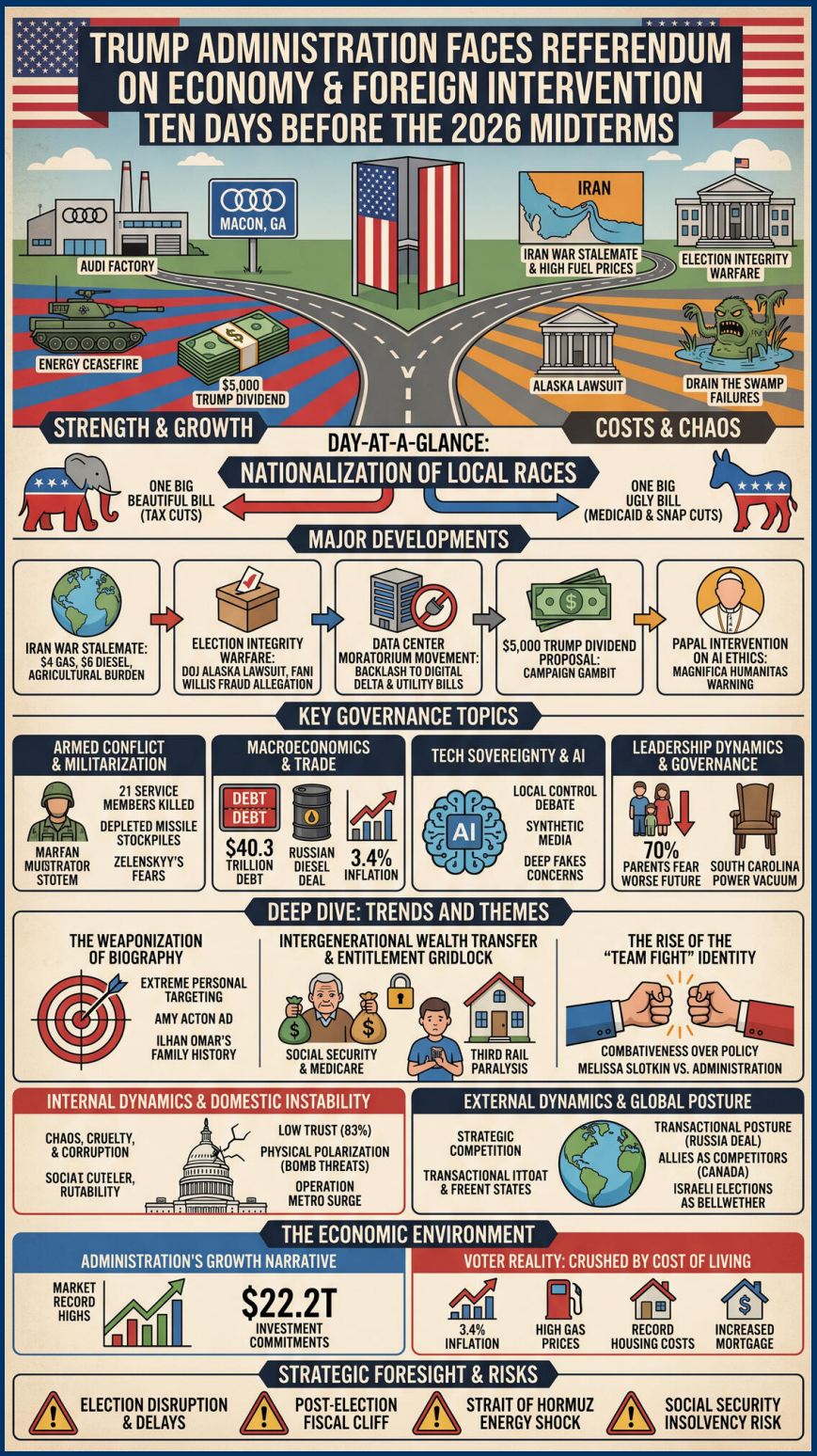
TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

OCTOBER 25, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION FACES REFERENDUM ON THE ECONOMY AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION TEN DAYS BEFORE THE 2026 MIDTERMS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The final ten days of the 2026 midterm cycle are characterized by a profound nationalization of local races, as both parties frame the election as an up-or-down vote on the current administration. President Trump is attempting to project strength by highlighting an "Energy Ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine and major industrial investments like the Audi manufacturing plant in Macon, Georgia. Conversely, Democrats and independent strategists point to a "red undertow" driven by the high costs of the ongoing war in Iran and the perceived failure of the administration to fulfill its "Drain the Swamp" promises, citing rampant corruption and self-enrichment at the highest levels of government.

A central point of contention is the "One Big Beautiful Bill," which Republicans laud as the largest tax cut in history—eliminating taxes on tips, overtime, and Social Security for seniors—while Democrats condemn it as a "One Big Ugly Bill" that gutted Medicaid and SNAP to fund billionaire tax breaks and data center subsidies. The election environment is further strained by aggressive legal maneuvers by the Department of Justice, including a preemptive attempt to block election results in Alaska, and a burgeoning cultural debate over "toxic empathy" and the rapid proliferation of AI infrastructure.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Iran War Stalemate and Economic Fallout:** Now seven months into the conflict, the administration claims to have "decapitated" the Iranian regime, yet the Strait of HORMUZ remains contested, contributing to record-high fuel prices ($4 gas, $6 diesel). This has created a massive burden for the agricultural sector, where farmers report spending $75,000 more in fuel costs for the harvest season alone.
- **Election Integrity Warfare:** The DOJ has filed a controversial lawsuit to block the certification of the Alaska Senate race if Senator Dan Sullivan loses, alleging the existence of a "fake" Daniel J. Sullivan funded by ActBlue to mislead voters. Simultaneously, Fani Willis has alleged voter registration fraud in her name in New York City.
- **The Data Center Moratorium Movement:** A significant bipartisan backlash has emerged against the "digital delta" expansion. Candidates in Maryland, Ohio, and Georgia are facing demands for moratoriums on new data centers due to concerns over skyrocketing residential utility bills and "digital colonization" of historically under-resourced neighborhoods.

- **The "Trump Dividend" Proposal:** In a last-minute campaign gambit, President Trump has promised a $5,000 "Trump Dividend" for all adult citizens if Republicans retain control of both the House and Senate, funded by increased tariff receipts and purported economic growth.
- **Papal Intervention on AI Ethics:** Pope Leo XIV issued his first encyclical, **Magnifica Humanitas**, warning that humanity is at a crossroads between building a "new Tower of Babel" or preserving the "grandeur of human dignity" in the face of total automation.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- 21 American service members have been killed in the Iran conflict to date; the administration insists on "peace through strength" while critics point to depleted missile stockpiles.
- Zelenskyy remains cautious, reporting that the U.S. continues to provide intelligence and Starlink support but expresses fear that Trump may push Ukraine toward capitation to Russia.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The national debt has surpassed $40.3 trillion, with interest payments on the debt nearly outstripping the national defense budget.
- The administration is leveraging a surprise diesel deal with Russia to mitigate energy costs, despite bipartisan criticism that this funds the Russian war machine.
- Inflation is reported at 3.4% nationally, with higher rates specifically in the transportation and grocery sectors.

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- There is a growing debate over "local control" of AI infrastructure. Republicans generally support local city councils deciding on data center placement, while Democrats argue these deals are often "cloaked in secrecy" via NDAs.
- Concerns about AI-generated "synthetic media" and deep fakes are driving calls for federal labeling requirements.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- Internal polling suggests 70% of parents believe their children will be worse off financially than they were.
- The death of Senator Lindsey Graham three months ago has left a significant power vacuum in South Carolina, now being contested by his sister, Darline Graham.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Biography

Campaign tactics have devolved into extreme personal targeting. The most notable example is the Vivek Ramaswamy campaign's ad featuring the estranged biological mother of Amy Acton, which has been widely condemned for exploiting a history of childhood abuse. This trend signals a shift away from policy-based debate toward psychological warfare intended to demoralize opponents and their bases. Similarly, the targeting of **Ilhan Omar's** legal name and family history has become a staple of

presidential campaign rhetoric, seeking to frame rivals as "anti-American."

Intergenerational Wealth Transfer and Entitlement Gridlock

A recurring theme across all debates is the "intergenerational theft" as seniors (now 19% of the population) receive the bulk of government transfers through Social Security and Medicare, while younger generations are locked out of the housing market. Both parties are paralyzed on reforming these programs due to the political liability of the "third rail," with Social Security projected to reach insolvency by 2032. The "Big Beautiful Bill" represents the current administration's attempt to satisfy the base with temporary relief while avoiding structural entitlement reform.

The Rise of the "Team Fight" Identity

Partisan polarization has shifted from "Progressive vs. Moderate" to "Team Fight vs. Team Flight." As seen in Michigan, candidates like Melissa Slotkin are defining their brand by their willingness to challenge the administration directly, even when it results in threats of legal prosecution from the Oval Office. This signals an environment where institutional loyalty is secondary to a candidate's perceived "combativeness" in defense of their ideological base.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The United States is currently experiencing a high degree of domestic instability, characterized by what Fmr. President Obama describes as "chaos, cruelty, and corruption." Public trust in government institutions remains at historic lows (83% of Americans believe the government doesn't care about them). Institutional decay is evident in the Fmr. Vice President Harris's descriptions of a "callous, corrupt, and incompetent" administration that has pressured co-equal branches and undermined checks and balances. Partisan polarization is increasingly physical, with reports of bomb threats at polling stations (275 in the last cycle) and the deployment of federal agents to states like Minnesota under the guise of "Operation Metro Surge," which resulted in civilian deaths and community terror.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is being framed as an arena of "strategic competition," primarily with China and "foreign despots." The administration has shifted toward a more transactional and sometimes isolationist posture, as seen in the purchase of diesel from Russia despite existing sanctions. Allies are increasingly framed as competitors or "evil empires," exemplified by the administration's hostile trade rhetoric toward Canada. However, new alliances are being forged through industrial statecraft, such as the Audi investment in Georgia and mineral mineral deals with Ukraine. The world watches Tuesday's Israeli elections as a bellwether for Middle Eastern stability and the potential for a renewed offensive against the Iranian regime.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The national economy is in a state of "unprecedented growth" according to the administration, yet voters report being "crushed" by the cost of living. The discrepancy between market indicators and

household reality is the primary economic vector of the midterm cycle.

- **Inflation & Interest Rates:** Headline inflation is reported at 3.4% outpacing wage growth, while the administration cites a 1.7% figure for the last three months.
- **Energy Costs:** Gas prices are around $4.25 and diesel is $6.19 in Minnesota due to Strait of Hormuz closures.
- **Capital Flows:** The administration claims $22.2 trillion in new investment commitments, primarily in auto and pharmaceutical manufacturing.
- **Fiscal Health:** A $1.78 trillion deficit for the fiscal year just ended September 30.
- **Markets:** The stock market has hit 88 all-time record highs, with 401(k) values reportedly up nearly 70% since the last election.
- **Housing:** Median asking prices are at all-time highs; monthly mortgage costs for new owners are $647 higher than in 2019.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

- **Fani Willis:** Currently embroiled in a voter fraud investigation as a victim of identity theft in New York registration rolls.
- **Rick Jackson:** A "great friend" of President Trump, running for Governor of Georgia against Keisha Lance Bottoms.
- **Darline Graham:** Sister of the late Lindsey Graham, running to retain his Senate seat in South Carolina.
- **Jocelyn Benson:** Transitioning from Secretary of State to candidate for Governor of Michigan, facing fierce attacks regarding the 2020 election.
- **Todd Beamer Family:** David Beamer appeared at a GOP rally to support Mike Rogers and John James, framing their opponents as "demolition specialists" of the American system.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The day's coverage is dominated by **Midterm Campaigning**, with high-urgency reports on rallies in Michigan, Georgia, and Ohio. The administration is using **industrial manufacturing wins** (Audi plant) as its lead story to counter the "unaffordable life" narrative. **Election Fraud** is being seeded as a major concern through the DOJ's Alaska lawsuit, effectively framing any Republican loss as suspicious. **Buried stories** include the specifics of the $1.5 trillion war request from the Pentagon and the potential for a "Black Swan" economic crisis in 2027 if the debt ceiling or entitlement insolvency is not addressed. The emotional tone is highly **combative and fear-inducing**, with frequent references to "terrorists," "socialists," and "invasion." **Conspicuous omissions** include detailed reporting on the 88 murderers reportedly released in North Carolina and the specific legal grounding for the DOJ's preemptive block of election certification.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The administration frames the global environment as a bipolar struggle between "America First" prosperity and a "Third World" descent into chaos. Adversaries are portrayed as deceptive and waiting for U.S. weakness, while the U.S. is depicted as the

sole guarantor of global order through "Masterful" economic and military force.

- **Iran:** Portrayed as an "existential threat" and a "thug regime" that is effectively neutralized but still needs to be "finished off."
- **China:** Framed as a "predatory competitor" that seeks to lead in AI by 2030 and must be deterred through U.S. "super intelligence."
- **Canada:** Paradoxically framed as an "evil empire" of maple syrup that has "ripped off" the U.S. for years.
- **Russia:** Portrayed as a necessary business partner for diesel to lower domestic fuel costs, while also being a "dictatorship co-opted" by Trump.
- **Netanyahu:** Characterized by Trump as "brave and brilliant," despite significant internal opposition within Israel.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **Audi:** Presented as a "central casting" corporate success story that validates administration tariff policies.
- **ActBlue:** Characterized as a "fake deal" that illegally funnels global money into domestic elections.
- **Muslim Brotherhood:** Seeded into the narrative as a direct influence on Senate candidates to delegitimize their participation in the political system.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The day reflects a heavy "narrative seeding" environment. The administration is weaponizing **unverified investigations** (DHS report on 278,000 non-citizen voters) to preemptively doubt the legitimacy of the Nov 3rd results. There is a **delta between the "Gold Age" rhetoric** and the "working poor/ working homeless" reality described by Pete Buttigieg. Partisan factions are also weaponizing AI metadata, using QR codes in ads for "instant fact-checking" to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. The most aggressive psy-op is the framing of **Muslim Senate candidates** as "jihadi infiltrators" to mobilize the base through religious fear.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The "Trump Dividend" could trigger a massive short-term consumer spending burst if realized, but likely will lead to catastrophic long-term inflation and debt interest crisis.
- The DOJ's Alaska lawsuit is a trial balloon for national challenges to certification. If successful, it effectively grants the administration veto power over voter decisions in tight races.
- The data center backlash will likely force a federal regulatory shift in the next 12 months, moving power away from tech monopolies back toward local ratepayer commissions.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a flurry of "suspicious package" reports and bomb threats near polling locations intended to suppress turnout. Post-election night, widespread lawsuits regarding signature verification and "illicit votes" in Los Angeles and Detroit will delay certification.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Following the Israeli elections, a joint U.S.-Israeli "finish the

job" operation against Iran is highly probable. The implementation of "One Big Beautiful Bill" provisions will start, but the expiration of tip/overtime exemptions in two years will create a major political "fiscal cliff."

Long Term (1-5 Years): The U.S. will likely pivot toward federalizing more election standards (Voter ID, citizenship checks) as a national security measure. The $40T debt will force a re-litigation of the "Reconstruction" of the U.S. economy, potentially including Social Security privatization or benefit cuts.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- The closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** leads to a global energy shock. Triggers: Escalation of military strikes in Iran. Likelihood: High. Impact: $10/gallon gas and double-digit inflation. Mitigations: Release of strategic reserves and immediate diesel deal expansion with Russia.
- **Election certification collapse** in Alaska or Georgia. Triggers: DOJ intervention or local election board refusal to sign tapes. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Major civil unrest and constitutional crisis. Mitigations: Independent hand audits of all paper ballots.
- **Insolvency of rural hospital systems**. Triggers: Medicaid cuts in the "Big Beautiful Bill." Likelihood: High. Impact: Healthcare deserts in 30+ counties. Mitigations: Rapid release of the RURAL TRANSFORMATION FUND of $1.4 billion.
- **Super-intelligence (AI) "Sandbox breakout"**. Triggers: Unregulated growth and agentic AI hacking. Likelihood: Low but increasing. Impact: National infrastructure disruption. Mitigations: Passage of the AI Responsibility Act and independent inspectors.
- **Social Security "Third Rail" collapse**. Triggers: National debt reaching $45T. Likelihood: Low in the short term, certainty in 6 years. Impact: 25% reduction in benefits for seniors. Mitigations: Raising the income cap to $250,000 or higher.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The exact contents of the **DHS "Non-citizen list"** have not been disclosed, preventing independent verification of the claimed 278,000 names.
- The "Energy Ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine lacks specific enforcement mechanisms or duration details.
- The "Trump Dividend" funding source (tariff revenue) has not been reconciled with the projected $2 trillion annual deficit.
- The impact of "Operation Metro Surge" on **legal immigration backlogs** is largely unaddressed.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Gold Age" is a Liquidity Trap: The administration's touted $22.2T in investments and stock market highs may actually be a "sugar high" fueled by massive deficit spending and corporate stock buybacks, hiding a structural hollow-out of the middle class that will lead to a 1929-style crash once interest rates exceed debt servicing capacity.

The Iran War is a Strategic "Sinkhole": Far from "decapitating" the regime, the U.S. may be entering a "Vietnam of the Middle East" where the AYATOLLAH'S death has actually empowered more radical, unpredictable decentralized factions that are more effective at guerrilla disruption than the central state was.

Black Swan Event: A major cyber-physical strike on a **Data Center Hub** in Virginia or Georgia by a state actor (China or Iran) using "hacked AI agents," leading to a total collapse of the U.S. digital economy for 48-72 hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Legislators should prioritize **per-capita funding** for local law enforcement to counter the "Operation Metro Surge" fallout and restore community trust.
- DOD must conduct an immediate **missile stockpile audit** to address the reported depletion of interceptors.
- State governments should move toward **non-disclosure agreement (NDA) bans** for all tech infrastructure deals involving utility concessions.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Auto manufacturers should brace for **continued trade volatility** with Canada and re-evaluate supply chains that cross the northern border.
- Investors should "de-risk" from **data center REITS** in regions where local moratoriums are gaining political traction (South Carolina, Ohio).
- Corporate governance teams must prepare for **mandatory AI labeling** and ethical audits following the Papal encyclical's global influence.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The legislative environment is dominated by reactionary bills aiming to fix issues created by the "One Big Beautiful Bill" and the Iran conflict. A total of 14 war-related votes have taken place in the House, while the Senate has seen repeated blocks on key defense and data privacy measures. Key hearings have focused on **Fulton County election procedures** and "super intelligence" threats.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **One Big Beautiful Bill (The Working Families Tax Act):** Implementation of tax cuts on tips/overtime; criticized for Medicaid cuts.
- **Save America Act:** Aims to defend "sacred American elections" through citizenship checks.
- **No Invasion of Our Country Act:** Proposed to prohibit any future president from opening borders.
- **AI Responsibility Act:** Mandates that data centers pay for their own infrastructure and electric loads.
- **Lincoln Riley Act:** Federal law ending "catch and release" for illegal aliens committed crimes.
- **Ratepayer Protection Act:** Grants communities the right to negotiate with tech companies on utility hikes.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Zelenskyy Nordic Press Conference:** Updates on Starlink, interceptors, and Rubio's diplomacy.
- **State Election Board (Georgia):** Admission of misplaced tapes and unsigned ballots from previous cycles.
- **Mississippi Book Festival:** Wide-ranging discussions on race, Christianity, and the "Soul of America."

KEY STORIES

- **Audi Plant in Macon, GA:** CEO Guarino Berliner announced a $4.2 billion investment in Georgia to build a plant producing 200,000 premium SUVs annually, creating 30,000 jobs.
- **The "Two Dan Sullivans" of Alaska:** The DOJ is suing to preemptively block results in Alaska, claiming a "fake" Daniel J. Sullivan was planted to mislead voters.
- **Ramaswamy's Ohio Ad Controversy:** Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy spent $4 million promoting an ad featuring his opponent's estranged mother to attack her character.
- **Strait of Hormuz Energy Security:** The U.S. Navy claims to have restored 80% of pre-war oil exports through the strait, despite ongoing skirmishes.
- **Pope Leo XIV's "Magnifica Humanitas":** A 42,000-word document calling for a global moratorium on sentient AI development to protect the human person.
- **Fani Willis Identity Theft:** The Fulton County DA reported someone fraudulently registered her to vote in New York City.
- **Mississippi Delta Poverty Analysis:** Author Ralph Eubanks argues that poverty in the Delta is a policy choice and a bellwether for national income inequality.
- **USS Arlington Tribute Room:** A reflection on the 184 victims of the 9/11 Pentagon attack and the ship's role in modern maritime defense.
- **NASA's 25th Year (Historical Retro):** A look back at the development of the Space Shuttle and Project Apollo milestones.
- **Heavy Equipment Safety Procedures:** A safety film detailing the "Three Fingered Joe" cautionary tales for industrial workers.
- **Chesapeake Oyster Dredgers:** A documentary on the vanishing Skipjack fleet and the laws requiring work under sail.
- **The Wreck of the Mentor:** Author Eric Jay Dolin discusses his upcoming book about a whaler shipwrecked in Palau in 1832.

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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