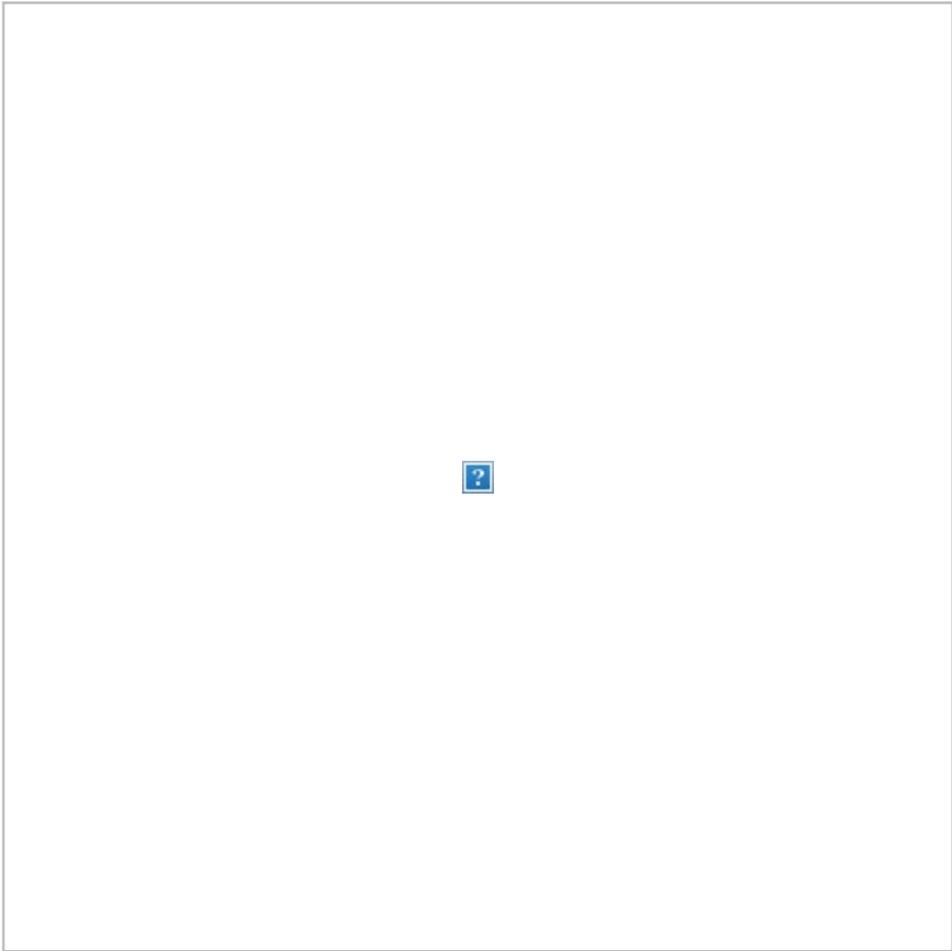
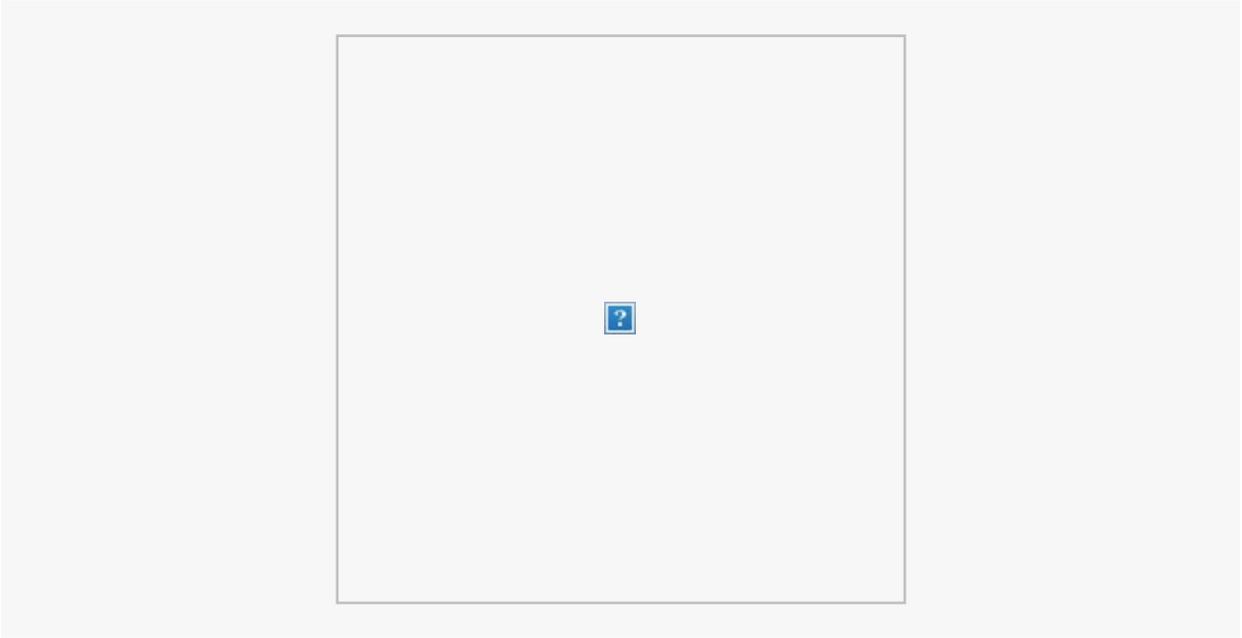


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March 15, 2024

Headlines - Aerospace & Defense - Budget & Economy - Advanced Tech - Military Installations & Communities - Homeland Security - Transportation & Infrastructure - Biotech & Healthcare - Climate & Development

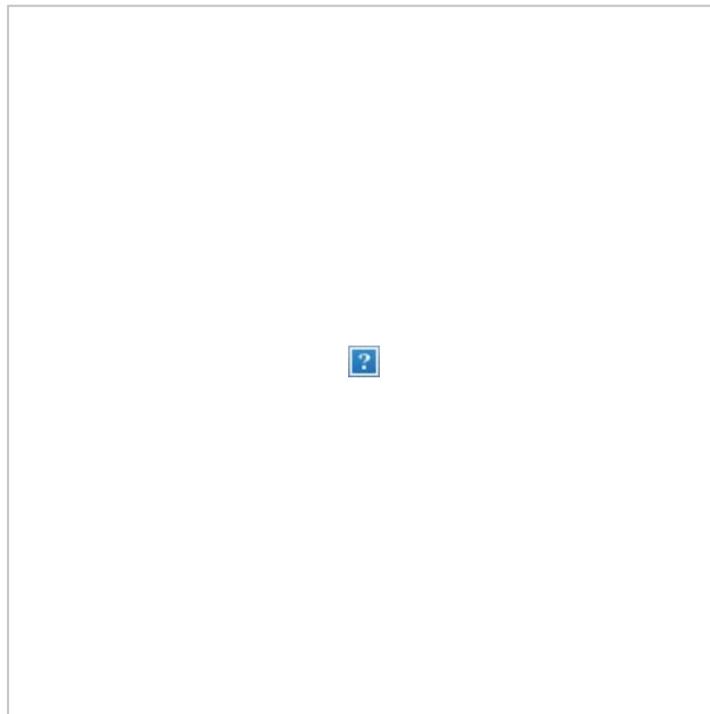
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Notable Headlines

- [Durbin, Lee pitch 'compromise' bill to renew Section 702 authority](#)
- [Growing teen THC use could further complicate cannabis policy](#)
- [Republicans are worried as the Ohio Senate primary breaks out into an all-out brawl](#)
- [All eligible people at Chicago migrant shelter have been vaccinated for measles in 'unprecedented operation'](#)
- [Fulton County judge says Fani Willis disqualification ruling 'should be out tomorrow'](#)

Worth reading: [What the Press and Pollsters Get Wrong about a Biden-Trump Rematch](#)

View From The Hill



The House overwhelmingly [passed](#) legislation this week to effectively ban the popular social media app, TikTok, in the United States after six months unless the app's parent company, ByteDance, divests the platform. The legislation faces much longer odds in the Senate, though President Biden has indicated he would sign the bill if the Senate ultimately sends it to his desk. The House vote stems from ongoing national security concerns about undue influence Beijing has on the app's data retention and collection and followed a classified briefing on the subject provided to all House Members ahead of the vote.

The House Republican Majority slimmed down to an extremely thin two Member margin this week, as retiring Rep. Ken Buck (R-CO) abruptly [announced](#) an early exit from Congress. Buck cited internal party bickering and overall dysfunction for his decision to leave earlier than planned. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) [took](#) his conference to the famed Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia for the party's annual policy retreat. The resort, known for its formerly secret Cold War [bunker](#) originally intended to shelter Congress in the event of nuclear war, only ended up hosting about half of the House GOP, as many lawmakers opted out of attending the event. The Speaker did make news during the event, [announcing](#) his intention to put both Ukraine and Israel aid funding on the House Floor as one or two separate bills, following passage of the remaining full year 2024 funding bills.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer took to the Senate Floor this week to [criticize](#) the Israeli government over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza amidst the Israeli response to the Hamas terror attacks on October 7th. As the highest-ranking elected Jewish official in American history, Schumer's remarks were remarkable and were specifically aimed at Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government.

Congressional leaders are expected to [unveil](#) the second, final government spending package for fiscal year 2024 by Sunday evening, as lawmakers seek to clear the FY24 books now that the President's fiscal year 2025 budget has officially hit Capitol Hill. The last major hurdle appears to be funding for the Department of Homeland Security, whose hot-button portfolio of border security and immigration enforcement mean that Department is likely to be left with a year-long stopgap continuing resolution.

Aerospace & Defense

[SpaceX Starship disintegrates after completing most of third test flight \(Reuters\)](#)

One of SpaceX's new spacecraft which was designed to take astronauts to the moon and beyond got very close to completing an entire test flight. Disaster struck on its return to earth when it disintegrated. Mission control lost communication with the Starship during its reentering of the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds. During the test flight SpaceX chose to skip one of the test flight's objectives - "an attempt to re-ignite one of Starship's Raptor engines while it coasted in a shallow orbit." The accomplishment of that task is considered a milestone to its future success. It is currently unclear why that objective was not attempted. Although re-entry did not go as planned both SpaceX and NASA officials considered the test flight an overall success.

[Middle East Conflicts Revive Clash Between the President and Congress over War Powers](#)

[Russia believed to have jammed signal on UK defense minister's plane \(Reuters\)](#)

As Sweden was brought into the NATO family last week, Russia continues to bear its might on countries they see as adversaries. As the UK defense minister was traveling back from Poland it is believed Russia jammed the satellite signal on the aircraft. Once the

signal was jammed, mobile phones could not connect to the internet and the aircraft was “forced to use alternative methods to determine its location.” The plane flew close to Kaliningrad and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pointed to that as the reason for the signal jam. The Russian defense ministry did not respond to a request for a comment, but Sunak did not seem concerned, given the plane’s geographic location when the event occurred.

Budget & Economy

[This week provided a reminder that inflation isn’t going away anytime soon \(CNBC\)](#)

This week brought poor economic news for the country and for President Biden’s re-election campaign. A new Federal Reserve survey showed that consumer prices rose 3.2% from a year ago and that pressure at the wholesale level is heating up. This data will be important as the Fed convenes this upcoming Tuesday for a “two-day policy meeting where it will decide on the current level of interest rates” and offer an updated look on where things are going long term. The Labor Department also reports that the ‘producer price index’ showed a 0.6% increase which was double the Dow Jones estimate. With these data trends it becomes more difficult for the Federal Reserve to justify a cut in interest rates.

[OPM prioritizing pooled hiring, HR workforce in 2025 budget](#)

[President Biden wants to give homebuyers a \\$10,000 tax credit. Here’s who would qualify. \(CBS\)](#)

For generations, home ownership has been the epitome of the American dream. Rate of home ownership has long been a measure of the strength of wages, the economy, and even the unmeasurable rate of well being in America. Generally speaking when home ownership is up, the country is doing well. But home ownership rates have been stagnant and many feel the possibility of owning a home is out of reach. President Biden, in his State of the Union address last week announced a \$10,000 new tax credit for first-time home buyers. This will also be followed by a separate \$10,000 tax credit for current homeowners who sell their home for a larger house. Both of these proposals would have to be passed by Congress, but it is an area where the president could get some bipartisan support as it is difficult in both red and blue states to own a home. The tax credits are being targeted toward the middle class and would be limited to households earning less than \$200,000.

Advanced Technologies

[From AI assistants to Big tech breakup: World Wide Web inventor’s top predictions as it turns 25 \(CNBC\)](#)

Tim Berners-Lee, a name not many individuals born after the year 2000 would know, but nevertheless a man who has shaped our society more than most. Tim Berners-Lee is credited with being the inventor of the World Wide Web while working at CERN. This

adventure started because Berners-Lee wanted an information management system to help his colleagues share information among themselves. Berners-Lee had bold predictions about the future of technology, but his ideas are not ones that people haven't already assumed would occur at some point. He believes that everyone will have a personal AI assistant. This is something that is not out of the realm of possibilities as many companies have begun to heavily invest in AI, while many have felt the pains of those investments via layoffs. One of the bigger predictions is that a big tech company could get broken up. It is clear the European Union has been more willing to go after big tech than the United States, but will it be enough to break up Apple, Google, or Microsoft?

[India banned TikTok without warning. 200 million people learned to live without it](#)

[Italy fines TikTok \\$11 million for failing to protect minors \(CNN\)](#)

As the US House of Representatives voted to ban TikTok or force its sale, the competition authority in Italy fined TikTok for failing to “control the spread of content that it said threatened the safety of minors and other vulnerable people.” The argument made by Italy is a similar one many US lawmakers have echoed in recent days and is one of the reasons the bill in the House to ban it passed with large bipartisan support. This was another blow to TikTok in Europe following a ruling of the Irish Data Protection Commission in September 2023 ordering the platform to pay a \$376 million fine for ‘failing to protect children.’ The fate of TikTok is threatened by actions taken in Europe, and the legislation pending in Europe. It is important to note the issues Europe is taking has to do with content control, where the issue taking priority in the United States is the owner of TikTok, ByteDance being beholdened to the Chinese government.

Military Installations & Communities

[Marine Corps sends special response unit to Haiti after partial US Embassy Evacuation \(Military.com\)](#)

The US Marine Corps has sent a special response unit to Haiti to supplement security which will allow non-essential personnel to depart and relieve Marines previously manning posts at the US Embassy to recuperate. Port-au-Prince has been battling widespread gang violence, which has prompted the evacuation of non-essential personnel. The Pentagon is taking this violence seriously as it doubled funding for its “multinational security mission in Haiti” this week. The US Southern Command stated it was working with Haitian National Police to ‘restore security’ and that support could include information sharing, airlift, and medical support. Evacuations were conducted earlier this week and it was added that no Haitians were aboard flights out of the country.

[Duty, Honor, Outrage: Change to West Point's Mission Statement Sparks Controversy](#)

[Visas for Afghans who helped US military running low amid Congressional gridlock \(Military.com\)](#)

Throughout the time the US spent in Afghanistan there were many who risked their lives to assist our Armed Forces, and now visas to help them get to the US are running low. Negotiations are ongoing to include 20,000 visas in the spending bill that would fund half the federal government, including the Department of State. Some supporters say that House Republicans are standing in the way but recently it appears that Speaker Mike Johnson has been open to “a few thousand” visas. With the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan supporters are pressing to ensure allies who helped the US military are able to relocate to the United States. Unless more are added, visas are expected to run out by August.

Homeland Security

[DHS budget request forecasts big hiring goals for CBP, TSA \(Federal News Network\)](#)

The Biden administration in its Homeland Security budget request for FY25 is placing priority on Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In the overall budget request of \$107.9 billion, including \$62.2 billion in discretionary funding the administration is looking to use that money for hundreds more staff at CBP and TSA. The Biden administration is attempting to put pressure on Republicans to pass border security legislation and this budget request reflects that attempt as well. Biden is asking for an extra 250 border patrol agents, 135 border patrol processing coordinators, 150 CBP officers, and 121 mission support positions.

[DHS headed for yearlong stopgap as appropriations finale comes into focus](#)

[US Citizen charged with providing material support to ISIS and receiving military-type training \(Homeland Security Today\)](#)

Harafa Hussein Abdi was recently taken into custody and transported to the US earlier this week and is charged with “providing and conspiring to provide material support to ISIS and receiving training from them.” Abdi was presented before US Magistrate Judge Valerie Figueredo on Tuesday. In the complaint it alleged that Abdi “carried an AK-47, threatened to attack civilians in New York City, and encouraged others to do the same.” Abdi moved from Minnesota to Somalia in 2015 and joined ISIS. A couple years later he left due to his deteriorating relationship with his group’s leadership. Abdi has admitted much of his ISIS based activity and even identified himself in an ISIS propaganda video. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant US Attorney Nicholas S. Bradley.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Sacramento receives \\$20 million for transportation projects in low-income communities \(CBS\)](#)

California legislators have secured federal funding for transit projects under the ‘Green

Means Go' program. The \$20 million they received will be going towards planning and community engagement according to Corless who is the executive director of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments. One of the projects that will be helped with this funding is a pedestrian bridge from Isleton that connects downtown back to the Sacramento River. California legislators are excited about the funding and believe it will offer them the leverage to get more money to continue to bring their projects to fruition.

[Yellen touts electric vehicle 'boom' as automakers tone down hype](#)

[Biden pledges billions to rebuild cities 'torn apart' by highways decades ago \(The Guardian\)](#)

As the general election is truly in full swing with both President Biden and Fmr. President Trump having secured enough delegates to become their respective parties' nomination when the conventions meet this Summer they are hitting the campaign trail. Biden is continuing to build on the coalition of minority voters that got him elected in 2020. In this effort he is hailing the start of \$3.3 billion in infrastructure spending to 'right historical wrongs' in an effort to reconnect city neighborhoods that were separated by interstate highways. While in Milwaukee, Wisconsin Biden announced a \$36.6 million grant to upgrade sidewalks and create cycle lanes, greater access to mass transit and more greenery in a historic majority African American neighborhood. Biden said the construction of interstate highways led to the demolition of roughly 17,000 homes and 1,000 businesses which disproportionately impacted Black and low-income neighborhoods. Biden will surely need the voters in these areas if he wants to defeat Donald Trump and carry states like Wisconsin.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Biotech trade association to split with China's WuXi AppTec \(Reuters\)](#)

As the stalemate between China and the US continues, the effects are being felt beyond the halls of Congress. A global trade association representing biotechnology companies is taking steps "to separate from Chinese member Wuxi AppTec" according to a letter from their CEO. The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO), said it would support legislation that restricts business with WuXi AppTec and other biotech companies of concern. This news comes off of a bill that was approved in a US Senate Committee last week that could prohibit federal agencies from contracting with WuXi AppTec and other Chinese biotech companies. BIO's new CEO is changing direction as last month its then CEO, Rachel King, wrote a letter to the committee to reconsider the legislation. It is clear that companies and organizations do not want to be seen as 'soft of China' or allow the perception they may be compromised by the Chinese government.

[The massive health care hack is now being investigated by the federal Office of Civil Rights](#)

[Illinois to cut state-funded health care for illegal immigrant, green card holders after soaring](#)

[costs \(Fox\)](#)

Citing costs that have surpassed their estimated projections, the state of Illinois has decided they will cut a “pair of state-funded health insurance programs that cover non-citizens and illegal immigrants.” The change will impact eligibility requirements for the Healthcare Benefits for Immigrant Adults and Seniors program as costs have skyrocketed to more than \$1 billion over the last year. According to the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, illegal immigrants and non-citizen green card holders “who have been in the US for fewer than five years will no longer be covered by a pair of the state’s health insurance programs beginning April 1.” The department will be providing information for alternative coverage, through the federal marketplace but recognize 6,000 will lose coverage come May 1.

Climate & Development

[Nearly half of US homes face severe threat from climate change, study finds \(CBS\)](#)

According to a new study, “nearly half of all US homes are threatened by extreme weather conditions.” Half of US homes would constitute nearly \$22 trillion in residential property that are at risk of destruction from high winds, wildfires, flooding, heat, and poor air quality. Poor quality will hit home for those in the Northeastern portion of the US as many remember the blanket of smoke that came down from wildfires in Canada. While these dangers are alarming for future homeowners, it can impact current owners by driving up insurance costs and potentially destabilize the broader housing market. A nonprofit that studies climate risks, First Street Foundation, found that “nearly 36 million homes face rising insurance costs and reduced coverage options due to climate risks.” While many would assume the homes affected are located on the coast inland states like Kentucky, South Dakota, and West Virginia are also feeling the impacts.

[Interior Department will give tribal nations \\$120 million to fight climate-related threats](#)

[Python farming could offer one of the most sustainable sources of meat in the world \(ABC\)](#)

With the increasing consequences of climate change being felt on our supply chain, scientists are learning more about alternatives to beef, pork, and chicken. It appears one of the most sustainable options could be python meat. According to researchers python meat could offer a “much less carbon intensive” option in comparison to current options. Coming off the heels of covid when the supply chain was severely disrupted, it was noted that pythons were able to survive extreme events and most likely would not have to be culled. It was found that python meat could be a more sustainable option because pythons can reproduce rapidly even when food is not abundantly available to them. For comparison, a mother cow can “produce an average of .8 calves a year, a pig can produce 22 to 27 piglets, but a female python can produce between 50 and 100 eggs in one year.” If a lot of the developed world could move past eating reptiles it would offer a high-quality protein with a significant decrease in its carbon footprint.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committee:

House: None listed

Senate: 3/20, 9:30 AM: To receive testimony on the final report of the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution Reform Commission

Appropriations Committee:

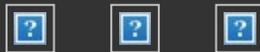
House: 3/20, 10 AM: FY25 Budget Request for the Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Energy; 10:30 AM: Oversight Hearing - Quality of Life in the Military; 3/21, 10 AM: FY25 Budget Request for the Department of Agriculture; 2:30 PM: President Biden's FY25 Budget Request and Economic Outlook

Senate: None listed

Homeland Security Committee:

House: 3/20, 10 AM: Current status of Iran's Axis of Resistance; 2 PM: Securing our Nation from WMDs

Senate: 3/20, 10 AM: Reforming federal records management to Improve transparency and accountability; 2:45 PM: Strengthening international cooperation to stop the flow of fentanyl into the US



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