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# Executive Insight Brief

December 8, 2023

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- [Hunter Biden hit with federal charges for evading tax](#)
- [Budgets, presidents and the defense industry: What to watch in 2024](#)
- [Israel sharply ramps up Gaza strikes, U.S. alarmed](#)

**Worth reading:** [The U.S. Can Afford a Bigger Military. We Just Can't Build It.](#)

## View From The Hill



House and Senate lawmakers [unveiled](#) a nearly \$900 billion compromise National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024 on Wednesday, with the Senate beginning final consideration of the bill with anticipated passage next week. While the House is expected to also achieve final passage of the bill, hardline conservatives remain angry that the final text dropped controversial culture war provisions related to Pentagon abortion and transgender healthcare policies. The compromise language tees up a 5.2% raise for servicemembers and includes a short-term extension of Section 702 federal surveillance authorities.

Senate Republicans [blocked](#) consideration of a supplemental funding bill containing aid to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan this week absent an agreement with Senate Democrats to include certain border security policies. While the two sides remain far apart, lead negotiators Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Sen. James Lankford (R-OK) promised to continue talks in hopes of finding compromise.

Several university presidents faced [widespread](#) condemnation across the political spectrum after testifying before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. At the hearing, leaders of Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Pennsylvania skirted explicitly stating that violent antisemitic rhetoric on their campuses constituted a violation of university policy. Since the October 7th Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel, college campuses across the United States have become flashpoints for demonstration, with institutions' leaders often facing criticism over perceptions they are not doing enough to respond to antisemitism.

George Santos is no longer a Member of Congress, having been expelled by his former House colleagues last week over his many federal corruption charges. The former representative from New York has [turned](#) his attention to raising money through appearances on Cameo, an app which allows individuals to pay celebrities for personalized video messages. He is currently charging around \$400 per video. In another disciplinary move, the House [voted](#) to censure Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY). The mostly symbolic motion comes after the lawmaker was seen on video pulling a fire alarm in the Cannon House Office Building when there was no emergency, shortly before a vote on government funding in September.

After being ousted from the speakership in October, Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) [announced](#) this week he will retire from Congress at the end of 2023. Similarly, Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC), who served as temporary Speaker during the weeks-long saga culminating in the election of current Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), [announced](#) his retirement this week, adding to the growing list of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle opting against reelection next cycle.

## Aerospace & Defense

### [AUKUS, JADC2, planes and tanks: What's in the draft \\$874.2B NDAA \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

House and Senate lawmakers filed their compromise version of the annual defense policy bill, featuring a \$874.2 billion topline, with key provisions ranging from the transfer of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia to significant upgrades for the Army's Abrams tanks. The bill's topline represents a significant increase — \$32 billion — over the president's request for fiscal year 2024 of \$842 billion. Since the start of October, the Pentagon has been operating under a continuing resolution, meaning all programs receive funding levels on par with the previous year, and brand new programs, "new starts," are prohibited from commencing — a situation that frustrates senior Pentagon officials annually. Now, for the compromise bill, written jointly by a conference of lawmakers from the House and Senate, to become law, both chambers of Congress must individually pass identical versions of the legislation. It would then be sent to President Joe Biden's desk for a signature. There's still a question as to if and when all that will happen, but if the bill passes in its current form, here are some critical takeaways from the bill.

### [US faces hurdles next year for Guam's missile defense, experts warn](#)

#### [Congress moves to save F-22s from the boneyard, once again \(Defense One\)](#)

Lawmakers are set to block the Air Force's request to retire older F-22 Raptors, despite pleas from the service that it would cost too much money to get them battle-ready. This is the second straight year Congress has denied the entreaty. Service officials have argued that Block 20 F-22s lack crucial modern weapons and would require billions of dollars to get them up to speed. Officials wanted to put the money toward the Next Generation Air Dominance program, its new, secretive fighter jet. Congress released its \$886 billion compromise defense policy bill late Wednesday night after weeks of negotiations between House and Senate lawmakers. The F-22 retirements were part of a larger Air Force proposal to shed more than 300 of its aircraft in fiscal 2024 and use the money for higher-end technology. The bill greenlights at least some of the other retirements, including of A-10 Warthogs and F-15C and -D fighters. The defense policy bill also puts limits on several other Air Force divestment plans, including F-15Es, and requires the service maintain a total fighter inventory of at least 1,112 aircraft.

## Senate votes to keep US troops in Syria amid Iran-backed attacks

### Final defense policy bill advances AUKUS, Taiwan training (Defense News)

The \$874.2 billion fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, finalized in conference late Wednesday, would fully authorize the trilateral AUKUS agreement with Australia and Britain and codify into law a new nuclear mission for Virginia-class submarines. It would also require a comprehensive Defense Department training program for Taiwanese troops and set up a special inspector general for Ukraine aid. “Our nation faces unprecedented threats from China, Iran, Russia and North Korea,” the four Republican and Democratic leaders on the Armed Services committees said in a joint statement Thursday. “It is vital that we act now to protect our national security.” Congress is expected to vote on the bill before the holidays. But it’s likely to face substantial opposition from the right-wing House Freedom Caucus as it removes many of their amendments, including one that would have overturned the Pentagon’s abortion travel leave policy and another that would have barred the Defense Department from implementing President Joe Biden’s climate change executive orders.

## **Budget & Appropriations**

### House votes to rebuff Biden on student loan relief plan, again (Roll Call)

The House passed a measure Thursday to block implementation of a new Biden administration student loan repayment option tied to income. The joint resolution under the Congressional Review Act would disapprove of an Education Department rule that includes family size and income in calculating the amount borrowers must repay. The option would allow borrowers who have earnings of less than \$15 per hour to pay \$0. “This new regulation, ironically dubbed the SAVE plan, is the most expensive regulation in our nation’s history, and is a backdoor attempt to ram the administration’s socialist free college fantasy down the throats of hard-working taxpayers,” Rep. Lisa McClain, R-Mich., said on the House floor ahead of the 210-189 vote Thursday. “Not only does this plan shift the cost of loans from the borrower, the person who actually took out the loan, it shifts the cost to the person who never took the loan out to begin with, the taxpayer ... but it also will make college more expensive.”

## Framework appropriations deal elusive as session winds down

### Members want \$26 billion for programs the Pentagon didn’t seek (Roll Call)

House and Senate appropriators have added into their two fiscal 2024 Defense spending bills a combined \$25.7 billion the Pentagon did not formally seek for more than 1,200 research and procurement projects, according to a CQ Roll Call analysis of a watchdog group’s previously undisclosed database. The House-passed Defense appropriations bill would add \$10.7 billion into

these weapons accounts for 580 different programs. The Senate's companion measure contains nearly \$15 billion inserted by senators for an almost completely different set of 636 weapons projects, according to the Taxpayers for Common Sense database. If history is a guide, the two sets of increases will mostly just be added together in the final bill, which appropriators hope to finish writing by early February, when the Defense Department's funding under the current stopgap spending bill expires. On top of the proposed additions for military research and procurement, appropriators are poised to add as yet unreckoned billions of dollars in unrequested spending this fiscal year for other categories of defense spending — from facilities maintenance to medical research. Members of Congress have a duty to write spending bills as they see fit. But the fiscal implications of all the congressional tweaking — for both the Pentagon budget and the wider federal discretionary budget — are not widely appreciated.

### [Army says it needs supplemental funds to shore up combat vehicle fleets](#)

#### [Senate Dems propose amendment adding conditions to Israel aid \(The Hill\)](#)

More than a dozen Democratic Senators are working to enact conditions on military assistance to Israel as part of President Biden's nearly \$111 billion national security supplemental request. The move is an effort by, largely, progressive Democrats in the Senate to address their alarm over the devastating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's war against Hamas since its Oct. 7 attack. The death toll among Palestinians is believed to have exceeded 16,000 people, with the majority women and children. "It is imperative that all assistance to Israel abide by U.S. and international law, prioritize the protection of civilians, assure the provision of desperately needed humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza, and align with a long-term vision for peace, security, and two-state diplomatic solution," Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), one of the amendment sponsors, said in a statement. The amendment, sponsored by 13 Senate Democrats, takes aim at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's resistance to allow humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip, with the early days of the operation against Hamas marked by Israel cutting off electricity, fuel, water, food and aid deliveries into the strip.

### **Advanced Technologies**

#### [Musk says his AI firm xAI is rolling out chatbot Grok to X Premium+ subscribers \(Reuters\)](#)

Elon Musk said on Thursday his artificial intelligence (AI) startup xAI is rolling out ChatGPT competitor Grok for Premium+ subscribers of social media platform X. He announced it in a post on X, without revealing anymore details of the launch. Last month, he had said that as soon as Grok was out of early beta testing, it would become available to the subscribers. As more advertisers move away from the microblogging platform, the billionaire has stressed on reducing the company's reliance on advertising and has turned his focus on subscriptions and making them more attractive. He even intends to turn X into a "super app", offering a range of services to its subscribers from messaging and social networking to peer-to-peer payments. Musk launched xAI in

July in a response to Big Tech's AI efforts, which he has criticized for excessive censorship and a lack of adequate safety measures. Large tech companies including Microsoft (MSFT.O) and Alphabet's Google are racing to launch AI-powered products after OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT caught the imagination of businesses and users globally. Musk co-founded OpenAI in 2015, but stepped down from the company's board in 2018.

### [Spy demonstrator planes log nearly 1,000 sorties in Europe and Pacific](#)

#### [Human operators must be held accountable for AI's use in conflicts, Air Force secretary says \(Next Gov\)](#)

Humans will ultimately be held responsible for the use or misuse of artificial intelligence technologies during military conflicts, a top Department of Defense official said during a panel discussion at the Reagan National Defense Forum on Saturday. Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall dismissed the notion “of the rogue robot that goes out there and runs around and shoots everything in sight indiscriminately,” highlighting the fact that AI technologies — particularly those deployed on the battlefields of the future — will be governed by some level of human oversight. “I care a lot about civil society and the rule of law, including laws of armed conflict,” he said. “Our policies are written around compliance with those laws. You don't enforce laws against machines; you enforce them against people. And I think our challenge is not to somehow limit what we can do with AI, but it's to find a way to hold people accountable for what the AI does.” Even as the Pentagon continues to experiment with AI, the department has worked to establish safeguards around its use of the technologies. DOD updated its decades-old policy on autonomous weapons in February to clarify, in part, that weapons with AI-enabled capabilities need to follow the department's AI guidelines.

### [Eight contract opportunities to watch in FY24](#)

#### [‘Off to the races’: DARPA, Harvard breakthrough brings quantum computing years closer \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

Widespread quantum computing may now come years sooner than widely expected, thanks to a Pentagon-funded project with implications for everything from rapid vaccine development and weather forecasting to cyber warfare and codebreaking. If the Harvard-led experiment can be replicated and scaled up, it would still take years to make quantum computers widely available to run new forms of artificial intelligence for medical research, scientific experimentation and military command-and-control. But early adopters would almost certainly include intelligence agencies eager to crack encryption protocols widely used by governments and businesses alike. That makes it all the more urgent to implement the new quantum-resistant encryption algorithms the National Institute of Standards & Technology aims to finalize in 2024. On Wednesday afternoon, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and a paper in Nature announced results from a team of almost two dozen scientists, most of them from Harvard, funded by a DARPA program known as ONISQ (Optimization with Noisy Intermediate-Scale Quantum devices).

## Military Installations & Communities

### [Centenarian Survivors of Pearl Harbor Attack Are Returning to Honor Those Who Perished 82 Years Ago \(Military.com\)](#)

Ira "Ike" Schab had just showered, put on a clean sailor's uniform and closed his locker aboard the USS Dobbin when he heard a call for a fire rescue party. He went topside to see the USS Utah capsizing and Japanese planes in the air. He scurried back below deck to grab boxes of ammunition and joined a daisy chain of sailors feeding shells to an anti-aircraft gun up above. He remembers being only 140 pounds (63.50 kilograms) as a 21-year-old, but somehow finding the strength to lift boxes weighing almost twice that. "We were pretty startled. Startled and scared to death," Schab, now 103, said at his home in Beaverton, Oregon, where he lives with his daughter. "We didn't know what to expect and we knew that if anything happened to us, that would be it." Eighty-two years later, Schab plans to return to Pearl Harbor Thursday on the anniversary of the attack to remember the more than 2,300 servicemen killed. He's expected to be one of just six survivors at a ceremony commemorating the assault that propelled the United States into World War II. The actual number may fluctuate depending on how many of the increasingly frail men are able to attend.

### [Here are the 422 military leaders finally confirmed by the Senate](#)

### [Austin Meets With Ukrainian Minister of Defense at Pentagon \(DoD\)](#)

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III today hosted bilateral discussions at the Pentagon with Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov. The meeting comes on the heels of the Ukraine Defense Industrial Base Conference in Washington, D.C., and also aligns with today's announcement of another security assistance package for Ukraine. The two leaders most recently met in November in Kyiv, where they discussed military operations as well as Umerov's near- and mid-term goals and objectives for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense. Before closed-door discussions began, Austin publicly reiterated U.S. support for Ukraine. "As I said in Kyiv, the United States stands with Ukraine as you fight back against the Kremlin's aggression and cruelty," Austin said. "Ukraine has taken back more than half the territory grabbed by Russia since its unprovoked invasion began in February 2022. So we will stand with Ukraine for the long haul. I'm confident that our allies and partners will be there as well."

### [Defense bill orders Pentagon to review reinstatement of troops fired for COVID-19 refusal](#)

### [Biggest Military Pay Raise in 2 Decades Finalized in Newly Released Defense Bill \(Military.com\)](#)

Service members will get a 5.2% pay raise come January under the compromise annual defense bill unveiled Wednesday night. The pay bump endorsed by the National Defense Authorization Act, or

NDAA, will mark the biggest raise for service members in more than two decades. A 5.2% raise in basic pay means anywhere from about \$1,100 more per year for the most junior service members to more than \$10,000 more per year for senior officers. The bill, the result of months of negotiations between the House and Senate, must still win final approval from each chamber and be signed by President Joe Biden before becoming law. But it's expected to easily pass Congress before the end of the year. This year's NDAA-endorsed raise matches what the Biden administration requested, which in turn matched what a formula set in a separate federal law said troops would be entitled to next year.

## Homeland Security

### [National security advisers of US, South Korea and Japan will meet to discuss North Korean threat \(AP News\)](#)

The national security advisers of the United States, South Korea and Japan will meet in Seoul this week to discuss North Korea's growing military threat and other regional security issues as they continue to promote trilateral cooperation in Asia. South Korea's presidential office said its national security office director, Cho Tae-yong, will host a three-way meeting in Seoul on Saturday with U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Japanese National Security Secretariat Secretary General Takeo Akiba for in-depth discussions on North Korea and other matters related to security, technology, and trade. Cho will also hold bilateral meetings with Sullivan and Akiba on Friday. White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the meetings will be driven by a "robust agenda of discussions of regional issues of mutual concerns, particularly in the security environment" as the countries continue to build on an August summit between their leaders in Camp David, where they vowed to deepen three-way security and economic cooperation.

## [Emerging Technologies Present Benefits and Risks for Airport Security](#)

### [China is using US-allied exercises to find 'soft targets': US Army's Pacific chief \(Defense One\)](#)

Chinese jets flying near Taiwan and Chinese fishing vessels swarming off the Philippines may get the headlines, but China is also conducting aggressive acts beneath the threshold of armed conflict on land, the head of U.S. Army Forces Pacific said Wednesday. China has been closely monitoring U.S. exercises with regional partners such as Indonesia and the Philippines as they grow in size and scope, Gen. Charles Flynn said at the Irregular Warfare Forum in Virginia. "They go relatively dormant during a key period of the exercise and then after it's over they'll go find soft targets.

They'll find officials to broker a deal with and then they'll maybe look for some land around one of the key bases or locations where we train," Flynn said. "So I'm trying to describe to you that these are ground intercepts that happen all the time." These operations aim to gather information about how the U.S. might fight a Pacific war, but they also seek ways to drive wedges between Washington and its regional partners, he said. "The Chinese are trying to disassemble, fragment and fracture a network of allies and partners that the United States enjoys globally, but definitely in the Indo-Pacific. And they're working every day."

## [House Intelligence panel advances its own surveillance bill](#)

### [A new Homeland Security guide aims to help houses of worship protect themselves \(AP News\)](#)

A new guide from the Department of Homeland Security released Wednesday aims to help churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship protect themselves at a time of heightened tensions in faith-based communities across the country. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, an arm of Homeland Security, works with faith groups across the country to help them prepare for and prevent targeted violence against their facilities and their members. David Mussington, who's in charge of infrastructure security at CISA, says the goal of the 16-page document is to give useable information in a format that's easy to understand. "It's designed to be clear, to be less jargon-filled and to provide guidance and assistance in getting assistance from us," Mussington said. The guidance, dubbed "Physical Security Performance Goals for Faith-Based Communities," outlines how faith groups can better protect themselves: keeping landscaping like hedges trimmed to prevent hiding places for attackers, for example, or only giving out necessary information during livestreams of services.

## **Transportation & Infrastructure**

### [Legislation to strengthen the supply chain introduced in Congress \(Transportation Today\)](#)

On Tuesday, U.S. Reps. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) and Larry Bucshon (R-IN) introduced legislation that would strengthen the supply chain, as well as to help America remain competitive with new technologies. The Congress members introduced the Promoting Resilient Supply Chains Act, and the Deploying American Blockchains Act. Both pieces of legislation are critical to identifying risks within American supply chains and remaining competitive globally, the law makers said. The Promoting Resilient Supply Chains Act would establish a supply chain resiliency program within the Department of Commerce to map, monitor and promote U.S. supply chains in critical industries and emerging technologies. The legislation would also encourage private-public partnerships surrounding supply chains and encourage the development and competitiveness of U.S. productive capacities and manufacturing in the United States. "After months of good-faith, bipartisan negotiations, I'm thrilled to introduce the bipartisan Promoting Resilient Supply Chains Act that will help us map, monitor, and strengthen American supply chains, make more critical goods right here at home, and create good-paying jobs while lowering consumer costs," Blunt Rochester said.

## [Biden Administration Pledges \\$6 Billion to a Pair of High-Speed Electric Rail Routes in the US West](#)

### [Pilotless FedEx, Reliable Robotics Plane Completes Flight \(Transport Topics\)](#)

Reliable Robotics Corp. has flown a small cargo plane on loan from FedEx Corp. without a human on board, a step toward the autonomous flight startup winning regulatory approval for its remote-pilot system. In coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration, the 12-minute flight of the Cessna 208B Grand Caravan on Nov. 21 took off from and landed at Hollister Municipal Airport in Northern California. A remote pilot handled all the radio calls and monitored the plane during the flight from about 50 miles away at the company's command center in Mountain View, Calif. It was Reliable Robotics' second automated flight, after flying a much smaller Cessna 172 in 2019. "We demonstrated automated taxiing, takeoff and automated landing, all without a pilot on board," said Robert Rose, co-founder and CEO of Reliable Robotics in an interview. "It was like a normal operation with the FAA." The flight is part of the startup's effort to gain full approval from the FAA. The agency accepted Reliable Robotics' plan for certifying the technology this summer after a four-year effort, said Rose, who expects to get FAA regulatory approval within two years. Since 2021, the company has worked under contracts with the Air Force, which is interested in the system for logistics and refueling aircraft, Rose said.

### [FHWA awards \\$110M in Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program grants](#)

#### [SpaceX plans key NASA demonstration for next Starship launch \(CNBC News\)](#)

SpaceX could attempt a key demonstration for NASA during the third test flight of its towering Starship rocket, according to the federal agency. A NASA official revealed on Monday that the next Starship flight is expected to include "a propellant transfer demonstration," though an agency spokesperson noted Tuesday the plan is subject to change, as is often the case in the space industry. SpaceX last month launched its second Starship flight, a test which saw the company make progress in development of the monster rocket yet fall short of completing the full mission. The propellant transfer demonstration would require that the rocket reach orbit as one of the demo's goals. A successful attempt would push Starship beyond its benchmarks reached thus far. "NASA and SpaceX are reviewing options for the demonstration to take place during an integrated flight test of Starship and the Super Heavy rocket. However, no final decisions on timing have been made," NASA spokesperson Jimi Russell said in a statement to CNBC. SpaceX did not respond to CNBC's request for comment on the plans.

## **Biotechnology & Healthcare**

#### [NTSB holds forum on pilots' mental health, chair says "the existing rules are arcane" \(CBS News\)](#)

The government agencies that oversee U.S. airlines are examining mental health regulations for pilots after an off-duty Alaska Airlines pilot allegedly tried to turn off the engines of a plane mid-flight. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) convened a mental health forum Wednesday to examine what needs to change, and witnesses, including pilots, told the panel they feared reporting problems, since they could be grounded by the FAA for good – unable to make a living. "The existing rules are arcane," Jennifer Homendy, NTSB chair, told CBS News. "At the very least, pilots and others need to be able to sit down, talk to a therapist and not worry about the

impact on their jobs." Witnesses at the forum said FAA rules create a stigma around mental health that creates a safety risk. One study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine last year found that more than 56% of U.S. pilots avoid seeking medical treatment, out of fear of losing their FAA certification to fly.

### [Research Links PFAS to Decreased Bone Health in Adolescents](#)

#### ['No one was spared': 2023 biopharma funds projected to fall \\$13B YOY, Pitchbook finds \(Fierce Biotech\)](#)

By the end of the year, biopharmas are projected to have raised about \$24 billion across about 840 transactions—the lowest tally in four years, according to a new PitchBook analysis. This is compared to annual values of \$38.1 billion in 2020, \$53.9 billion in 2021 and \$36.9 billion for 2022, representing a \$12.9 billion drop. “No one was spared,” senior analyst Kazi Hela, Ph.D., who contributed to the Dec. 7 report, told Fierce Biotech. “Everyone took a bit of a hit.” While AI and obesity drugs have proven to be slight exceptions, Hela said the sentiment holds true when looking at the bigger picture. Despite the significant drop in venture capital funds, deals are still being done, though a shift in investment strategy has occurred, according to Pitchbook. There have been fewer but more significant deals happening, indicating a more judicious approach that prioritizes larger and potentially more stable investments, the report said.

### [Biden administration delays ban on menthol cigarettes until 2024](#)

#### [Biden administration threatens seizure of US-funded drug patents if prices too high \(The Hill\)](#)

The Biden administration is rolling out a framework to enforce the government’s march-in authorities on drugs developed with taxpayer dollars, saying if drugmakers refuse to make their products “reasonably” available, then the government is prepared to give other companies license to produce those drugs at a lower cost. Under the Bayh–Dole Act of 1980, the government retains certain rights on any products produced through a public-private partnership using federal funding. This legislation allows federal agencies that provided the funding to compel companies that make such products to provide a “nonexclusive, partially exclusive, or exclusive” license to a “responsible applicant.” If the company refuses to grant a license for its product, the government has the authority to grant the license itself. These are referred to as march-in rights, as they allow the federal government to “march in” and issue a license for a product on its own. While the government has had this authority for decades, it has never exercised this right. Shortly before leaving office, the Trump administration proposed a rule that would have narrowed the terms in which march-in rights could be used, preventing them from being exercised on the basis of “business decisions” related to the “pricing of commercial goods and services.”

## **Climate & Development**

### [US to release hydrogen subsidy guidance after COP28 \(Reuters\)](#)

The U.S. will release guidance for how hydrogen producers can secure billions of dollars of subsidies embedded in last year's Inflation Reduction Act sometime this year after the COP28 climate conference in Dubai, U.S. energy advisor John Podesta told Reuters on Wednesday. Industry has been waiting anxiously for the guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department for months, as the administration debates whether to restrict the incentives to producers using new, instead of existing, clean energy sources to prevent an uptick in emissions. Asked when the guidance would be released, Podesta said he expected it before the end of the year, but not during the Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 COP28 summit. Hydrogen is a clean burning fuel that the Biden administration views as crucial to cleaning up hard-to-decarbonize industries like aluminum and cement. It is made by electrolyzing water and can be considered green if its production is powered by zero-emissions sources like solar, wind, nuclear or hydro.

### [The Race Is On to Make Low-Emissions Steel. Meet One of the Companies Vying for the Lead](#)



[More Than 100 Countries at COP28 Call For Fossil Fuel Phaseout \(Inside Climate News\)](#)

Under a blanket of petro-smog, more than half the 198 countries in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change called for a fossil fuel phaseout on the second day of COP28,

marking a turning point after 27 years of climate negotiations. Since the talks began at COP1 in Berlin in the spring of 1995, member nations have focused on temperature targets, voluntary emissions trading programs and other approaches that never addressed the root cause of the problem—the massive global increase of coal, oil and gas burning. At COP26 in Glasgow two years ago, the final conference documents for the first time included a timid reference to fossil fuels. But Friday, 106 countries—27 member states of the European Union and the 79 members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States—finally took the issue head on, calling for a fossil fuel phaseout, an immediate end to all new oil and gas production and clear end dates for fossil fuel production.

### Fossil CO2 emissions at record high in 2023

#### House votes to block Biden EV rule (The Hill)

The House on Wednesday voted in favor of blocking a Biden administration rule that's expected to shift car sales in the U.S. significantly toward electric vehicles. The rule in question could move car sales as far as to reach two-thirds electric by 2032. The bill approved by House Republicans on Wednesday would also bar the Environmental Protection Agency from pursuing any rules that result in limited availability of gas-powered cars. Despite its House passage, the legislation is not expected to gain traction in the Democratically-controlled Senate. The White House has already threatened to veto it. In its veto threat statement, The White House defended the rule as being “projected to save Americans \$12,000 over the lifetime of a new light-duty vehicle by accelerating adoption of technologies that reduce fuel and maintenance costs alongside pollution.”

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### Next Week's Hearings

#### **Armed Service Committees:**

**House:** None listed

**Senate:** None listed

#### **Appropriations Committees:**

**House:** None listed

**Senate:**

- Tuesday, December 12th, 10:00am EST; "[Communities in Crisis: What Happens When Disaster Recovery Funds are Delayed](#)"

**Homeland Security Committees:****House:**

- Tuesday, December 12th, 10:00am EST; ["Considering DHS' and CISA's Role in Securing Artificial Intelligence"](#)
- Tuesday, December 12th, 2:00pm EST; ["From Festive Cheer to Retail Fear: Addressing Organized Retail Crime"](#)
- Wednesday, December 13th, 2:00pm EST; ["Censorship Laundering Part II: Preventing the Department of Homeland Security's Silencing of Dissent"](#)

**Senate:**

- Tuesday, December 12th, 10:00am EST; ["Coast Guard Academy Whistleblowers: Stories of Sexual Assault and Harassment"](#)
- Thursday, December 14th, 10:00am EST; ["They Cyber Safety Review Board: Expectations, Outcomes, and Enduring Questions"](#)

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