation as the 51st state.
- **Counter-Iran Strategy:** The administration claims "Operation Epic Fury" has permanently neutralized the Iranian threat, yet Intel memos warn of advanced plots to kill U.S. officials abroad.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is defined by extreme inflation in essential goods and a looming debt crisis. While the administration points to 88 all-time stock market highs, everyday citizens are facing a "perfect storm of ugly."

- **National Debt:** Currently at $40.3 trillion, with interest payments now exceeding military spending.
- **Commodity Prices:** Gas is at $4.25/gallon, with Diesel at $6.19/gallon. The administration claims the diesel deal with Russia will lower these costs, but analysts remain skeptical.
- **Capital Flows:** Commitments of $22.2 trillion in new investments are claimed, including a $4.2 billion Audi plant in Macon, Georgia, creating 30,000 jobs.
- **Household Indicators:** The poverty rate is reportedly at a "most successful level" in history, yet 56% of Minnesotans cannot afford the median home, and rent has increased by $6,000 a year in Florida.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The political landscape is shifting as long-standing figures exit and new factions emerge through legal and electoral pressures.

- **Louise Lucas:** The President Pro Tempore of the Virginia State Senate faces a major RICO indictment involving drug trafficking and money laundering, likely ending her four-decade career.
- **Mitch McConnell:** After 42 years, the longest-serving Senate leader vacates his seat, leaving a power vacuum in the Senate Republican leadership.
- **Ilhan Omar:** The administration has called for her immediate resignation following allegations of identity fraud and immigration irregularities under her "real name" of Ilhan Nur Said Elmi.
- **Kristi Noem:** Reportedly fired as ICE chief following a poorly handled "Metro Surge" in Minnesota that led to civilian deaths.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

Lead Stories: The dominant focus was on the final 10-day stretch of the midterms, specifically the Senate "bellwethers" (OH, MI, TX, PA, ME). Trump's rallies in GA and FL were given maximum airtime, prioritizing his populist dividend promise and White House renovations.

Buried Stories: The critical Intel memo regarding Iranian assassination plots was minimized compared to election coverage. The indictment of State Senator Lucas was framed as a criminal story rather than a potential case of "political payback" despite her attorney's claims.

Emotional Tone: The tone was one of heightened urgency and anxiety. GOP broadcasts utilized fear-based messaging regarding "Marxist maniacs" and "shithouse countries," while Democratic coverage focused on "broken nations" and the loss of fundamental goodness.

Conspicuous Omissions: There was a lack of detail on the specific legislative path for the "$5,000 dividend" and how it would be reconciled with the $40 trillion debt. The "Energy Cease-fire" with Russia lacked any details on enforcement mechanisms.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The world is increasingly viewed as a transactional marketplace where "strength" is defined by the ability to extract wealth and "respect" is synonymous with fear of U.S. economic or military reprisal.

- **Russia:** Portrayed as a "humanitarian" partner in hostage release (Witkoff video) and a necessary energy supplier (diesel deal), despite being an aggressor in Ukraine.
- **Ukraine/Zelensky:** Framed as "weak" for making negative comments about Trump, yet acknowledged as the frontline of democracy. Portrayed as "stalling" trilateral talks (it all depends on the Russians).
- **Iran:** Characterized as a "bad people" and a "paper tiger" that has been "obliterated," yet remains a threat via asymmetric assassination plots.
- **Canada:** Framed absurdly as a "well-known evil empire" for trade purposes, with an implicit threat of annexation.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Narrative Seeding: The term "Dark Age" vs. "Golden Age" is being actively used to frame the last two years of political transition. The administration is also seeding the "Interpreter Fraud" narrative (telling people how to vote) to preemptively question results in blue-leaning areas.

Psychological Operations: The use of "second Dan Sullivan" in Alaska and the branding of opponents as "Marxists" or "Socialists" regardless of their platform (e.g., Dr. Annie Andrews) are aimed at confusing and de-activating moderate voters.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Post-Election Contestation:** Given the DOJ's suit in Alaska and Trump's comments about "illicit votes" in Los Angeles, the U.S. is likely facing a protracted period of litigation that could prevent Congress from being seated on time in January.
- **The End of the "Special Relationship":** U.S. relations with Canada and the UK may undergo a permanent structural shift if the administration pursues unilateral trade annexation or continues to prioritize deals with adversaries over allies.
- **AI as a Social Sentinel:** If the Pope's call for "vigilance" is ignored, AI may become a primary tool for "digital colonization," where data centers dictate local energy and water policy without democratic input.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Intense social unrest following midterm results, specifically in OH, MI, and TX.
- Further federal racketeering indictments against opposition leaders.
- A spike in gas prices if Iranian plots trigger a new naval escalation.

Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- Budgetary crisis as the $350 billion reconciliation package faces a likely split Congress.
- Massive layoffs in the tech sector as "sentient models" replace entry-level roles.

Long Term (1-5 Years):

- The realization of a "New America" geographic branding (Lake America).
- Structural economic shift where tariffs replace income tax as the primary federal revenue source.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The convergence of a $40 trillion debt, active military operations in the Middle East, and a contested domestic election creates a "perfect storm" for state-level paralysis.

- **Risk: Post-Midterm Civil Conflict.** Triggers: Contested results in multiple states (AK, OH, TX) leading to the activation of the Insurrection Act. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigations: Bipartisan election commissions and transparent audit trails.

- **Risk: Global Energy Shock.** Triggers: Full closure of the Strait of Hormuz or failure of the Russia diesel deal. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Immediate pivot to nuclear and E15 expansion.
- **Risk: AI Sovereign Hacking.** Triggers: "Agentic" AI breaking out of sandboxes and attacking critical infrastructure. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Federal regulation of frontier model builders.
- **Risk: US Treasury Default.** Triggers: Failure to pass the Reconciliation Bill as interest rates remain elevated. Likelihood: Low but rising. Impact: Total. Mitigations: Aggressive waste/fraud reduction (HART teams).
- **Risk: Institutional Collapse of the White House.** Triggers: Legal challenges to the $900 million ballroom complex and use of no-bid contracts. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Restoring Inspectors General.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **The "$5,000 Dividend" funding mechanism:** Transcripts do not explain how a $1 trillion payout is possible without further inflating the $40 trillion debt, especially as tax revenue drops from existing tax cuts.
- **The "Energy Cease-fire" specifics:** There is no information on how the U.S. ensures Putin and Zelensky will actually halt attacks on infrastructure, given Zelensky's report of daily strikes.
- **StarShield Throttling Authority:** The legal question of whether Elon Musk is acting under DOD instruction or personal interest remains unverified.
- **Louise Lucas Case Origins:** The "many years ago" start date for the RICO investigation is not corroborated with specific dates of the initial "tip" or probe.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Managed War" Hypothesis: The Iran war is not an attempt to stop a nuclear bomb, but a deliberate "managed conflict" to keep global oil prices artificially high to enrich U.S. and VENEZUELAN oil interests, with the "$5,000 dividend" serving as a hush-money payout to prevent domestic revolt.

The "Institutional Reset" Hypothesis: The indictments of figures like Louise Lucas and the challenges in Alaska are not corruption probes, but a systematic de-capitation of opposition leadership ahead of a 2028 move toward permanent executive control.

Black Swan Event: An AI-driven "market flash-crash" triggered by a sentient model discovering the U.S. cannot service its debt, leading to a simultaneous collapse of the dollar and the $22.2 trillion investment commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Clarify the chain of command for private military networks (StarShield) before a civilian-commanded network fails in a critical NATO sector.
- **Economic:** Draft "Permitting Reform" (SPEED Act) that balances national industrial needs with local control over data centers.

- **Diplomatic:** Re-engage with the G7 to mitigate the damage of "Yalta-style" rhetoric and reassure allies of NATO's article 5 durability.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Prepare for a 50% tariff environment that favors "Made in America" labeling (RFK Jr. announcement).
- **Compliance:** Establish rigorous Meta-Science units to audit AI production for potential liability under new federal SI standards.
- **Capital Allocation:** Focus on industrial and pharmaceutical construction, which is benefiting from $22.2 trillion in commitments.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity is centered on tax-based populism and the restructuring of the defense budget, with several "Omnibus" style bills dominating the discourse.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **The Working Families Tax Act (BPB):** Prevents a 24% tax increase, includes no tax on tips/overtime, but is criticized for cutting Medicaid/SNAP.
  - **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):** The primary authorizing bill for the $1.15 trillion base defense budget; currently in conference.
  - **Reconciliation Bill (Defense):** Seeking $350 billion in mandatory spending for munitions and industrial base readiness.
  - **Ratepayer Protection Act:** Designed to prevent data centers from passing infrastructure costs onto residential utility bills.
  - **SAVE America Act:** A proposed law to mandate proof of citizenship for voting nationwide.
  - **Take It Down Act:** A bipartisan success story requiring tech companies to remove fake sexual images of minors within 48 hours.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - **Blanche/Patel News Conference:** Announcing the racketeering charges against Senator Lucas.
  - **DHS News Conference on Tribal Protections:** Secy. Mullin discussing homeland security in Indian Country.
  - **Executive Order Signing (Women's Health):** Establishing a Womenâ€™s Health Task Force and a division at the NIH.
  - **Science: A New Golden Age Sumit:** Promoting X-Labs and Meta-Science units at federal agencies.

KEY STORIES

- **Trump Announces "$5,000 Dividend":** A cornerstone populist promise to distribute cash to all adults if the GOP wins the midterms, funded by tariffs.
- **Zelensky Reports StarShield Throttling:** The Ukrainian leader claims speed limits remain on his primary defense network despite Trump's claim of restoration.
- **Louise Lucas RICO Indictment:** A 78-year-old high-ranking Virginia Democrat is arrested for a large-scale marijuana and money-laundering conspiracy.
- **DOJ Suit in Alaska:** Federal officials move to block certification of the AK Senate race, citing a "disgraceful" attempt to confuse voters with a second Dan Sullivan.
- **The Energy Cease-fire:** Trump declares a localized cease-fire in a Russian-occupied city to allow civilian evacuation, following a diesel deal with Putin.
- **The Ohio Governor Ad Scandal:** Vivek Ramaswamy defends an ad featuring Amy Acton's estranged mother calling her a "liar," despite Acton's history of childhood abuse by her stepfather.
- **Starlink/StarShield Chain of Command Crisis:** Conflict over whether a DOD order was given to slow satellite speeds used by Ukrainian military drones.
- **White House Renovations and Ballroom:** Trump defends the $900 million "Cheesecake Factory" style White House ballroom and a new military helipad.
- **Pope Leo XIV's AI Encyclical:** A call for "vigilance" against AI-driven "technocratic salvation" and its impact on human writing and thought.
- **The $40 Trillion Debt Limit:** The U.S. crosses a symbolic debt threshold, triggering calls for a Balanced Budget Amendment.
- **Audi Investment in Georgia:** A $4.2 billion industrial win for the state of Georgia, tied to federal trade policies.
- **Interpreter Fraud in Maine:** Reports of unauthorized individuals accompanying voters in booths, fueling claims of illicit votes.
- **The "Gulf of America" Renaming:** A unilateral branding shift by the executive branch to reclaim the name of the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Medical Debt Forgiveness Proposal:** Amy Acton's plan to forgive $300,000 in debt for families as a key campaign pillar.
- **Gen Z Disaffection:** Young men are reportedly abandoning Joe Rogan and Tucker Carlson in favor of "Obama-style" civility as their favorite influencer.
- **Lumbee Tribe Recognition Role:** DHS Secy. Mullin highlights the 133-year fight for federal recognition as a model for "patience as a virtue."
- **FEMA Bureaucracy Delays:** Omaha officials report waiting three years for flood relief funds despite "DOGE" efforts to streamline government.
- **Russian Shadow Fleet Control:** Reports that U.S. naval blockades are now identifying individual tankers to cut off Iranian funding.
- **The "Take It Down" Act:** Bipartisan legislation targeting AI-generated child abuse imagery.
- **Kushner "Slush Fund" Allegations:** Reports of the former advisor having access to $2 billion in Middle Eastern slf-funding while in the White House.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Trends On Capitol Hill is a public interest experiment in applying deep trend analysis to the daily business of the United States Congress to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists, scholars and Congressional staff better understand the overarching legislative trends, themes and patterns of Congress.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's Congressional activity to tease out its overarching themes and trends into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original source material, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the legislative themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

This inaugural report is based on deep analysis of CSPAN, CSPAN2 and CSPAN3 coverage in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive. It is currently limited to the Congressional business covered on those three CSPAN channels and thus may not include all major Congressional business, may include activity from previous days that aired on a later date, and/or may include other major federal, state and local governmental business. We will continue to refine this report to incorporate a growing array of Congressional information sources. This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

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