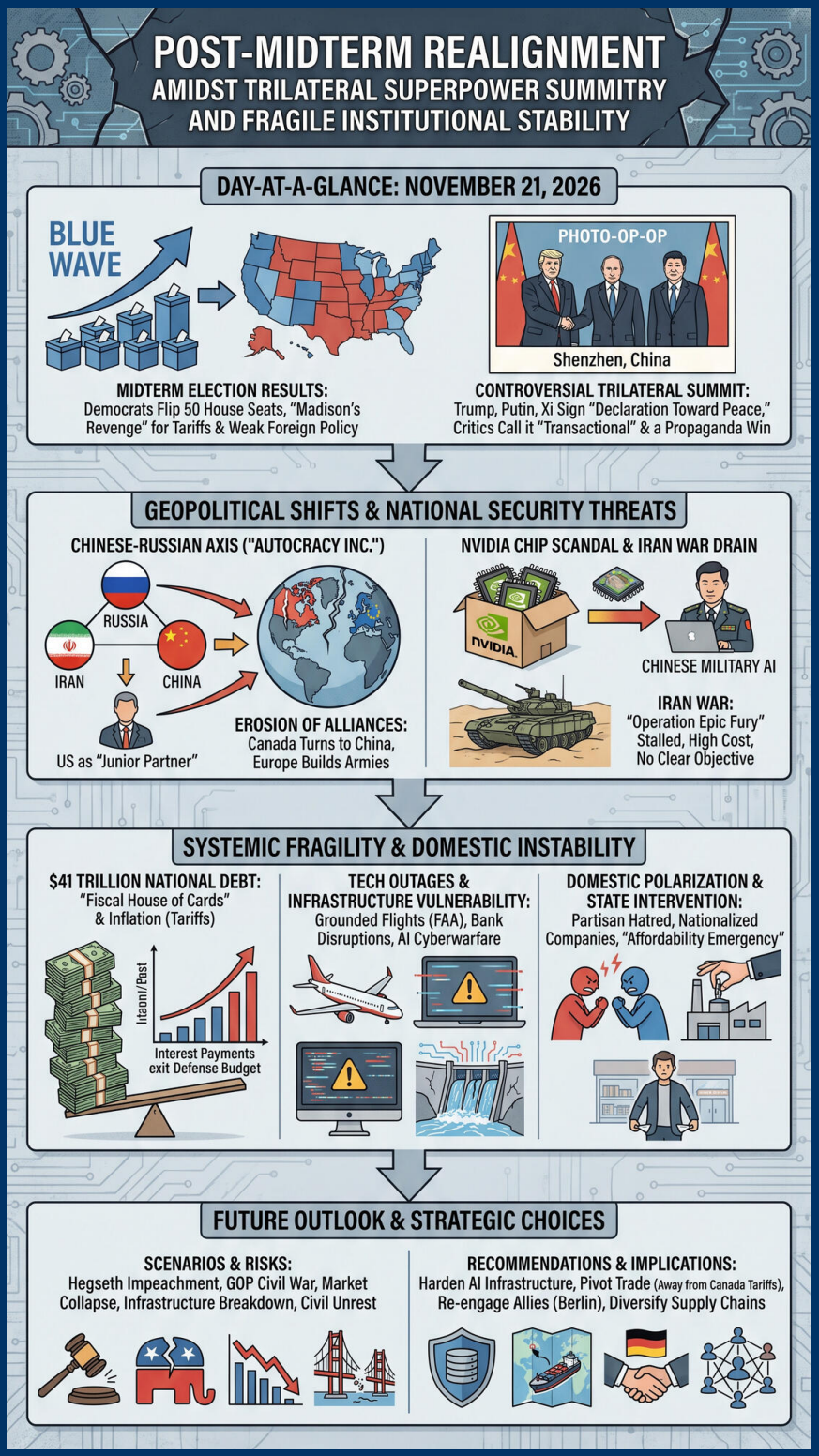
# TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

NOVEMBER 21, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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## POST-MIDTERM REALIGNMENT AMIDST TRILATERAL SUPERPOWER SUMMITRY AND FRAGILE INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

November 21, 2026, serves as a pivotal inflection point for American governance, characterized by the immediate fallout of a "Blue Wave" in the 2026 midterm elections and a highly controversial trilateral summit in China between President Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Domestically, the Republican Party is grappling with a significant loss of approximately 50 House seats, a shift that has empowered a new Democratic majority set to take control on January 3, 127. This electoral rejection is being attributed by both moderate Republicans and conservative traditionalists to the administration's reliance on broad-based tariffs, which are cited as the primary driver of a 3.5% inflation rate, and a perception of pathologically weak foreign policy that has alienated traditional allies like Canada and the European Union.

The geopolitical landscape is dominated by the "Declaration Toward Peace" signed in Shenzhen, which critics argue relegitimized Vladimir Putin and signaled a transition to a "transactional" world order where the United States is viewed as a junior partner in a new Chinese-Russian axis. This perceived weakness coincides with a domestic national security scandal involving the illegal smuggling of over 800,000 advanced NVIDIA AI chips to the Chinese People's Liberation Army, allegedly with the knowledge of the Trump Commerce Department. Simultaneously, the nation faces systemic fragility, ranging from a $41 trillion national debt to massive technological outages affecting the FAA and major banks, raising urgent questions about the stability of critical infrastructure as the 120th Congress prepares for a period of intense oversight and potential impeachment proceedings against Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

### The Shenzhen Trilateral Summit and "Declaration Toward Peace"

- President Trump met with Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping to sign a joint declaration focusing on UN reform and energy supply, but the event was widely panned as a propaganda win for Russia and China.
- Critics, including former National Security Advisor John Bolton, argue the summit LEGITIMIZED Putin following his 2022 invasion of Ukraine and sidelined US allies in NATO and Asia.
- The summit highlighted a shift toward "flexible realism," which critics claim lacks a moral compass and abandons the traditional "shining city on a hill" leadership role of the United States.

### Legislative Fallout of the 2026 Midterm "Blue Wave"

- Democrats successfully flipped roughly 50 House seats and achieved historic trifectas in states like Pennsylvania for the first time since 1978.
- A significant number of "swing district" Republicans were "punished" by voters for failing to act as a check and balance on the administration's more controversial policies.
- Incoming Democratic leadership, including Hakeem Jeffries and Jamie Raskin, is preparing a series of investigations into corruption, self-dealing, and the separation of powers.

### The NVIDIA Export Control Scandal

- Evidence has emerged that the Trump Commerce Department approved the sale of high-end AI chips to firms with ties to the Chinese military.
- The scandal involves allegations that a Chinese spy targeted NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang, while the administration reportedly ignored warnings about the smuggling of these critical technologies.
- Congress is expected to accelerate oversight bills in December to restrict AI exports and address this national security breach.

### Systemic Institutional and Economic Fragility

- The national debt has reached $41 trillion, with interest payments now exceeding the total budget for the US military.
- A series of unexplained "tech outages" has grounded the air traffic system for 72 hours and affected major financial platforms, leading to public anxiety and "apocalyptic purchasing" trends at retailers like Costco.
- The FEMA workforce has been "decimated," losing 6,800 employees in the last 18 months, compromising disaster readiness during a severe El Niño season.

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

### Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The "Iran War" (Operation Epic Fury) remains a primary drain on resources, with the US paying more in debt service than on national security.
- Secretary Pete Hegseth is accused of attempting to establish an "autocratic ethos" within the military by demanding personal loyalty over constitutional adherence.
- Reports indicate Russian casualties in Ukraine have reached 25,000 soldiers per month, totaling 1.5 million dead or wounded.

### Macroeconomics & Trade

- The administration’s use of blanket tariffs has been identified by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York as the source of nearly the entire inflation rate.
- Former VP Mike Pence noted that the administration has nationalized 41 companies, a policy he characterized as deriving from the "politics of the left."
- The US national debt is currently 125% of GDP, creating a "fiscal house of cards" that risks a 1929-style depression.

### Tech Sovereignty & AI

- AI is being weaponized in cyberwarfare, with a "slow burn" of tech outages believed to be caused by AI-driven attacks on infrastructure vulnerabilities.
- The NVIDIA scandal has made tech sovereignty a central pillar of the Democratic agenda for the 120th Congress.
- The scientific community is debating the use of psychedelic therapies (MDMA, Psilocybin) for veterans, with 180,000 potentially eligible for new VA protocols.

### Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- Governors are emerging as the "laboratories of democracy," with Maryland Governor Wes Moore and Indiana Governor Mike Braun advocating for bipartisan results over federal polarization.
- The Republican party is facing an internal rift between "traditional" Reagan-Goldwater-Friedman conservatives and the populist right.
- Justice Samuel Alito warned of a mounting campaign to "intimidate and harass" Supreme Court justices, threatening the judiciary's independence.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

### The Erosion of Alliances and the Rise of "Transactionalism"

A major theme is the decoupling of US foreign policy from shared democratic values in favor of a "transactional" approach. This is most evident in the administration's treatment of Canada and Mexico. Governor Josh Shapiro highlighted how Trump's "foolish trade war" led Canada to sign a deepened partnership deal with China this week. The Shenzhen summit further institutionalized this trend, with the US appearing to accept a "junior partner" status while legitimizing Putin's territorial gains in Ukraine. This "flexible realism" is viewed by traditionalists as a national embarrassment that has left the US more isolated than at any time since the Second World War.

### Domestic Polarization as a National Security Threat

Internal dynamics have reached a point where partisan hatred is described as a greater threat than foreign adversaries. Rep. Don Bacon observed that Americans currently hate the other side more than they hate Putin or terrorists. This polarization is obstructing the resolution of the "fiscal house of cards," specifically the $41 trillion debt and the impending insolvency of Social Security and Medicare. The 2026 midterm results suggest a public "exhaustion" with this chaos, leading to a " Madison's Revenge" where voters are demanding a return to checks and balances.

### The Nationalization of the Private Sector and Tech-Infrastructure Vulnerability

There is a quiet but rapid shift toward state intervention in the economy, with the federal government now owning stakes in 41 American companies. This trend is coupled with a massive failure in tech oversight, exemplified by the smuggling of NVIDIA chips and the unbelievable technology collapse of the FAA. The convergence of state-run economics and failing technical infrastructure suggests a hollowed-out administrative state that is vulnerable to both domestic corruption and foreign cyber sabotage.

## INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The United States is currently experiencing a period of severe institutional decay and loss of government mandate. The executive branch has been accused of "lawfare," using the DOJ, FBI, and IRS to target political enemies, which has fundamentally degraded public trust. This decay is mirrored in the workforce, where FEMA has seen an unprecedented loss of experienced emergency management officials and institutional knowledge. Public sentiment has shifted dramatically, as seen in the 2026 midterms where even "ruby red" states like Utah saw Democrats gain ground due to concerns that elected leaders are no longer listening to the public.

Societal stability is further threatened by an "affordability emergency." In states like Michigan, Canada's proximity and the administration's tariffs have hit Michiganders harder than any other state. The middle class is described as being in a state of "celebration recession," with a decline in social rituals and upward mobility, leading some scholars to propose lottery-based democracy as a radical fix for an "oligarchic" system that no longer represents the average citizen. The presence of "screaming clubs" and "silent retreats" signals a population struggling with the psychological toll of a lonely life of screens and political vitriol.

## EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is being reframed as an "anarchic threat matrix" where the United States is withdrawing from its role as the stabilizer of the global order. The "Declaration Toward Peace" suggests that the US is willing to "coddle Putin" and XI while trashing the Canadian leader. This isolationist posture is creating a vacuum being filled by "Autocracy Inc.," a conglomerate of ideologically diverse dictatorships (China, Russia, Iran, North Korea) that cooperate through secretive financial systems and shared surveillance technology.

Allies are reacting defensively to these US shocks. European solidarity remains intact for the moment, but countries like Poland are building large armies (spending 4% of GDP on defense) as they prepare for a future where US commitments like NATO's Article Five can no longer be trusted. The external operating environment is increasingly defined by "hybrid warfare," with Russia suspected of attacks in Poland and sabotage across Europe, while the US remains bogged down in a "slow burn" war in Iran that lacks clear objectives.

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic environment is marked by high-risk indicators and a transition toward state-led capitalism. The national debt and tariff-induced inflation are the primary drivers of market instability, with the S&P 500 and Dow entering "correction territory" today. Supply chains are being fundamentally altered by the "trade war" with Canada and Mexico, forcing those nations to seek investment from China. The cost of healthcare continues to grow at three times the rate of inflation, with the average family paying $25,000 annually for care.

### Key Economic Vectors:

- **National Debt:** $41 trillion; 125% debt-to-GDP ratio.
- **Inflation:** 3.5% rate attributed almost entirely to global tariffs.

- **Market Sentiment:** AI jitters on Wall Street; NASDAQ losses wiping out gains for the year.
- **State Intervention:** 41 companies nationalized by the administration.
- **Energy Costs:** Natural gas and diesel prices inflated due to Strait of Hormuz blockade.
- **VA Healthcare Budget:** $16.49 billion for FY 26 mental health care.

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The current political environment is characterized by a "humble pie" period for the GOP leadership following midterm losses, while Democrats are seeing a "watershed moment" for a new, diverse class of leaders.

- **The 120th Congress:** A "watershed moment" with 10% of the nation's governors now being Black, including Keisha Lance Bottoms (GA) and Byron Donalds (FL).
- **Chris Van Hollen:** Gaining momentum to challenge Chuck Schumer for Senate Majority Leader, representing an appetite for "fresh faces."
- **Markwayne Mullin:** The Homeland Security Secretary is reportedly on a "primetime timeout" following poor communications regarding tech disruptions.
- **Democratic Trifectas:** Governor Josh Shapiro (PA) and Governor-Elect Aaron Ford (NV) have consolidated full control of their state governments.
- **Don Bacon:** Retiring from the House but openly musing about a 2028 presidential run to restore "traditional conservatism."

## EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial posture is heavily focused on the **legitimacy and consequences of the Shenzhen Summit**, often framing it through the lens of betrayal or weakness. The "Lead Stories" are consistently the trilateral meeting, the smuggling of NVIDIA chips, and the 2026 midterm post-mortems. There is a perceptible "fear-inducing" tone regarding the tech outages and the Iran War, with segments frequently referencing the frying of the air traffic system and "apocalyptic purchasing."

"Buried Stories" include the extrajudicial killings of fishermen in the Caribbean by US military forces and the detail that the administration nationalized 41 companies. Conspicuous Omissions include any deep dive into the **actual text** of the "Declaration Toward Peace" beyond its headlines, and a lack of coverage regarding the **humanitarian situation inside Iran** despite its central role in US economic and military policy. The death of **Fiona the Hippo** in Cincinnati was given surprising prominence, serving as a rare "reassuring" but ultimately distracting human interest story amidst national crises.

## GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's transcripts present a world where traditional power dynamics have inverted, with the US depicted as descending into chaos while its adversaries present a unified front.

### COUNTRIES

- **Russia:** Portrayed as a "big winner" and " humanitarian" (per administration allies), but a "killer" and "terrorist" state (per critics). "The ostaricism he and the Russians have been in... is really lifting."
- **China:** Framed as the "dominant world leader" and "greatest adversary." "He is the chairman. He is in the center of the picture."
- **Canada:** Portrayed as a "betrayed ally" and "51st state" in administration rhetoric, now turning to Chinese investment out of necessity.
- **Iran:** Depicted as a "thuggish" and "unstable" regime currently enduring "slow burn" economic strangulation.

### LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Characterized by critics as "pathologically weak," "ineffectual," and "corrupt." "Trump benefits because he got to spend an hour with his best ease and got a nice picture."
- **Vladimir Putin:** Framed as a master manipulator who has successfully "worked his magic" on Trump.
- **Pete Hegseth:** Portrayed as an "eight-year-old playing with toy soldiers" with no plan for the war he is leading.

### NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **NVIDIA:** Framed as a company that "sold out" national security for profit. "Approved the sale of over 800,000 of our cutting edge AI chips to Chinese companies."
- **FEMA:** Depicted as a "politicized" and "decimated" agency that is failing its mission.

## INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Public perception is being aggressively shaped by two competing narratives. The administration is seeding a narrative of "peace and stability" through the Shenzhen Summit, weaponizing "photo-ops" to project global leadership. Conversely, the "Democratic counter-narrative" focuses on "Autocracy Inc." and "corruption," using the NVIDIA scandal as proof that the administration is enriching its donors at the expense of national security. A specific "psy-op" is noted regarding the 2020 election, where senators continue to demand that officials endorse the "falsehood" that the election was stolen as a test of loyalty. The delta between the "spin" (peace in our time) and ground truth (unprovoked attacks and smuggling of critical tech) is fostering mass confusion.

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The Hegseth Impeachment:** Given the 120th Congress's Democratic majority, a "privilege resolution" to impeach Secretary Hegseth is highly likely in early 2027.
- **GOP Civil War:** The Republican party will likely fracture into a "Trump loyalist" faction and a "Bacon-Pence" traditionalist faction as the 2028 primary season begins in three months.
- **Infrastructure Collapse:** If tech outages continue to grounded flights and disrupt banking, public "apocalyptic purchasing" will likely lead to supply chain breakdowns during the 2026 holiday season.

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect "rocket field acceleration" of oversight bills regarding NVIDIA chip exports and intense debate over a December 11th spending bill to prevent a government shutdown.

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The 120th Congress will likely use the "War Powers Act" to defund the Iran War. The VA will begin selecting the 10 test sites for psychedelic treatments.

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** A structural shift toward a "tri-polar nuclear world" will force a complete rewrite of US defense strategy. If current fiscal trends hold, the US will reach a point of bankruptcy within five years.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

- **National Security Tech Leakage:** Smuggling of 800,000 chips significantly accelerates China's military AI. Triggers: Continued lack of Commerce Department enforcement. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigations: Immediate Congressional ban on all high-end AI exports.
- **Financial Market Collapse:** Debt reaching 125% of GDP and tech outages ground commerce. Triggers: Failure to pass a credible debt plan. Likelihood: Moderate-High. Impact: Severe. Mitigations: Bipartisan support for the Fiscal Responsibility Act.
- **Iran War Escalation:** Blockade of the Strait of Hormuz leads to direct military conflict. Triggers: An Iranian "lucky shot" at a US troop carrier. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Diplomatic exit strategy and restoration of oil exports.
- **Domestic Civil Unrest:** Affordability crisis and "lawfare" reach a breaking point. Triggers: Impeachment trials or further political arrests. Likelihood: High. Impact: Severe. Mitigations: Governors bridging the national divide.
- **VA Patient Safety Crisis:** Rapid rollout of psychedelics leads to adverse events. Triggers: Poor training at outside clinics. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Moderate-High. Mitigations: Strict VA-led oversight and training.

## GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts do not explain why the US intelligence community failed to notify the NVIDIA CEO about his entanglement with a suspected Chinese spy.
- There is a lack of clarity on the legal basis for the ongoing Iran War, as it was never declared by Congress.
- The broadcasts fail to detail the "41 nationalized companies," leaving their identities and current management status unknown to the public.
- There is no verified data on the "97 individuals" who received pardon and allegedly committed further serious crimes.

## CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

**The Shenzhen Summit as a Strategic Stall:** The trilateral meeting might not be an act of weakness but a calculated move to buy time for the US to address its internal tech vulnerabilities before a larger conflict. **Black Swan Event:** A coordinated cyber-attack by "Autocracy Inc." that permanently disables the US financial cloud infrastructure, leading to an immediate transition to a gold-backed

global currency dominated by the BRICS nations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

### For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Security: Priority must be given to data center regulation and hardening AI infrastructure.
- Economic: Abandon blanket tariffs in favor of targeted free trade with Canada and Mexico to curb inflation.
- Diplomatic: Re-engage the "Coalition of the Willing" in Berlin to prevent the total isolation of the United States.

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- Supply Chain: Pivot away from Canadian routes if auto tariffs remain at 50%.
- Regulatory: Prepare for a massive increase in Congressional subpoenas and preservation orders regarding short-term messaging apps.
- Capital Allocation: Move capital into South Korean shipyard partnerships (Hanwha) as a hedge against domestic infrastructure decay.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The current session is a flurry of "lame-duck" activity and preparations for the 120th Congress. The primary focus is on **War Powers**, **Debt Reform**, and **Corporate Oversight**.

### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Hegseth Impeachment Resolution:** Introduced by Rep. Massie (R-KY); currently stalled by GOP ducking.
- **Fiscal Responsibility Act:** Bipartisan bill (Peters/Huizenga) to balance the budget and save Social Security.
- **Iran War Powers Resolution:** Failed for the 15th time in the Senate.
- **Environmental Permitting Reform Bill:** Passed Senate (62-33); seeks to mandate data center power independence.
- **Rural Disaster Fairness Act:** Proposed to reduce damage thresholds for federally-owned land.

### HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **National Intelligence Nominee Hearings:** Focused on pardon corruption and Iran threats.
- **FEMA Oversight Hearing:** Focused on workforce loss and political aid allocation.
- **VA Health Subcommittee Hearing:** Evaluated psychedelic breakthrough therapies.
- **National Press Club (Don Bacon):** Discussed the direction of the GOP and 2028 aspirations.

## KEY STORIES

- **The Shenzhen Peace Declaration:** Trump signs "hollow" agreement with Putin and Xi, criticized as blue smoke and mirrors.
- **NVIDIA Chip Smuggling:** House release reveals 800,000 chips sent to China with administration approval.

- **FAA System Failure:** A 72-hour air traffic ground stop caused by aging technology collapse.
- **The $41 Trillion Debt Milestone:** Interest payments now exceed defense spending.
- **The 2026 Midterm "Watershed":** Democrats flip House, Black governors reach 10% representation.
- **Justice Alito's Warning:** Justice claims a campaign to intimidate the Court threatens democracy.
- **VA Psychedelic Breakthrough:** VA prepares for 180,000 veterans to receive novel treatments.
- **Voyager 1 Milestone:** NASA probe reaches one light day distance from Earth.
- **Canada-China Investment Deal:** Canada turns to China after US trade betrayal.
- **FEMA Workforce Crisis:** Loss of 6,800 employees leaves disaster readiness in question.
- **Fiona the Hippo Dies:** Cincinnati Zoo icon dies after ingesting a hat; Ohio Senate offers resolution.
- **Rikers Island Delay:** New York Mayor MAMDANI pushes closure to 2032.
- **Utah GOP Losses:** Republicans lose urban seats in a "Madison's Revenge" election.

## 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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