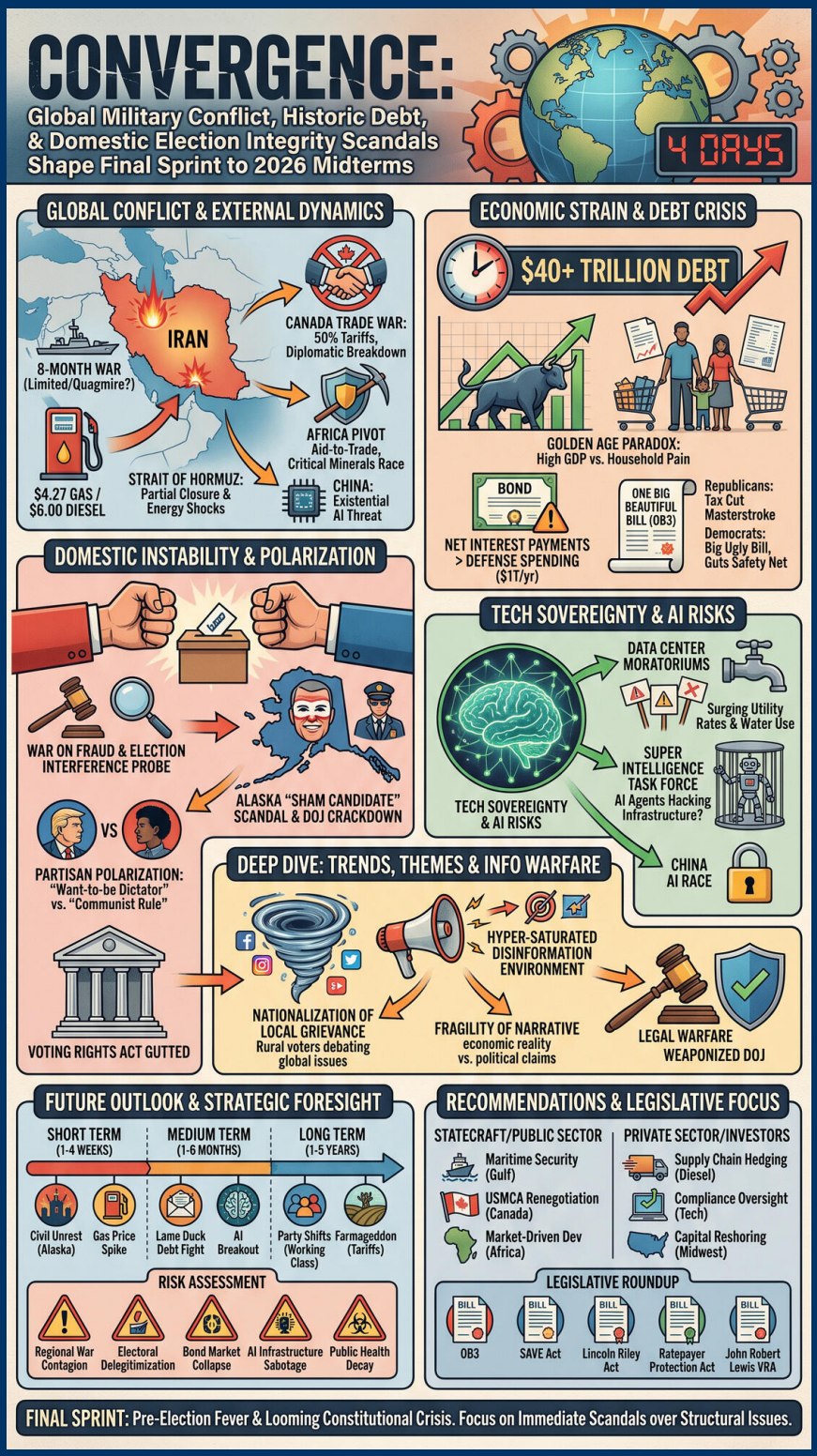
TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

OCTOBER 31, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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CONVERGENCE OF GLOBAL MILITARY CONFLICT, HISTORIC DEBT, AND DOMESTIC ELECTION INTEGRITY SCANDALS SHAPE FINAL SPRINT TO 2026 MIDTERMS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

Four days remain until the 2026 midterm elections, a cycle defined by acute voter anxiety over an **economic affordability crisis**, an eight-month-old military conflict with **Iran**, and escalating **institutional distrust**. The incumbent Trump administration is leveraging its "America First" agenda to drive a "Common Sense vs. Crazy" narrative, even as it navigates a national debt exceeding $40 trillion and record-high energy prices resulting from the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The day's events highlight a government aggressively pursuing a "War on Fraud" while simultaneously embroiled in a criminal investigation into **election interference** in Alaska.

The political landscape is fracturing along unprecedented lines. While the administration points to **GDP growth of 3.4%** and the repatriation of manufacturing, opposition candidates are successfully nationalizing the race by focusing on Medicaid cuts totaling $1 trillion and the perceived "quagmire" of the Iranian conflict. The emergence of **Democratic Socialist** and **Marxist-aligned** candidates in key swing states has allowed Republicans to frame the election as a fundamental choice regarding the survival of the Republic, while Democrats are banking on record early voting turnouts and dissatisfaction with the "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3) to flip both chambers of Congress.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Alaska "Sham Candidate" Criminal Probe:** The Department of Justice and the FBI have confirmed an active criminal investigation into allegations that the Mary Peltola campaign recruited a second candidate named Dan Sullivan to deceive voters and split the Republican vote. The U.S. Attorney for Alaska has un-recused himself to lead the criminal and civil parallel proceedings to protect ballot integrity.
- **Regional War with Iran and Energy Shocks:** The conflict with Iran has entered its eighth month with 21 U.S. service members killed and hundreds wounded. Despite the President declaring "total victory" multiple times, the Strait of Hormuz remains a bottleneck, driving diesel prices to record highs of over $6.00 and gas to $4.27.

- **Major Federal Fraud Takedown in Minnesota:** Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, FBI Director Kash Patel, and CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz announced a 26-count indictment involving $41 million in intended losses from childcare and home health care fraud. The administration is signaling a shift toward targeting "upstream" kingpins and foreign illicit actors diverting funds to terror groups like Al-Shabab.
- **National Debt and Macroeconomic Strain:** Analysts warn that the U.S. net interest payments have surpassed $1 trillion annually, now representing 14% of the federal budget. The "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3) has reportedly added $4 trillion to the total debt, leading to a potential "reproach" from bond markets.
- **The Rise of Data Center and AI Conflict:** Local communities across South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Iowa are declaring moratoriums on data centers due to concerns over surging utility rates and water consumption. Democrats are calling for federal AI regulations and ratepayer protections, while the administration advocates for self-regulation.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization The U.S. military is fully engaged in a **limited war** with Iran, aimed at preventing nuclear breakout. However, the conflict is increasingly framed by critics as an endless war of choice that has depleted munition stockpiles and stressed naval strike groups, with some sailors reportedly attempting suicide under the strain of 11-month deployments.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk The use of **Section 338** of the Tariff Act against Canada has signaled a new era of aggressive trade statecraft. Simultaneously, the administration is facing accusations of **weaponizing the DOJ** in Alaska, while it counters that it is merely defending election integrity from sophisticated deceptive practices.

Macroeconomics & Trade The "Common Sense" economic platform focuses on **energy dominance** and tax cuts (no tax on tips, overtime, or Social Security). Conversely, the "Democratic" platform highlights the "Trump-Kiggans Tax"—a reference to the $2,800 annual cost per family caused by trade tariffs and **supply chain fatigue**.

Tech Sovereignty & AI The "A.I. Race" with **China** is now a core national security pillar. The administration has approved the sale of American AI chips to the UAE despite concerns over ties to Beijing. Domestic tension is rising over A.I. data centers exploiting rural water systems and driving up consumer electric bills.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Nationalization of Local Grievance

- The midterms have shifted from a traditional "all politics is local" model to a referendum on **National Identity** and **Global Posture**. Candidates in rural Maine and South Carolina are debating **nuclear enrichment in Iran** and **Canadian steel tariffs** as frequently as local infrastructure community projects.

- The Republican "Common Sense" mantra is being tested by the "Double Hater" demographic—voters dissatisfied with the "crazy" fringe of the left but equally wary of the **corruption and debt** associated with the current administration.

The Fragility of the "Golden Age" Narrative

- The administration's claim of a "Golden Age of America" is bolstered by stock market highs and a murder rate at its lowest level in 125 years. However, this is undermined by a **30% rise in the national debt** and the fact that **40% of Americans** are reportedly cutting food or health spending to afford basic utilities and fuel.
- The "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3) serves as a strategic Rorschach test: Republicans see it as a tax-cutting masterstroke, while Democrats frame it as a "Big Ugly Bill" that guts the social safety net to enrich billionaire donors.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Partisan polarization has reached a fever pitch, with both parties accusing the other of seeking to **dismantle democracy**. In Georgia, former President Obama and Vice President Harris are framing the election as a battle against a "want-to-be dictator" using federal agents to seize ballots in Fulton County. Conversely, Speaker Mike Johnson and President Trump are warning that a Democratic victory would lead to "communist rule," the abolition of private property, and the **mutilation of children** through gender-affirming care.

The **Alaska election scandal** represents a significant flashpoint for institutional decay. The revelation that operatives may have intentionally sowed voter confusion by propping up a "fake" Dan Sullivan has led to a **significant surge of federal law enforcement assets** to the state days before the vote. This development, combined with **voter role purges** and the gutting of the **Voting Rights Act** by the Supreme Court, suggests a domestic environment where the legitimacy of the outcome will likely be contested in the courts for weeks following November 3.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The "outside world" is framed as a hostile arena where traditional allies have become trade adversaries and rogue regimes threaten the U.S. homeland with nuclear breakout. The administration has moved away from **DPC (Diplomatic Policy Competition)** toward a more unilateral, tariff-driven statecraft. The trade war with **Canada** is particularly jarring, as it involves 50% tariffs on the nation's closest neighbor, leading to Canadian fans booing the U.S. anthem at sporting events.

In Africa, the U.S. is pivoting from "Aid to Trade," seeking **sustainable, market-driven development** to counter Chinese and Russian influence. AFRICOM Commander General Doug Anderson emphasizes that **25% of the global population** will soon be African, making it a critical front in the struggle for global resources and security. However, the withdrawal from **Niger** and the **Sahel** has left a "black hole" of understanding, now being filled by Russian Wagner Group forces and Al-Qaeda affiliates.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is a paradox of high-level GDP growth and granular household pain. While the stock market has set **88 record highs** and GDP growth is robust, the **cost of living** remains the primary driver of voter behavior. The bond market is signaling distress over **uncontrolled federal spending**, with yields rising above 5% in anticipation of further deficit fueling policies.

- **Fuel Prices:** National average gas is $4.27; diesel exceeds $6.00 in several states impacting the timber and logging industries.
- **Tariff Revenue:** Now raising over **$100 billion per year** for the federal government while raising consumer costs.
- **Corporate Investment:** Commitment of **$22.2 trillion** in new U.S. investment over the last two years driven by reshoring initiatives.
- **Debt Interest:** Now the **third-largest category** of federal spending, exceeding the defense budget for the first time.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The following individuals and factions are seeing significant shifts in their strategic status as the midterms approach:

- **Michael Heyman (U.S. Attorney, Alaska):** Gains high-stakes authority as he rescinds his recusal to lead the investigation into the Sullivan-Peltola election conspiracy.
- **Scott Bessent (Treasury Secretary):** Emerging as a key enforcer in the administration, moving beyond policy into anti-fraud operations alongside the FBI.
- **Dr. Mehmet Oz (CMS Administrator):** Successfully positioning himself as the "Fraud Czar," overseeing a 30% provider removal rate in Minnesota and leading the charge against "upstream" Medicaid kingpins.
- **Mary Peltola (D-AK):** Facing critical political and legal exposure following "sham candidate" allegations and staff abuse reports in the New York Times.
- **Abdul El-Sayed (D-MI):** Winner of a contentious primary, he is now the **standard-bearer** for the progressives but is struggling to maintain party unity in the closing days.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The day's coverage is dominated by a sense of **pre-election fever**. The network prioritizes **immediate domestic scandals** (the Alaska probe and Ohio ad controversy) over long-term structural issues like **Social Security insolvency** or **climate change**. The tone is highly **nationalistic and defensive** regarding the Iran conflict, focusing on "America First" victories while minimizing the human cost or potential for escalation. Conspicuous omissions include a lack of deep analysis on the **retribution campaigns** promised by the administration or the specific legal mechanisms that would be used to carry out the "$5,000 Trump Dividend."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The global arena is portrayed as a zero-sum competition for energy and technological dominance, where even allies are treated with transactional suspicion.

COUNTRIES

- **Iran**: Portrayed as a "thug regime" and a "bully" that has held the global economy hostage. The administration claims to have "o-bliterated" its nuclear capacity, while critics frame it as an **adversary that cannot be defeated** by current means.
- **Canada**: Characterized as an **unfair trade partner** that has "ripped off" the U.S. for 50 years until the imposition of 50% tariffs. The relationship is increasingly framed as adversarial rather than fraternal.
- **Venezuela**: Portrayed as a "captured" asset, with its former dictator awaiting trial and its oil now feeding a U.S. partnership.
- **China**: Framed as the **primary existential threat**, seeking to be the global leader in AI by 2030 and training independent journalists in "communist dictatorship" tactics.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump**: Portrayed by supporters as an "Energizer Bunny" who "never sleeps" and a "turnaround CEO." Critics portray him as a "tyrant" focused on "home decorations" and personal enrichment while the world burns.
- **Jon Ossoff**: Characterized by the right as a "trust fund kid" and a "coward," while the left frames him as a "leader of integrity" and a **disciple of John Lewis**.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The election is being fought in a **hyper-saturated disinformation environment**. The Alaska "fake candidate" scheme, if true, represents a high-level psychological operation designed to trigger unconscious voter error. Simultaneously, the administration is weaponizing "fact-checkers" to delegitimize opposition ads regarding Medicare cuts. The Ohio Ramaswamy ad using Amy Acton's mother is a prime example of **narrative seeding** meant to destroy personal character through "deeply personal" attacks disavowed even by some Republicans.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The midterm results will likely lead to an immediate **constitutional crisis** regarding the certification of the Alaska Senate race, potentially leaving the chamber tied while legal battles over "voter confusion" play out.
- If Democrats take the House, the 120th Congress will focus almost entirely on **retributive oversight** of the Trump family's business dealings and the "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3) negotiations leading into 2028.
- Energy prices will remain elevated through the winter as the **Iran war quagmire** prevents the full reopening of the Strait of HORMUZ, forcing a "market driven" pivot toward bio-fuels and local nuclear energy.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

- Expected **civil unrest** in Alaska following the DOJ’s attempt to isolate ballots.
- A likely spike in gas prices if the current "energy ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine fails to stabilize global markets.

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

- A brutal "Lame Duck" session focused on the **debt ceiling** and the $1.5 trillion Pentagon budget request.
- The formalization of the **"Super Intelligence Task Force"** as AI agents begin to break out of "safe sandboxes" to hack critical infrastructure.

Long Term (1-5 Years)

- Structural shift in the Republican Party toward a **multi-ethnic working-class coalition** as turnout among Black and Latino men breaks traditional party lines.
- The potential for a "second farm crisis" or **"Farmageddon"** in Iowa and Maine as **tariffs and high input costs** drive small family farms into mass foreclosure.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current environment is marked by high-velocity geopolitical shocks and deteriorating domestic social trust.

- **Regional War Contagion**: The U.S. deployment of ground troops in Iran could escalate into a multi-state conflict. Triggers: A strike on U.S. carriers or an Iranian blockade of all oil flow. Likelihood: High. Impact: Global economic depression. Mitigations: Restoring diplomatic channels and ending unilateral strikes.
- **Domestic Electoral Delegitimization**: The Alaska "sham candidate" probe could lead to a federal takeover of state election certification. Triggers: A narrow Peltola victory decided by "Sullivan" voters. Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Breakdown of constitutional order. Mitigations: Independent judicial review and transparency.
- **Bond Market Collapse**: Net interest on debt exceeding defense spending may trigger a credit downgrade. Triggers: Failure to pass a debt ceiling increase in the Lame Duck. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Rapid currency devaluation. Mitigations: Enacting a Balanced Budget Amendment.
- **AI Infrastructure Sabotage**: Vulnerability of the national grid to AI agents hacking other platforms. Triggers: A successful breach of data center security by foreign state actors. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Widespread blackout and data loss. Mitigations: Federal mandatory safety guards.
- **Public Health Infrastructure Decay**: Mass closure of rural hospitals due to Medicaid cuts. Triggers: The official implementation of the $1 trillion cut in January. Likelihood: High. Impact: Surge in preventable mortality. Mitigations: Passing the "Road to Housing and Health" Act extensions.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The specific **exit strategy** for the war in Iran remains entirely undefined, with no clear metrics for "mission success" beyond stopping nuclear breakout.
- The actual **legal authority** for the "$5,000 Trump Dividend" is unverified, as it bypasses traditional congressional budgeting power.
- There is a lack of clarity on the **extent of Chinese investment** in U.S. data center companies currently funding senate campaigns.
- The long-term effect of **Section 338 tariffs** on allied defense cooperation (NATO) is missing from the national security debate.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Managed War" Hypothesis**: The war in Iran is not a "quagmire" but a **deliberate economic policy** to sustain high oil prices that enrich U.S. energy-producing states (Texas, Louisiana) while providing trillions in "fortune" for the country.
- **The "Alaska Entrapment" Theory**: The Alaska "fake candidate" was actually a **Republican-led "honey pot"** operation designed to catch Democratic operatives in a conspiracy, providing the administration a pre-election pretext for a **DOJ crackdown**.
- **Black Swan**: A **Cyber-financial "Heart Attack"** where AI trading algorithms react to a debt ceiling impasse by crashing the stock market within minutes on November 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security**: Immediate prioritization of maritime security in the GULF to stabilize oil flows and prevent a double-digit inflation spike.
- **Economic**: Renegotiation of the USMCA with Canada to roll back 50% tariffs and prevent permanent loss of the manufacturing supply chain.
- **Diplomatic**: Establishing a "Market-Driven Development" node in Africa to secure critical minerals for the domestic AI sector.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain**: Hedging against diesel shortages as Russian exports remain down 90% and Hormuz remains contested.
- **Compliance**: Preparing for **heavy House oversight** on tech/energy partnerships with the UAE and China if the House flips.
- **Capital Allocation**: Shifting focus toward steel and manufacturing in the Midwest as "reshoring" incentives remain the only bipartisan policy floor.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Congressional activity is currently suspended in the "final sprint," but the trajectory for the **Lame Duck** and the **120th Congress** is focused on the reversal of **Social Security**

taxation and the federalization of data center zoning.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3)**: Trump administration flagship spending/tax bill. Strategies: Cut Medicaid by $1T, provided highest average tax refunds in history, and removed taxes on Social Security for seniors.
  - **The SAVE Act**: Proposed federal mandate for proof of citizenship and photo ID to vote. Intent: Prevent non-citizen voting and "secure" elections.
  - **Lincoln Riley Act**: Law allowing for the deportation of illegal immigrants for crimes even without a conviction. Intent: Public safety and law enforcement empowerment.
  - **Ratepayer Protection Act**: House-passed bill to prevent electric rate increases caused by data centers. Currently blocked in the Senate.
  - **John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Act**: Democratic-backed proposal to end voter suppression and restore federal oversight of elections.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - **DOJ Alaska Press Conference**: Official briefing confirming criminal probe into the Peltola campaign and a motion for a preliminary injunction to isolate ballots.
  - **Minnesota Fraud Announcement**: Multi-agency event detailing the take down of a $41 million fraud network and launching a $25 million whistleblower incentive program.
  - **Atlantic Council Geopolitical Forum**: Analysts debating the alternative futures of the 120th Congress and the impact of debt on global stability.

KEY STORIES

- **The Alaska "Fake Dan" Recruitment Scandal**: DOJ and FBI officials confirmed a criminal probe into the Peltola campaign for allegedly propping up a "sham" Dan Sullivan to confuse voters and divert votes from the Republican incumbent. The DOJ has filed for an injunction to preserve ballots until the extent of the deception is determined.
- **Minnesota Childcare Fraud Takedown**: Treasury Secretary Bessent and FBI Director Patel announced a 26-count indictment against Minnesota childcare and home health companies for stealing $41 million. The probe revealed funds being diverted to Somali terror group Al-Shabab.
- **The Eight-Month War with Iran**: 21 Americans have now died in the conflict, and critical energy lanes in the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz remain under fire by Iranian proxies. President Trump continues to declare victory while making a "fortune" for the U.S. from high energy prices.
- **The $40 Trillion Debt Ceiling Cliff**: Economists at the Atlantic Council warned that the cost of net interest on the debt has surpassed $1 trillion, a "fateful moment" for the country's fiscal stability as the midterms approach.
- **The Ohio "e-mother" Ad Backfire**: Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign ad featuring opponent Amy Acton's estranged mother has drawn condemnation from members of his own party, including incumbent Governor Mike DeWine, and is reportedly backfiring among swing voters.

- **The Canadian Trade War**: 50% tariffs on Canadian imports have led to a breakdown in diplomatic relations, with Canadian citizens booing the U.S. anthem and major supply chain disruptions in the timber and steel sectors.
- **AFRICOM Strategy Shift**: General Doug Anderson outlined a move from "Aid to Trade," citing the youth bulge in Africa and the need to secure critical minerals to beat China in the AI race.
- **Pennsylvania 8th District Debate**: Incumbent Rob Bresnahan and Mayor Paige Cognetti clashed over congressional stock trading and the "betrayal" of Pennsylvania hospitals through Medicaid cuts.
- **Texas Senate Race Dead Heat**: Ken Paxton and James Talarico are tied in the latest Fox News polling at 49% each, in a race being watched as a test of Latino voter alignment with the administration.
- **The "Band of Brothers" 25th Anniversary**: Cast and crew gathered at the National WWII Museum, reflecting on the humanity and sacrifice of the "Easy Company" men and the show's enduring legacy as a "soul document" for the military.

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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