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Executive Insight Brief

January 5, 2024

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Worth reading: [Israeli minister outlines plans for Gaza after war](#)

View From The Hill



With the holidays over and 2024 officially underway, Congress [begins](#) the year with an impending fiscal cliff: The two-tiered Continuing Resolution (CR) orchestrated by Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) in December sees its first tranche of funding run out on January 19th, with the rest expiring two weeks later. The good news is that congressional negotiators made some progress over the holiday recess towards agreement on top line spending numbers—key to unlocking any eventual deal. However, some House Republicans have begun signaling a desire to tie border security policy changes to the spending fight, raising the prospects of a government shutdown. With progress being made behind the scenes and no one in town wanting to face voter blame for a shutdown in an election year, it remains to be seen whether Republicans will die on that hill.

The Senate was the first chamber to return to Washington after the holidays, where a bipartisan group of senators [continued](#) talks around a possible border security and immigration deal, which Republicans have tied to any prospects of supporting a supplemental aid package for Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan. Hang-ups on a deal continue to be specific policies related to expedited removal of migrants who have entered the United States between ports of entry, as well as changes making it harder for individuals to claim asylum in the United States and interior immigration enforcement actions. But even if Senate Democrats and Republicans are able to strike a deal with the Biden Administration, House Republicans are increasingly [adamant](#) that they will only support more hardline language akin to H.R. 2, the red-meat border bill that passed the House last July.

While the House is not expected to come back from recess until Tuesday, Speaker Johnson [led](#) a large delegation of more than sixty House Republicans to Eagle Pass, TX on Wednesday, where lawmakers toured migrant processing facilities, a port of entry, and the border itself. The trip was designed to highlight the massive influx of migrants entering the United States and increase pressure on President Biden to ramp up border controls. During the visit, a group of migrants could be [seen](#) crossing the Rio Grande into the United States just a few feet from Speaker Johnson and House Members. Migrants crossed the U.S. Southern Border in record numbers in December, topping more than 300,000 encounters, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Against this backdrop, House Republicans, led by Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mark Green, have opted to move forward with impeachment hearings for Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas.

The Department of Justice [announced](#) a superseding indictment for Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) this week, adding to multiple charges of public corruption. These latest

charges allege the senator was offered luxury watches valued between \$10,000 and \$24,000 by individuals connected to the Qatari government in exchange for positive remarks on Qatar. The U.S. Government also alleges the senator received additional items of value from Qatar over a period of time.

Aerospace & Defense

[South Korea, U.S. conduct week-long firing drills near North Korea border \(Reuters\)](#)

U.S. and South Korean troops are continuing joint combat drills near the border with North Korea. These exercises involved heavy weapons and were to “test and enhance combat readiness simulating enemy aggression.” These joint drills were to the dismay of Pyongyang who criticized the U.S. and South Korea for “pushing the region to the brink of ‘an inferno of nuclear war.’” Drills were conducted from Dec. 29 to Jan. Pyongyang has continued long-range ballistic missiles which are designed to strike targets in the South and the Pacific. The U.S. has also begun deploying more military assets near the Korean peninsula “including a nuclear missile submarine, aircraft carriers and large bombers.” The U.S. Army said the drills included “more than 110 large combat weapons including South Korean army tanks, anti-aircraft artillery and combat earthmovers supported by the U.S. military attack aircraft and armored fighting vehicles.

[Airbus 2023 deliveries reached mid-730s, beating target of 720-sources \(Reuters\)](#)

[European NATO members strike deal to buy up to 1,000 Patriot missiles \(Reuters\)](#)

Germany, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain are being support by the procurement arm of NATO with a contract to purchase 1,000 Patriot air defense missiles. NATO awarded a contract to COMLOG which is a joint venture between RTX and MBDA. In a statement announcing the contract NATO added that European production of the missiles would be expanded.

[Gen. Jim Silfe sworn in as Air Force vice Chief of Staff \(Defense News\)](#)

[U.S. says Russia has used North Korean ballistic missiles in Ukraine and is seeking Iranian missiles \(AP\)](#)

The White House has stated that “U.S. intelligence officials have determined that Russia has acquired ballistic missiles from North Korea and is seeking close-range ballistic missiles from Iran.” Moscow has struggled recently to replenish arms for its continued war with Ukraine. This information from U.S. intelligence officials confirms similar claims South Korea made in November 2023. White House National Security spokesman John Kirby said of the North Korean ballistic missiles that, “Russian forces fired at least one of those ballistic missiles into Ukraine on Dec. 30.” Kirby also said that while a Russia-Iran deal is not confirmed the US “is concerned that Russia negotiations to acquire close range ballistic missiles from Iran are actively advancing.”

Budget & Appropriations

[Big pay raise means big tradeoffs under spending stalemate \(Roll Call\)](#)

President Biden through the NDAA and an executive order finalized a 5.2% raise for civilian and military employees. This was the “largest annual pay raise for federal employees in decades last week after the worst inflation since the 1980s.” While this pay raise is good for the federal workforce and their families it does pose a potential to the agencies themselves: how to pay for them. Federal agencies will need to find room for the increase “within budgets that are currently operating with no growth from the previous year and could end up facing steep cuts starting in a few months.” This could have varying consequences including “contractor cutbacks to hiring freezes to furloughs and layoffs.” Furloughs and layoffs are worst-case scenario for agencies to reduce their footprints but Jaqueline Simon, policy director “for the 750,000-strong American Federation of Government Employees” is not worried about the pay raise’s impact on staffing. Simon said, “I think the agencies have many, many choices where to cut back if they have to cut back to absorb increased payroll costs.” What remains unclear at this point is if potential steep budget cuts in the 2024 appropriations process will put agencies in the position to choose from the list of worst-case scenarios.

[Missouri's Luetkemeyer announces plans to retire when term ends \(Roll Call\)](#)

['We're out of money': US exhausts security funds for Ukraine \(Defense News\)](#)

The war in Ukraine continues and its outcome will have a substantial impact on the world and Russia's place in it. From the beginning, the US has been a very strong ally to Ukraine sending billions in funding. However, Pentagon press secretary, Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, said there were no funds left to replace weapons sent to Ukraine. While there is about \$4.2 billion in authorized aid Ryder said "lack of replenishment funds will likely lead to a pause in support, as the Pentagon doesn't want to risk the readiness of U.S. forces." The Pentagon announced its "final Ukraine aid package" in late December, but any supplemental funding is on hold until the 2024 appropriations process is complete.

[4 ways the government funding fight could play out in January \(The Hill\)](#)

[US national debt hits record \\$34 trillion as Congress gears up for funding fight \(ABC News\)](#)

The US continues to set national debt records as the number eclipsed \$34 trillion. The financial state of the US continues to be a divisive issue in Washington especially as funding deadlines loom. In January 2020, the Congressional Budget Office projected "gross national debt eclipsing \$34 trillion in fiscal year 2029." Since those CBO projections were pre-pandemic it is not a surprise the US racked up \$34 trillion in debt several years early. Government under both President Trump and President Biden "had to borrow heavily to stabilize the economy and support a recovery." In recent memory both Democrats and Republicans have added substantially to the national debt and continue to debate the best methods to get US finances under control.

Advanced Technologies

[US plans \\$162 million award to Microchip Technology to boost production \(Reuters\)](#)

On Thursday, the U.S. Commerce Department said “it plans to award Microchip Technology \$162 million in government grants to step up U.S. production of semiconductors and microcontroller units (MCUs) key to the consumer and defense industries.” Officials say these funds will allow Microchip to “triple production” at two U.S. factories. The United States has looked to increase production at home so they do not have to rely on foreign sources like China who dominates the chip production market. The award distributed is the second from the program “Chips for America” that Congress passed last year. Increasing domestic chip production is vital to the US’ national and economic security as they go into everyday items built by the “automotive, commercial, industrial, defense, and aerospace industries.

[5 ways artificial intelligence is rapidly changing our world \(The Hill\)](#)

[US leads world in 2023 launches, sats on orbit: study \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

According to a just-release study “the US led the world, far surpassing both China and Russia in the number of space launches and satellites placed on orbit in 2023.” Astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell “calculates there were a record 223 attempted space launches world wide in 2023, up from 186 in 2022, and more than double the 85 attempts made in 2016.” This trend is also indicative of commercial launches “are generally overtaking the launch market.” The one company leading this surge is SpaceX. While the Department of Defense and Space Force “have welcomed the surge in commercial launch capacity because of the attendant reduction in costs to orbit” they have had to rely more heavily on Elon Musk who consistently causes controversies. This data also captures Russia’s failure to “keep up with evolving launch capabilities by the other space powers,” said Victoria Sampson who is head of Secure World Foundation’s Washington Office. While the Cold War ended decades ago it does appear we are entering a new space race.

[To Beat Russia, Ukraine Needs a Major Tech Breakthrough \(Wired\)](#)

[Navy to seek industry help on countering ‘cross-domain’ drone attacks \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

Drone attacks have been a “persistent threat for US Navy warships currently stationed in

the Middle East, especially the Red Sea.” Sailors of the USS Carney were presented combat medals for their performance against attacks launched by Houthi rebels in Yemen. The Carney Sailors “shot down 14 Houthi UAVs in the Red Sea.” The attack sparked outrage across the international community with a joint statement being released by the White House and twelve other governments “calling for the Houthi attacks to stop or they will ‘bear the responsibility of the consequences.’” Due to these continued attacks in the Middle East the Navy “plans to solicit industry later this month for ‘innovative proposals’ centered around countering cross-domain attacks by uncrewed systems.

Military Installations & Communities

[New Tricare benefits delayed due to continued contract protest \(Military Times\)](#)

New Tricare contracts designed to improve care for the 9.6 million Tricare beneficiaries will be delayed from a planned start date of August 2024. The actual start date remains up in the air, as a protest involving the West Region’s \$65.1 billion contract continues in the United States Court of Federal Claims. A 12-month transition period is needed before the policies begin. Defense officials, however, halted work on the contracts pending the decision of the court. Defense Health Agency officials have said there will be no disruption to patient care, but the ongoing dispute could delay some of the improvements beneficiaries were expecting. The new contracts, for example, would allow patients to transfer specialty care referrals to a new doctor when they move, even if their new duty station is not in their current Tricare region. New contracts for the Tricare East and West regions have a potential combined value of \$136 billion over nine years. Once the dispute is settled, an additional 1.5 million Tricare beneficiaries will be transferred to the West Region from six states in the East Region. In court filings, West Health Net Federal Services contends that errors in the Defense Health Agency’s evaluation of proposals resulted in “the illogical conclusion that TriWest — an entity that has not performed a Tricare [Managed Care Support] contract in nearly a decade and that has no existing Tricare network — had equally relevant and more favorable past performance than the successfully performing West Region incumbent who has received glowing performance assessments for years.”

[US quietly reaches agreement with Qatar to keep operating largest military base in Middle East](#)

[Navy Destroyer Crew Receives Combat Award for Shooting Down Drones as Houthi Attacks Intensify in Red Sea \(Military.com\)](#)

The destroyer USS Carney has been awarded a combat award, and several sailors received medals following its actions in shooting down drones and missiles that were apparently aimed at merchant shipping in the Red Sea, the Navy announced Tuesday. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the commander of the Navy's forces in the Middle East, visited the ship and presented five awards to sailors, including its commander, and "he also recognized the whole crew with the Combat Action Ribbon" for their actions on Dec. 16 when the ship shot down 14 Houthi drones in the Red Sea, a Navy post on social media said. The awards are the second time in less than a month that the crew of the Carney, which has participated in multiple engagements with drones and missiles in the area, has been visited by military leaders and presented with medals. However, the accolades also raise new questions about whether U.S. forces are actively being targeted in the region. According to a Navy spokesman, Cooper awarded two Navy Commendation Medals -- including one to the ship's commander, Cmdr. Jeremy Robertson -- and three Navy Achievement Medals.

[New system to improve shipments of troops' household goods delayed](#)

[Gordon Sullivan, former Army chief of staff and service secretary, dies at 86 \(Stars and Stripes\)](#)

Retired Army Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, the service's 32nd chief of staff, who oversaw a transformational Army after Operation Desert Storm, died Tuesday, the Association of the U.S. Army announced. He was 86. A career armor officer, Sullivan spent 36 years in the Army serving two tours to Vietnam before rising in the ranks to lead the service as its top officer from 1991 to 1995, according to his service records. For three months in 1993, Sullivan served as Army chief of staff and acting Army secretary. He was appointed to the role by former President Bill Clinton after the previous secretary's sudden dismissal from the job for theft. Sullivan is the only person to ever serve in both top Army positions simultaneously. Retired Army Gen. Bob Brown, the president and CEO of AUSA, called

Sullivan “a true American hero and an Army legend.” “He was an inspirational leader of integrity and compassion who served his beloved Army and country selflessly for decades,” Brown said in a statement announcing Sullivan’s death. “As the 32nd chief of staff of the Army, he led the service through critical times with strength and a clear vision, ensuring soldiers and their families had the best training and resources.”

Homeland Security

[Biden administration asks Supreme Court to weigh in on border razor wire \(The Hill\)](#)

The Biden administration asked the Supreme Court on Tuesday to allow border patrol agents in Texas to remove the razor wire on southern border — a topic that has been at the center of a legal battle for months. The Justice Department filed an emergency appeal, asking the high court to pause last month’s appellate court ruling that forced the federal government to stop removing the razor wire. The federal government claimed Texas does not have the legal standing to install the wire, because it is “requiring federal law to yield to Texas law.” Overall, the administration argued immigration policies and enforcement fall underneath the jurisdiction of the federal government instead of the states. Besides not having the legal authority, Biden officials argued that keeping the razor wire could have “serious on-the-ground consequences” for border patrol agents, as well as migrants coming into the United States. “Like other law-enforcement officers, Border Patrol agents operating under difficult circumstances at the border must make context-dependent, sometimes split-second decisions about how to enforce federal immigration laws while maintaining public safety,” officials argued in the motion.

[New York City announces lawsuit against bus companies sending migrants to city, seeks \\$708 million](#)

[Russian hackers were inside Ukraine telecoms giant for months \(Reuters\)](#)

Russian hackers were inside Ukrainian telecoms giant Kyivstar's system from at least May last year in a cyberattack that should serve as a "big warning" to the West, Ukraine's cyber spy chief told Reuters. The hack, one of the most dramatic since Russia's full-scale invasion nearly two years ago, knocked out services provided by Ukraine's biggest telecoms operator for some 24 million users for days from Dec. 12. In an interview, Illia

Vitiuk, head of the Security Service of Ukraine's (SBU) cybersecurity department, disclosed exclusive details about the hack, which he said caused "disastrous" destruction and aimed to land a psychological blow and gather intelligence. "This attack is a big message, a big warning, not only to Ukraine, but for the whole Western world to understand that no one is actually untouchable," he said. He noted Kyivstar was a wealthy, private company that invested a lot in cybersecurity. The attack wiped "almost everything", including thousands of virtual servers and PCs, he said, describing it as probably the first example of a destructive cyberattack that "completely destroyed the core of a telecoms operator."

[5 things to know about the border bill at the heart of GOP shutdown threats](#)

[DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas calls for bipartisan effort to address rise in migrant crossings \(CBS News\)](#)

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Thursday that "Republican and Democratic senators are at the table to discuss how the broken immigration system should be fixed," although he avoided speaking about specifics amid high-stakes negotiations between both parties as another government shutdown looms. "This is all about solutions, not making the problem worse by taking away the funding that our public servants rely on to do their work in the service of the American people," Mayorkas told "CBS Mornings." The White House has asked Congress to provide more funding for Israel and Ukraine, but Republicans are insisting on tying that aid to a border security package. A bipartisan group of senators has been trying to work out a deal, but they are coming up against shutdown deadlines as several key government programs are only funded through Jan. 8, and others through Feb. 2. Meanwhile, House Republicans, including House Speaker Mike Johnson, have moved a step closer to impeaching Mayorkas, with an initial hearing scheduled for Jan. 10. The House Homeland Security Committee has alleged that Mayorkas has intentionally exacerbated the situation at the border.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[California Air Resources Board extends deadline for Clean Truck Check reporting \(Transportation Today\)](#)

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) recently extended the reporting deadline for Clean Truck Check, a program designed to reduce air pollution by preventing high-polluting buses or trucks from registering for operation and encouraging the rapid repair of malfunctioning emissions control systems, to Jan. 31. The extension gives heavy-duty truck owners and operators an extra month to finalize their initial reporting requirement and compliance fee payment for 2023. Owners are required to report in the new Clean Truck Check-Vehicle Inspection System reporting database. Reporting requirements apply to vehicles weighing more than 14,000 pounds that are powered by diesel or alternative fuels. It applies to in-state and out-of-state vehicles that travel within California, government vehicles, buses, motor coaches, single vehicle fleets, California-registered motorhomes, and personal vehicles. When Clean Truck Check is fully implemented, it is projected to cut statewide nitrogen emissions by more than 81 tons daily and particulate matter emissions by 0.7 tons daily in 2037.

[The \(Pretty Short\) List of EVs That Qualify for a \\$7,500 Tax Credit in 2024](#)

Tax Credits for New EVs

The following vehicles are eligible for tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act based on the latest guidance from the Treasury Department. The credits are for new vehicles placed in service during 2024.

U.S. FEDERAL TAX CREDITS FOR NEW PLUG-IN VEHICLES

Model years in service 2024

MODEL	MODEL YEAR(S)	CREDIT AMOUNT
Chevrolet Bolt EUV	2022-2023	\$7,500
Chevrolet Bolt EV	2022-2023	\$7,500
Chrysler Pacifica PHEV	2022-2024	\$7,500
Ford Escape Plug-in Hybrid	2022-2024	\$3,750
Ford F-150 Lightning (extended range battery)	2022-2024	\$7,500
Ford F-150 Lightning (standard range battery)	2022-2024	\$7,500
Jeep Grand Cherokee PHEV 4xe	2022-2024	\$3,750
Jeep Wrangler PHEV 4xe	2022-2024	\$3,750
Lincoln Corsair Grand Touring	2022-2024	\$3,750
Rivian R1S Dual Large	2023-2024	\$3,750
Rivian R1S Quad Large	2023-2024	\$3,750
Rivian R1T Dual Large	2023-2024	\$3,750
Rivian R1T Dual Max	2023-2024	\$3,750
Rivian R1T Quad Large	2023-2024	\$3,750
Tesla Model 3 Performance	2023-2024	\$7,500
Tesla Model X Long Range	2023-2024	\$7,500
Tesla Model Y All-Wheel Drive	2023-2024	\$7,500
Tesla Model Y Performance	2023-2024	\$7,500
Tesla Model Y Rear-Wheel Drive	2024	\$7,500

[DOT launches transportation innovation advisory committee \(Transportation Today\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) announced it had launched a new advisory committee that will advise the Secretary of Transportation on transportation innovation. The 27 member Transforming Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) will provide Transportation Sec. Pete Buttigieg and the DOT with information on plans and approaches for innovation in the transportation industry from a wide array of sectors, geographies and areas of expertise. Officials said the members include experts from think tanks, academic institutions, labor, industry and the public sector in topics ranging from automation to cybersecurity, safety and entrepreneurship. "We are living in a time filled with unprecedented opportunity and unprecedented challenges in transportation," Buttigieg said. "The deep expertise and diverse perspectives of this impressive group will provide

advice to ensure the future of transportation is safe, efficient, sustainable, equitable, and transformative.” TTAC members will serve 2-year terms and may be reappointed. Officials said they worked hard to select individuals with in-depth knowledge of their respective industries or sectors, while being mindful of diversity and comprehensive points of view.

[State Group Sues Biden Administration Over Emissions Rules](#)

[Secretary Buttigieg to Headline Annual TRB Conference \(Transport Topics\)](#)

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is among the senior officials headlining the Transportation Research Board meeting this year, an annual event that brings together several thousand stakeholders, academics and experts to discuss myriad issues facing the transportation sector. The DOT leader is scheduled to keynote the annual Washington, D.C., conference on Jan. 10. On his agenda is the ongoing implementation of 2021’s \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Included in that bipartisan measure was the multibillion-dollar Bridge Investment Program. DOT recently announced applications for agencies to access funding for bridge projects. “When a bridge closes, it costs Americans time and money, disrupts supply chains across the region, and sometimes cuts off entire communities from vital resources,” Buttigieg said Dec. 20. “Thanks to President [Joe] Biden, we are making the largest investment in America’s bridges since the construction of the interstate system, and these grants will help repair bridges in communities of all sizes, so we can get people and goods safely to where they need to be.”

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Digital transformation in nursing ed can increase workforce resilience \(Healthcare News\)](#)

Over five years, the University of Rochester School of Nursing transitioned from students managing large textbooks across multiple devices and mediums and schedules filled with lectures into a tablet-driven metaverse of learning where instructional designers work with faculty to provide real-world, hands-on experience. By mid-year 2023, the program reported a 50% rise in enrollment from its numbers in 2016. That increase may seem surprising for a couple of reasons. Ninety percent of nurses were ready to leave the profession in 2022 due to the administrative burnout and mental strain of working through the COVID-19 pandemic while the healthcare industry quickly looked to technology to help

address immediate needs and deliver care in the face of clinical and nursing shortages. Health systems leveraged artificial intelligence to make the nursing workload more equitable and informaticists to improve or redesign electronic health record workflows to reduce documentation burden. Hospitals also implemented virtual nursing to ease clinician burnout as well as inpatient virtual care to help manage nursing shortages.

[Lilly launches website, home delivery option for weight-loss drug](#)

[New antibiotic compound very exciting, expert says \(BBC News\)](#)

The new compound, zosurabalpin, worked "extremely well" in test-tubes and mice, Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership scientific director Prof Laura Piddock said. The research offered "definite hope" for other hard-to-treat infections, she told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. It is published in the journal Nature. US researchers focused on finding a new way to treat infections caused by the carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (Crab) bacterium. The organism, classed a "priority-one critical pathogen" by the World Health Organization, can cause very serious invasive blood and chest infections in critically ill hospital patients. It is resistant to many known antibiotics. A key reason it is so hard to find new drugs that neutralise it is because of the bacterium's tricky structure - with a double walled "membrane" surrounding it and protecting it from attack. This configuration "makes it very difficult to get drugs into it and to get drugs to stay inside", Prof Piddock told BBC News.

[Flu is intensifying, especially in the Southeast and the West](#)

[Alzheimer's Drugs Might Get Into the Brain Faster With New Ultrasound Tool, Study Shows \(U.S. News\)](#)

Scientists have found a way to help Alzheimer's drugs seep inside the brain faster — by temporarily breaching its protective shield. The novel experiment was a first attempt in just three patients. But in spots in the brain where the new technology took aim, it enhanced removal of Alzheimer's trademark brain-clogging plaque, researchers reported Wednesday. "Our goal is to give patients a head start," by boosting some new Alzheimer's treatments that take a long time to work, said Dr. Ali Rezai of West Virginia University's Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, who led the study. At issue is what's called the blood-

brain barrier, a protective lining in blood vessels that prevents germs and other damaging substances from leaching into brain from the bloodstream. But it also can block drugs for Alzheimer's, tumors and other neurologic diseases, requiring higher doses for longer periods for enough to reach their target inside the brain. Now scientists are using a technology called focused ultrasound to jiggle temporary openings in that shield.

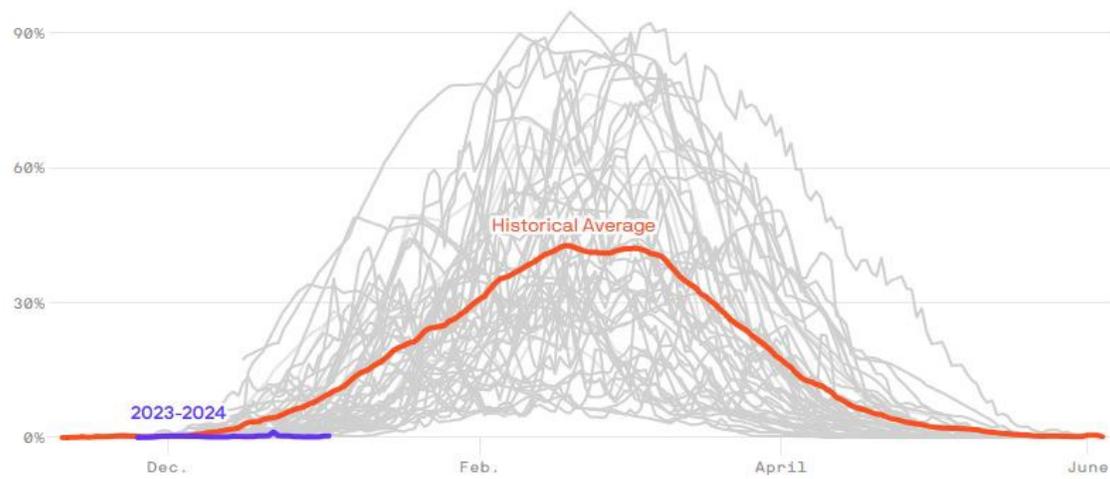
Climate & Development

[EPA gives Louisiana authority to approve projects storing carbon dioxide underground \(The Hill\)](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has granted Louisiana the right to approve projects that store carbon dioxide underground. These projects take carbon dioxide emitted by energy production or industrial processes and inject it into rock formations underground to prevent it from going into the atmosphere and worsening climate change. The EPA said last week that the state's program meets requirements for approval. In a written statement Thursday, Gov. John Bel Edwards (D) said that the state's geology and existing pipeline infrastructure set it up to be a major hub for carbon capture and sequestration projects. "While CO2 sequestration is not the only strategy available for carbon management, it is the most mature and market-ready tool available in the near term," he said. The EPA's move was met with criticism from some on the left, who raised concerns with both the State of Louisiana and the use of carbon storage more broadly.

[From the Sierra Nevada to the Great Lakes, winter is running late](#)

Great Lakes ice cover, 1973-2024



[Germany's emissions hit 70-year low as it reduces reliance on coal \(The Guardian\)](#)

Germany's emissions hit a 70-year low last year as Europe's largest economy reduced its reliance on coal. A study by the thinktank Agora Energiewende found that Germany emitted 673m tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2023, 73m tonnes fewer than in 2022. The drop was "largely attributable to a strong decrease in coal power generation", Agora said, accounting for a reduction of 46m tonnes in CO2 emissions. Emissions from industry fell significantly, largely due to a decline in production by energy-intensive companies. Electricity generation from renewable sources was more than 50% of the total in 2023 for the first time, while coal's share dropped to 26% from 34%, according to the federal network agency. Germany had resorted to coal following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, when Moscow cut off gas supplies. But since then Germany has significantly reduced its use of the fossil fuels.

[Brace yourself for a blockbuster year on energy and climate](#)

[What climate scientists are predicting for the globe in 2024 \(NYT\)](#)

As a year of surprising global warmth came to a close, a record high annual average temperature was already assured. Now, some scientists are already speculating: 2024 could be even hotter. After all, vast swaths of Earth's oceans were record-warm for most of 2023, and it would take as many months for them to release that heat. An intense episode of the planet-warming El Niño climate pattern is nearing its peak, and the last time that

happened, it pushed the planet to record warmth in 2016. That suggests there will be no imminent slowdown in a surge of global warmth that has supercharged the decades-long trend tied to fossil fuel emissions. It could be enough to, for the first time on an annual basis, push average planetary temperatures more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial, 19th century levels, according to Britain's Met Office. The planet came closer than ever to that dreaded threshold in recent months, providing a first glimpse of a world where sustained levels of that heat would fuel new weather extremes.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committee:

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Appropriations Committee:

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Homeland Security Committee:

House: Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 10:00am EST; ["Havoc in the Heartland: How Secretary Mayorkas' Failed Leadership Has Impacted the States."](#)

Senate: Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 10:00am EST; ["Harnessing AI to Improve Government Services and Customer Experience"](#)



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