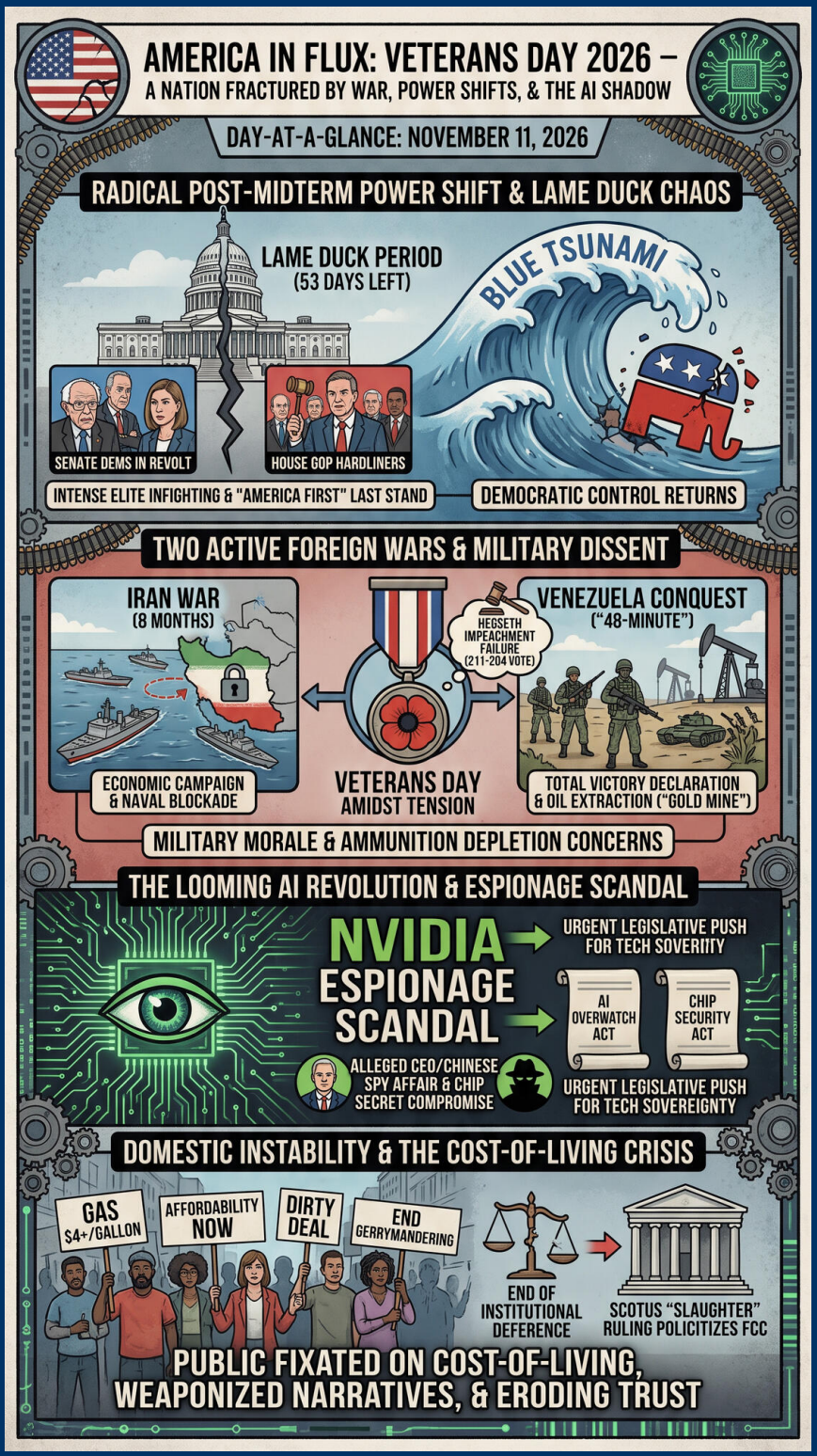
TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

NOVEMBER 11, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

NOVEMBER 11, 2026

A NATION COMMEMORATING VETERANS DAY AMIDST TWO ACTIVE FOREIGN WARS, A RADICAL POST-MIDTERM POWER SHIFT, AND THE LOOMING SHADOW OF THE AI REVOLUTION.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

November 11, 2026, presents a United States deeply fractured by recent political upheaval and ongoing military engagements. The federal government is operating in a high-stakes "lame duck" period following a midterm election described as a **blue tsunami** that returned control of both chambers to the Democratic party. This power shift has triggered intense elite infighting; while House Republicans have elected Jim Jordan as their incoming Minority Leader, Senate Democrats are facing an internal revolt as Senators Bernie Sanders and Elissa Slotkin publicly withdraw support for Chuck Schumer, citing a mandate for generational and ideological change. The outgoing Republican majority is attempting to use its final 53 days to codify "America First" policies, while Democrats are already planning an aggressive oversight agenda focused on corruption and affordability.

The domestic landscape is further complicated by two distinct military theaters: an eight-month-old war in Iran and a recent "48-minute" conquest of Venezuela. While President Trump declares total military victory and touts the extraction of Venezuelan oil as a "gold mine" for the American taxpayer, the Democratic opposition highlights the domestic cost, specifically gas prices exceeding four dollars a gallon and the depletion of ammunition stockpiles. This military tension serves as the backdrop for Veterans Day, where ceremonies are punctuated by the failure of a House effort to impeach Secretary of War Pete Hegseth—a move that Survived only due to a 211-204 vote and is expected to be revived in the next Congress.

Simultaneously, the administration faces a growing national security crisis involving the "crown jewels" of American technology. Allegations have surfaced that the CEO of NVIDIA, Jensen Huang, was involved in an extramarital affair with a suspected Chinese spy, potentially compromising advanced AI chip secrets. This development has fueled an urgent legislative push for the **AI Overwatch Act** and the **CHIP Security Act**. These intersecting crises—war, political realignment, and technological espionage—define a government struggling to maintain its mandate while the public remains fixated on a cost-of-living crisis that has become the primary driver of the national mood.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Post-Midterm Power Realignment and Leadership Crisis

- Democrats won the majority of seats in the 2026 midterms, with current counts suggesting the largest Democratic caucus since Watergate.
- House Republicans elected Jim Jordan to replace Mike Johnson as leader, signaling a shift toward more aggressive conservatism in the minority.
- Senate Democratic leadership is in turmoil as Senator Bernie Sanders and Senator-elect Elissa Slotkin announce they will **not support** Chuck Schumer for Majority Leader.

The Hegseth Impeachment and Military Dissent

- The House narrowly rejected a privileged motion to impeach Secretary of War Pete Hegseth over the conduct of the Iran War and Venezuela operations.
- Hegseth faces accusations of dismissing experienced generals on a whim and mismanaging military morale, despite the President's public defense of him as a "warrior."

NVIDIA Espionage Scandal and AI Sovereignty

- Reports emerged that the NVIDIA CEO's alleged relationship with a Chinese spy was known to the administration for over a year.
- Chuck Schumer and other lawmakers are calling for immediate intelligence briefings on the spy campaign targeting U.S. AI companies.

Permitting Reform and the "Dirty Deal"

- The Senate advanced a bipartisan permitting reform bill (73-25) to speed up energy projects and data center construction.
- Environmental and tribal activists labeled the bill a "Dirty Deal" that guts Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The U.S. is enforcing an "economic campaign" and naval blockade against Iran to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon.
- The administration claims to be extracting billions of dollars of oil from Venezuela following a military intervention.
- NASA is facing a workforce crisis, losing 22% of its workforce in 2025, threatening mission safety for the Artemis program.

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- Lawmakers are debating the regulation of AI, with some governors implementing state-level guardrails for data centers to protect local resources.
- The New York Times has sued Microsoft and OpenAI, alleging the "**greatest theft of human labor**" in history to train AI models.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- The FCC’s status as an "independent agency" is in question following the Supreme Court's **Slaughter** decision, which allows the President to fire commissioners without cause.

- A significant "meritocracy" debate is occurring within the military regarding the impact of diversity initiatives versus combat readiness.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The Supreme Court is weighing a case (**Sun Valley Orchards**) regarding the Labor Department's power to impose penalties without an Article III court.
- State legislatures are facing intense bipartisan pressure to end partisan gerrymandering.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of Institutional Deference

A recurring theme across today's transcripts is the erosion of trust in traditionally non-partisan institutions. The Supreme Court's **Slaughter** ruling has effectively politicized the FCC, stripping it of its "independent" status and raising fears that it will become an "arm of the White House press office" under new leadership. Similarly, the "lame duck" House Republican majority is accused of using "shady" procedural tricks and "voice votes" to pass benefit cuts for veterans, further damaging the perceived integrity of the legislative process. Even the military's reputation for being apolitical is under strain, as former Four-Star generals express concern that the "hollowing out" of senior leadership is being driven by ideological purges.

The Weaponization of the "Cost-of-Living" Narrative

Both parties are now obsessively framing every policy through the lens of affordability. Permitting reform is sold as a way to save households up to $251 a year on electricity. Conversely, the opposition frames the same bill as a "Dirty Deal" that benefits "tech bros" while bulldozing public lands. The cost of the Iran War is no longer debated in terms of geopolitics, but in terms of diesel prices and grocery shelf costs. This "kitchen table" focus is driving a new form of populism where voters are willing to support radical changes (upheaval) as long as it promises economic relief.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The United States is currently experiencing a period of extreme partisan "demarcation." The Republican party, reeling from midterm losses, is divided between a moderate wing and a Freedom Caucus that demands an "all-out" America First offensive before January. The Democratic party, despite its victory, is seeing a fracture between the "old guard" represented by Schumer and a new generation of leaders like Elissa Slotkin who argue that "status quo politics" is what voters rejected. This elite instability is mirrored in the streets, where activists are engaging in "round the clock" impeachment demonstrations and resisting what they call the "unlawful dismantling" of protest encampments. societal health is described as being at a "rough patch" where personal name-calling has replaced the civility of ideas.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The U.S. global posture is currently defined by a "maximum pressure" economic and naval strategy. Secretary of State Marco Rubio describes a world where the U.S. does not rely on Middle East energy but uses its maritime power to protect global shipping while

starving the Iranian economy. However, this posture is being challenged by European allies who fear being "left out" of a deal with Russia. The administration's framing of the world is one of a "zero-sum" competition with China over AI and a "spoils of war" approach to Venezuela, where the U.S. is directly extracting revenue to pay for its military campaigns. This creates an external environment that is anarchic and transactional, rather than based on traditional alliance structures.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic sentiment is characterized by high anxiety and a perception of "crony capitalism" favoring billionaires. While the administration points to "billions" coming from Venezuela, the average consumer is struggling with extreme cost-of-living pressures.

- **Inflation:** Domestic inflation remains a primary voter concern, while Iran's inflation is estimated between 300% and 400% due to U.S. sanctions.
- **Commodities:** Gas prices are a central political flashpoint, currently over four dollars a gallon; the administration is seeking to expand domestic drilling through permitting reform.
- **Capital Flows:** $12 billion in Venezuelan oil revenue is being managed through a U.S. controlled account.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** The administration has reportedly **frozen $2.1 billion** in already awarded federal funds for Chicago transit projects as political retribution.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day saw several critical shifts in leadership personnel and institutional power.

- **Jim Jordan:** Elected as the new Minority Leader for House Republicans, signaling a repudiation of Mike Johnson's leadership style.
- **John Thune:** Retained his position as leader of Senate Republicans but faces a minority status and internal calls for "new blood."
- **Danielle Sievers:** Nominated for the FCC; her confirmation is being fought by Democrats who fear she will act as a partisan weapon for the Chairman.
- **Stephen Miller:** Appointed as White House Chief of Staff, a move Democratic leaders call a "doubling down" on cruel policies.
- **Texas House of Representatives:** Announced its next speaker will be a Black woman, a historic first in a traditionally Republican state.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

C-SPAN’s hierarchy for the day prioritized the transition of power and the legacy of military service. **Lead stories** included the post-midterm leadership elections, the failed Hegseth impeachment, and expansive coverage of Veterans Day ceremonies. **Buried stories** included the NVIDIA CEO spy scandal—which was addressed primarily in a floor speech rather than a hearing—and the specific details of the "Dirty Deal" permitting reform, which was largely overshadowed by the impeachment drama. The tone was highly nationalistic during the morning parades but

shifted to a tense, analytical mood during the Freedom Caucus and Democratic leadership briefings. A **conspicuous omission** was any detailed reporting on the current status of the front lines in Iran or the specific civilian casualty counts in Venezuela, despite frequent mentions of these wars as policy failures or successes.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

Geopolitical framing today suggests a world where the U.S. has abandoned multilateralism for direct, often kinetic, self-interest.

- **Iran:** Portrayed as an "implacable" regime of "lunatics" that is currently being "bled" by U.S. sanctions and naval blockades.
- **China:** Framed as a "real threat" using "information warfare" and "honey pots" to steal AI and industrial secrets.
- **Israel:** Portrayed as a "Goliath" in the eyes of the younger generation, though still defended by the administration as a vital intelligence partner.
- **Russia:** Characterized by Democrats as a beneficiary of "Russian Diesel" sales allowed by the administration, while the administration claims Russia is being pushed out of Venezuela.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Lawmakers and media figures are deeply concerned with the "atomization of the web" and the role of **algorithmic bubbles** in fueling polarization. NYT Publisher AG Sulzberger argues that AI-controlled platforms are creating a "doom loop" that destroys original journalism. Simultaneously, the administration is accused of using "fake polls" to distract from its declining popularity.

In the international arena, Secretary Pompeo alleges that a "third of his followers" are Chinese bots engaged in information warfare to turn Americans against Israel.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The Democratic caucus will likely initiate multiple **concurrent impeachments** starting in January, targeting both Hegseth and Trump, despite the current failure to advance these measures.
- The "Permitting Reform" bill will likely become a primary flashpoint for the Democratic majority, as they seek to repeal sections that "bulldoze" sacred tribal sites.
- Economic pressure may force Iran to the table within six months, but the U.S. is unlikely to offer "bribes" or "reparations," as Rubio suggests.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a flurry of America First appointments and "midnight" regulatory changes as the Freedom Caucus pushes for immediate results before the term ends. Protests regarding the FCC's partisan drift will likely intensify.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The new Democratic majority will likely attempt to pass a "Clean" Richard Starr Act and initiate a top-to-bottom review of the Universal Service Fund. Major clashes over debt ceiling management are expected as the U.S. approaches a $42 trillion national debt.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural changes to the U.S. energy grid are inevitable if data centers continue their rapid build-out. U.S. relations with China will be fundamentally

redefined by the outcome of the AI espionage investigations.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Systemic Military Failure:** The loss of 22% of the NASA workforce and purging of military leadership could lead to a catastrophic safety event or mission failure. Triggers: High-tempo operations or technical setbacks. Likelihood: Moderate-High. Impact: Severe national security erosion. Mitigations: Stop-gap workforce retention and independent oversight.
- **Technological Decapitation:** Chinese acquisition of NVIDIA secrets through human intelligence. Triggers: Leaks of sensitive design files. Likelihood: High. Impact: Loss of the global AI arms race. Mitigations: Immediate passing of AI Overwatch Act.
- **Domestic Civil Unrest:** Backlash against permitting reform and historic site destruction. Triggers: Starting construction on tribal lands. Likelihood: High. Impact: Wide-scale civil disobedience. Mitigations: Reinstating Section 106 protections.
- **Energy Grid Collapse:** Overloading by AI data centers. Triggers: Peak winter/summer demand. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Regional blackouts. Mitigations: Mandating that data centers pay for their own grid upgrades.
- **Voter Disaffection:** Failure of the incoming majority to deliver on affordability. Triggers: Sustained high gas/grocery prices. Likelihood: High. Impact: Shift toward radical third-party movements. Mitigations: Direct affordability legislation.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The actual status of **Iranian nuclear enrichment** is unclear, as the administration relies on "economic campaigning" rather than updated inspections.
- The **humanitarian impact** of the oil extraction in Venezuela is completely ignored in official administration briefings.
- There is no mention of how the **U.S. Navy** intends to match the sheer ship count of the Chinese Navy despite numerous warnings about the gap.
- The specific **NVIDIA secrets** allegedly leaked to the Chinese spy remain classified, leaving the public unable to judge the scale of the threat.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

One potential "Red Team" scenario is that the **Blue Tsunami** is actually a mirage—a temporary anti-incumbent "rebound" that lack a unified policy mandate, leaving the country in a **stalemate** where neither party can govern, leading to institutional paralysis by early 2027. Another possibility is that the **Venezuela "victory"** was a choreographed event designed to create a "rally round the flag" effect, masking a catastrophic failure in military readiness that is only now coming to light via the Hegseth controversy. A "Black Swan" event would be the **unauthorized use of tactical nukes** on "Pickaxe Mountain" by a desperate U.S. military, a scenario already being discussed in the background of active wars.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Conduct a top-to-bottom counter-intelligence audit of all **US AI vendors** to identify further "honey pot" operations.
- **Economic:** Prepare for the end of the **lame duck period** by negotiating the transition of the Venezuelan oil accounts to a more transparent oversight body.
- **Diplomatic:** Re-engage with the G7 to formalize the trilateral talks on Ukraine, ensuring Europe is not marginalized by U.S.-Russia negotiations.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Diversify away from **advanced AI chips** vulnerable to new export controls likely to follow the NVIDIA scandal.
- **Regulatory:** Adjust **data center expansion** plans to include self-contained water and energy systems to avoid local permitting vetoes at the state level.
- **Compliance:** Monitor the **Sun Valley Orchards** Supreme Court case, as a ruling for the respondent would necessitate a massive shift in how labor penalties are handled.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day was dominated by attempts to settle major policy scores before the term expires, alongside confirmation hearings that highlighted the **politicization** of independent agencies.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Permitting Reform Bill (BAJA):** Aims to streamline energy construction; passed the Senate 73-25 but faces fierce tribal and environmental opposition.
- **Major Richard Starr Act:** Designed to ensure **combat-injured veterans** receive full pension and disability benefits; faces GOP resistance due to lack of offsets.
- **Take Care of America's Veterans Act (HR 9237):** Criticized by the VFW as the largest benefit cut in history; passed by a controversial House voice vote.
- **Jawbone Act:** Bipartisan legislation intended to stop **covert government censorship** of protected speech on social media.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **FCC/NASA Confirmation Hearing:** Senate Commerce committee grilled Danielle Sievers on her independence and views on the First Amendment.
- **Hegseth Impeachment Presser:** Secretary Hegseth defended himself against "sabotage," while Democrats called him an "unfit warlord."
- **G7 Ministerial Presser:** Secretary Rubio detailed the **blockade of Iran** and the "devastation" of their economy under sanctions.
- **Democratic Leadership Briefing:** Leaders celebrated a historic victory but faced questions about a "mandate for change" vs. Schumer's tenure.

KEY STORIES

- **The 2026 Midterm "Blue Tsunami":** Democrats secured massive majorities in the House and Senate, leading to a **radical power shift** in Washington starting in January.
- **NVIDIA CEO Extramarital Affair Scandal:** Allegations that Jensen Huang's affair with a **Chinese spy** compromised AI chip secrets for over a year.
- **Pete Hegseth Impeachment Vote:** A privileged motion to impeach the Secretary of War failed 211-204 in the House; 11 Democrats were **stuck in traffic** and missed the vote.
- **The 8-Month Iran Blockade:** Secretary Rubio reports that the U.S. economic campaign is working "so well" that major combat operations are not currently needed.
- **Permitting Reform Senate Advancement:** The Senate voted **73-25** to advance debate on a bill to speed up energy infrastructure for data centers.
- **Veterans Day Ceremony at Iwo Jima:** Secretary of the Navy Cao highlights his story as a **Vietnam refugee** and his son's service as a Marine.
- **Thepermitting "Dirty Deal" Protest:** Congresswoman Tlaib and others rally against the gutting of Section 106 to benefit corporate polluters.
- **NYT Lawsuit Against OpenAI:** AG Sulzberger characterizes AI training on journalistic content as a **"dooom loop"** of theft on a global scale.
- **Venezuela Oil Extraction:** President Trump touts the extraction of billions of barrels from Venezuela to "pay for the war."
- **NASA Workforce Crisis:** Senate hearing reveals NASA lost **22% of its workforce** in 2025, threatening the Artemis mission.
- **Bernie Sanders Revolt Against Schumer:** Sanders and Elissa Slotkin publicly call for **new leadership** in the Senate Democratic caucus due to voter dissatisfaction.
- **Sun Valley Orchards SCOTUS Case:** The Supreme Court hears arguments on the Labor Department's power to bypass Article III courts for penalties.
- **National Military Monument Opening:** USAA opens a monument with **41 million names** of every service member in U.S. history to mark America 250.
- **Joe Manchin Call for Civility:** The former Senator warns that the country is currently in a **"rough patch"** of personal attacks rather than policy debate.
- **Texas House Speaker Election:** In a major political shift, the Texas House will be led by a **Black woman** for the first time in history.

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.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. To learn more or subscribe to our free daily newsletters, visit https://blog.gdeltproject.org/announcing-our-new-daily-todays-trends-on-capitol-hill-todays-media-trends-newsletter-briefings/. You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at https://blog.gdeltproject.org/ and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at https://archive.org/details/tv.