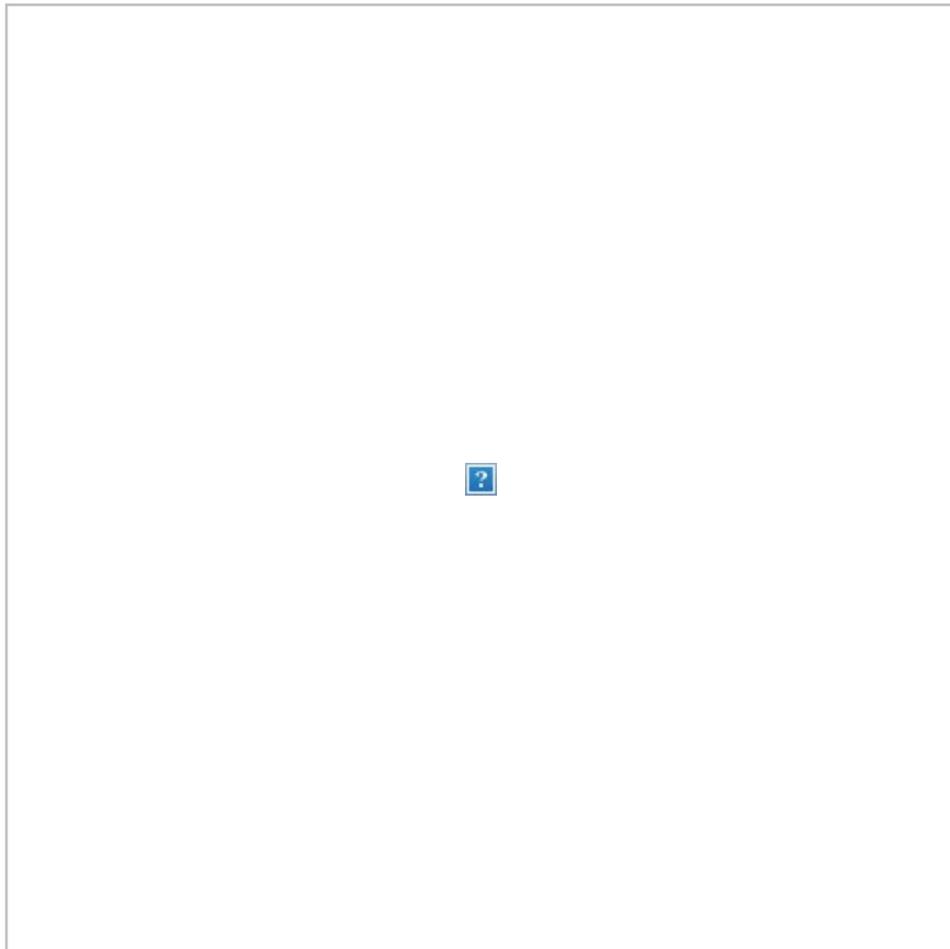
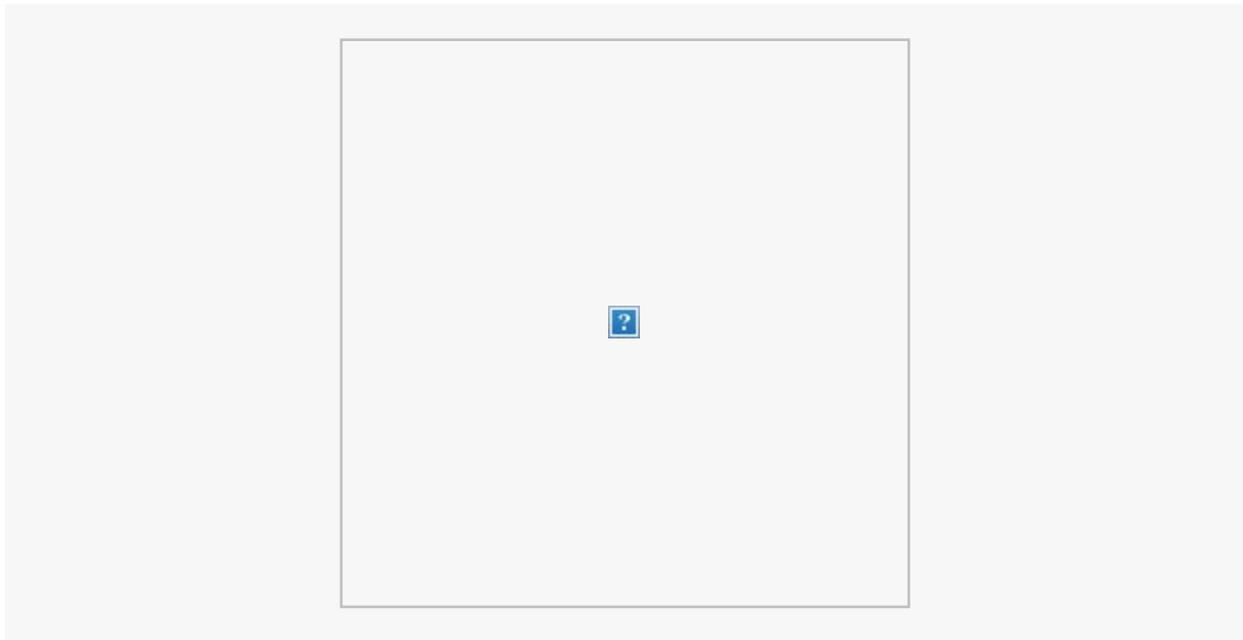


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May 17, 2024

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

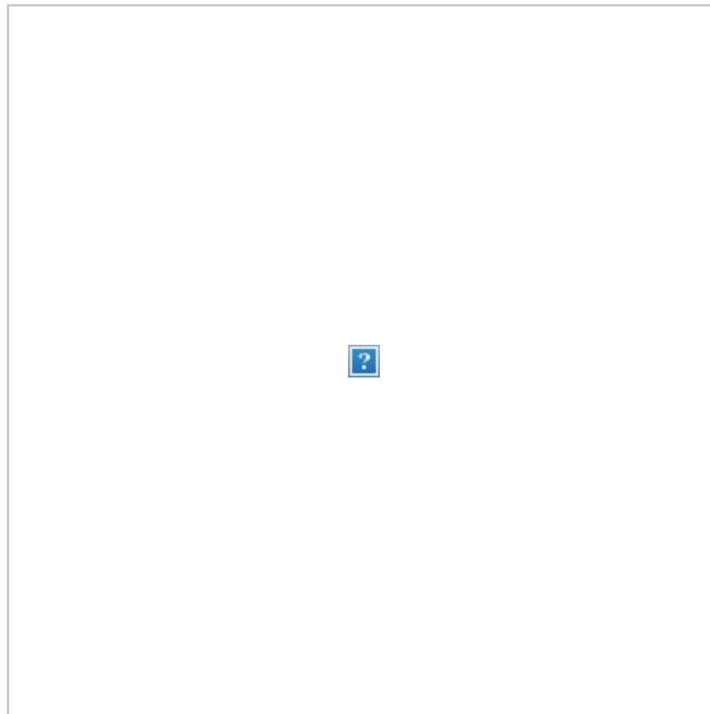
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Notable Headlines

- [Biden asserts executive privilege over audio of interview with special counsel Hur](#)
- [Senate Rules advances three AI election bills](#)
- [Trump trial Day 18 takeaways: Fireworks on the stand as finish line nears](#)
- [Police Departments sell their used guns. Thousands end up at crime scenes.](#)
- [Raw milk sales spike despite CDC's warnings of risk associated with bird flu](#)

Worth reading: [Warning signs for Trump: 5 takeaways from Tuesday's primaries](#)

View From The Hill



The House [passed](#) the final version of legislation to reauthorize programs and operations of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) this week, enacting policies that would increase the number of air traffic controllers and force air carriers to automatically refund passengers whose flights are cancelled or significantly delayed. The bill also places more FAA inspectors at aircraft manufacturing facilities, after several high-profile safety incidents involving Boeing aircraft in recent months. The House also [passed](#) legislation, opposed by most House Democrats and the Biden Administration, that would force the White House to end its temporary pause on delivering certain bombs to Israel. President Biden announced

the pause last week in response to concerns over escalating military activity by the Israeli Defense Forces in Rafah. Republicans condemned the move, arguing it would send the wrong message to Hamas and Iran. The Republican House Majority has increasingly used the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas as a wedge issue against Democrats, who are much more divided on the conflict. The House GOP sees political benefits to continuing to lob tough votes at their Democratic colleagues heading into election season.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and his bipartisan task force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) [released](#) a roadmap this week outlining policy challenges and proposing \$32 billion in non-defense spending by the federal government to advance the nation's AI capabilities. Congress has been grappling with how and whether to regulate AI and what the overall role of the federal government should be in advancing use of the technology in a rapidly changing landscape. Speaking of bipartisanship, the annual ranking of most bipartisan Members of Congress was [released](#) by the Lugar Center this week, with Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) earning the top spot, followed closely by Senator Gary Peters (D-MI). On the House Side, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Rep. Marc Molinaro (R-NY) [were](#) the top two, with Rep. Chris Pappas (D-ME) leading Democrats in third place. The rankings are based on legislation sponsored or cosponsored by Members of both parties.

As budget season moves quickly into fiscal year 2025 appropriations season, hearings continued across Capitol Hill this week. The Senate Armed Services Committee [received](#) testimony from Navy Sec. Carlos Del Toro, Admiral Franchetti, and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith, in which struggling shipbuilding programs were a hot topic. General Smith, who suffered a cardiac event while on a run in his DC neighborhood a few months ago, was [featured](#) alongside the good Samaritans who saved his life in a Washington Post article on the remarkable story. Also in the Senate, TRG's own client, The [Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance](#), testified before the Budget Committee on the impact climate change is having on military installations and associated national security implications. Over in the House, newly minted chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), [released](#) the hotly anticipated markup schedule for consideration of individual appropriations bills for FY25. The first bill under subcommittee consideration will be the FY25 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill next week.

Aerospace & Defense

[Lockheed running out of parking space amid F-35 delays, says watchdog \(DefenseNews\)](#)

According to the Government Accountability Office Lockheed Martin is running out of space to store undelivered F-35 Joint Strike Fighters as the jets' upgrade effort remains behind schedule. GAO also found the "F-35 program's testing capacity is stretched thin and will worsen once the Technology Refresh 3 software upgrade and Block 4 update are ready." Technology Refresh 3 includes improved cockpit displays, better computer memory and more processing power. Block 4 will allow the F-35 to carry more weapons and provide upgrades to its electronic warfare capabilities. Test officials for Technology Refresh 3 told the GAO that the "software remains unstable" almost a year after deliveries were supposed to start. The other issue is Block 4 upgrades cannot be made until Technology Refresh 3 upgrades are installed. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA) who chairs the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces told reporters that within months more than 100 jets could be "stacked up on the tarmac – unacceptable." In the first release of text for the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, the House cut 10

jets from the Pentagon's proposed F-35 procurement saving around \$1 billion. Those funds would go toward ensuring Technology Refresh 3 and the jets work properly.

[Russia says it destroys five Ukraine-launched ATACMS missiles over Crimea](#)

[Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems to lay off about 400 employees, memo says \(Reuters\)](#)

After a lawsuit was filed against them by Texas Attorney General, Ken Paxton, Spirit AeroSystems is back in the headlines but this time it is for layoffs. According to an internal memo which cited high debt and slowed production at Boeing, the company is laying off several hundred employees in Wichita, Kansas. The spokesman for Spirit AeroSystems, Joe Buccino said "the recent shutdown in delivery rate on commercial programs compels a reduction to our workforce in Wichita...we will inform affected employees and are committed to implementing this transition in as compassionate a manner as possible." The company had already begun to implement restrictions on overtime and hiring as production has declined substantially due to a lower volume of 737 MAX jets. Since the mid-air blowout in January Boeing has been put through the wringer with federal agencies stepping in and having a larger say in their production output. Not to mention whistleblowers warning about individuals cutting corners on other jets in Boeing's portfolio.

Budget & Economy

[Supreme Court upholds funding structure for CFPB \(CBS\)](#)

On Thursday, the Supreme Court upheld the funding structure for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), "rescuing the consumer finance agency from another effort by its critics to weaken it." In a 7-2 decision the Court ruled the CFPB's funding structure complies with the Constitution's appropriations clause. Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the majority while Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch dissented. The decision from SCOTUS reversed a ruling coming out of the US Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit. Justice Thomas wrote that the statute laying out how the CFPB gets its funding, which is from the Federal Reserve, is "similar to schemes used to fund the Post Office and Customs Service" which were established in the late 1700s. In his dissenting opinion Justice Alito said the ruling "turns the Appropriations Clause into a minor vestige and that the CFPB can bankroll its own agenda without any congressional control or oversight." The mechanism at play was the fact that the CFPB gets their money from a capped amount from the Federal Reserve rather than through the annual Congressional appropriations process like many other federal agencies.

[Home prices are soaring. Is this another bubble?](#)

[Australia unveils record \\$37 billion defense budget \(DefenseNews\)](#)

Australia is spending a record amount on their defense budget for the next fiscal year.

They are investing AU \$55.7 billion (US \$37 billion) which equates to 2.02% of their gross domestic product. The budget also represents a 6.3% increase from last fiscal year. In the national defense strategy that Australia released last month it planned for a significant increase in defense spending. However, the big increase does not begin until 2027-2028 when Australia expects to spend about AU \$64.7 billion on defense. Their government does still have work to do if they want to hit their defense spending goal of “AU \$100 billion by 2033-2034 which would equate to 2.3% of GDP.” In their budget release for FY2025 they are setting aside “AU \$16.7 billion for equipment acquisitions, plus another AU\$17.2 billion to sustain existing assets.” The Navy is getting a sizable allocation as nuclear-powered submarines are starting to consume a substantial portion of the budget as the AUKUS agreement progresses.

Advanced Technologies

[News, publishers sound alarm on Google's new AI-infused search, warn of 'catastrophic' impacts \(CNN\)](#)

On Tuesday this week, Google announced they are infusing their search engine with their artificial intelligence model, Gemini. The technology will be able to directly answer user queries at the top of results pages. In the words of the company, “Google will do the Googling for you.” For users this means they will no longer need to click on the links displayed in search results to find the information they are looking for. For the everyday user this sounds like a great addition, but for news publishers this new tool will likely cause “an even further decrease in audience, potentially starving them of readers and revenue.” If the information has already been compiled for the user it removes the need to click on links. The “legwork” that Google will take care of comes in the form of “human-written articles and expertise published across the internet on blogs and media outlets, all built on a foundation of advertising support.”

[Ukraine, Russia race to shield battle tanks from exploding drones](#)

[Microsoft asks some employees in China to move to other countries \(CNN\)](#)

According to Chinese state media reports Microsoft has asked at least 100 of its employees in China to consider moving to other countries. This report comes as relations strain between Washington and Beijing over technologies, especially AI. Employees involved in cloud computing were “recently offered the opportunity to work in the United States, Australia or Ireland.” The Wall Street Journal reported that Microsoft asked as many as 800 employees — mostly engineers with Chinese nationality working on cloud computing or AI, to consider relocation. The Biden administration continues to ponder the possibility of restricting Chinese firms’ access to US cloud services which would certainly hurt companies who hire Chinese nationals. This report comes the same week when President Biden announced tariffs on \$18 billion worth of Chinese imports.

Military Installations & Communities

[Army reservist's family describes struggle to get help before mass shooting in Maine \(Military.com\)](#)

The sister and brother-in-law of an Army reservist who was responsible for killing 18 people in Maine offered an emotional apology yesterday. During public testimony in front of the independent commission investigating the mass shooting the sister, Nicole Herling and brother-in-law, James Herling said “they struggled for months to get help as Robert Card’s mental health declined.” The Herling’s said they were getting frustrated with Army officials as they tried to get Card mental health care. During the hearing the family said “our family will never forget your names” and added that pictures of the victims are on the walls in the Herling home. During the hearing they disclosed an analysis of Card’s brain showing evidence of traumatic brain injuries. In service Card trained others in the use of hand grenades and the family blamed that exposure for his mental decline. James Herling particularly singled out the Army Reserves for declining to answer the phone or return calls before the shooting.

[Military Ospreys Can't Fly More Than 30 Minutes from Landing Airfield Months After Grounding Lifted](#)

[Military must focus on efforts to keep its child care employees to shorten waitlists. watchdog says \(Military.com\)](#)

According to a report released by the Government Accountability Office, in order to cope with increasing turnover rates of child care workers the Defense Department must “do a better job of tracking the effectiveness of employee retention efforts and start offering workers paid leave and bonuses.” The GAO made the recommendations as part of an effort to improve the availability of military child care which many service members struggle to receive and afford. According to a Senate Armed Services hearing this month around 12,000 children are still on waitlists for military child care programs. The report found that while the services do focus on recruiting new employees they do not measure the efforts to retain their child care employees. Some junior service members cannot afford high-quality civilian child care options outside of the DoD forcing many spouses to stay home instead of entering the workforce.

Homeland Security

[Biden's DHS promotes ways for visa holders to stay in US after losing work amid major layoffs \(Fox\)](#)

Amid mass layoffs the US Citizenship and Immigration Services are reminding visa holders there are options for staying in the country after getting laid off or fired. The guidelines for H-1B or other noncitizen workers were updated last month and offer several options to individuals on work visas who have lost their jobs. Individuals can apply for a change in nonimmigrant status or a compelling circumstances employment authorization document. The changes were slightly controversial as some critics claim that they are “abused by tech companies to undercut more expensive American workers.” However, the changes were oriented to streamline the process and provide more flexibility for employers and workers. But, some of the nation’s largest employers have announced layoffs including Walmart who announced a several hundred person layoff earlier this week. Similar announcements

were made by Google, Tesla, and Microsoft. Tesla cut 10% of its workforce last month, with Google cutting 12,000 jobs in 2023 having some of those cuts continue into this year. Google and Microsoft are the companies with the most H-1B visas with many of them going to workers from India and China.

[US Repatriates 11 U.S. Citizens From Northeast Syria](#)

[FBI, Homeland Security warn of possible threats to LGBTQ events, including Pride Month activities \(AP\)](#)

As we approach the month of June, also the month in which pride month occurs, the FBI and Department of Homeland Security are sending warnings to LGBTQ organizations. In a recent public announcement the agencies warned “foreign terrorist organizations or supporters may seek to exploit increased gatherings associated with the upcoming June 2024 pride month.” The public announcement did not specify specific areas or indicate if they were tracking specific threats. In the note the agencies mentioned June 12 marks the 8th anniversary of the attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida. 49 people were killed along with 53 wounded, while the gunman was ultimately killed by SWAT members, he did pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. With Israeli war protests still continuing and Hamas being quite opposed to the LGBTQ community, groups will need to remain vigilant. In June of last year three sympathizers of the Islamic State were arrested in Vienna after attempting to attack a pride event there.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[US airlines are suing the Biden administration over a new rule to make certain fees easier to spot \(AP\)](#)

Airlines are suing to block the Biden administration from requiring greater transparency over fees that the carriers charge their passengers saying "the new rules would confuse consumers by giving them too much information during the ticket-buying process." The US Department of Transportation said it will “vigorously” defend the rule against the hidden junk fees. In a federal appeals court American, Delta, and United along with three other carriers and their industry trade group sued the Transportation Department asking the court to overturn the rule. The trade group, Airlines for America said the Transportation Department was going beyond its authority by attempting “to regulate private business operations in a thriving marketplace.” The airlines claim that the Biden administration has not shown that consumers can’t get information about the fees already. The new rule announced on April 24 would require airlines and travel agents to disclose any charges for baggage and canceling or changing a reservation. The agency estimates the rule will save customers more than \$500 million a year.

[Foresight Finds: Exploring Emerging Trends in Transportation and Security](#)

[These wall-climbing, AI-powered robots are finding the flaws in 'D' grade US infrastructure, from commuter bridges to military hardware \(CNBC\)](#)

Earlier this year the Francis Scott Key Bridge and an I-95 overpass collapse were the latest examples of "critical and vulnerable bridges, roads, dams, factories, plants and machinery that are rapidly aging and in need of repair." Significant amounts of money have been invested to fix these issues but the way infrastructure is maintained has not changed. Maintenance is usually done very slowly or after a significant issue arises. Gecko Robotics is taking on the challenge with AI and robots. Its wall-climbing robots perform inspections on infrastructure and not only identify issues, but also try to predict what can be done to avoid future problems. The US currently has a D rating for infrastructure and getting the rating up to a B would cost \$4 to \$6 trillion. The technology from Gecko Robotics is being used to monitor "500,000 of the world's most critical assets from oil facilities to pipelines." They also received a contract from the US Air Force to help with conversion of missile silos and are now beginning work with the Navy to inspect aircraft carriers.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Babyscripts, Lyft partner on maternal health transportation \(Healthcare Finance\)](#)

Babyscripts is a virtual maternity care program for managing obstetrics and they are partnering with Lyft Healthcare to provide sponsored rides to and from doctor appointments for transportation-insecure maternity patients. Rides will be available to pregnant and postpartum women receiving care through Babyscripts in select areas. Babyscripts and Lyft cited research published by the March of Dimes showing that "access to affordable and reliable transportation can be a determining factor in maternal and infant health outcomes." Inadequate prenatal care experienced by more than 15% of pregnant women, "is associated with poor outcomes such as preterm birth and low birthweight, and can be an indicator of long term health problems for mother and child."

[Damaging hacks expose the weak underbelly of America's health care system](#)

[HHS announces new funding opportunities for AI, behavioral health projects \(Healthcare IT News\)](#)

The Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health IT is offering new money for innovations around AI data quality and technology adoption for behavioral health. ONC under its Leading Edge Acceleration Projects (LEAP) in Health IT initiative they are offering funding for FY24 related to two priorities for HHS. One opportunity is to "develop innovative ways to evaluate and improve the quality of healthcare data used by artificial intelligence tools in healthcare." The other is "focused on designing, developing, and piloting lightweight health IT solutions that can enhance health IT capabilities in behavioral health settings and improve care coordination between behavioral health and clinical settings." When ONC first launched LEAP in Health IT several years ago, their goal was to address challenges to the "development, use, or advancement of well-designed, interoperable, and scalable health IT."

Climate & Development

[DeSantis, amid criticism, signs Florida bill making climate change a lesser state priority \(AP\)](#)

Under legislation signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, climate change will be a lesser priority for the state of Florida. The legislation would boost "expansion of natural gas, reduce regulation on gas pipelines in the state and increase protections against bans on gas appliances such as stoves." DeSantis critics say the law passed "ignores the reality of climate change threats" which include rising seas, extreme heat and flooding and increasingly severe storms. According to the US Energy Information Administration, Florida is 74% reliant on natural gas to power electric generation. Critics of the bill say the legislation moves Florida's energy goals away from efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gases. While DeSantis cites the legislation as "common sense" it could be a policy build up as he eyes a potential 2028 presidential run after a flameout in the 2024 primaries.

[Canadian Wildfire Smoke Is Triggering Outdoor Air Quality Alerts Across the Midwestern U.S. It Could Pollute the Indoors, Too](#)

[Are migraines getting worse? \(NBC\)](#)

According to the journal *Headache* migraines are increasing in frequency and intensity and climate change may be the reason. While the number of Americans who have migraines have remained stable for the last 30 or so years, their impact on daily activities have worsened. According to the study, since 2004 the "measure how migraines affect a person's daily activities jumped from 22% to 42.4%." Dr. Fred Cohen from Mount Sinai said that extreme weather conditions are known triggers for migraines and "as extreme weather events become frequent and intense, they could be contributing to an increase in migraine attacks and their severity." There is evidence that thunderstorms and barometric pressure can trigger headaches, but it is unclear if air pollution from sources like bad air from wildfires is a migraine trigger.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committee:

House: 5/22, 10:00 AM: Markup of 2025 National Defense Authorization Act

Senate:

- 5/21, 9:30 AM - Dept. of Defense space activities in review of Authorization Request for FY 2025 and Future Years Defense Program
- 5/22, 4:45 PM - Dept. of Energy's atomic energy defense activities and Dept. of Defense nuclear weapons programs in review of the Defense Authorization request for FY2025 and Future Years Defense Program

Appropriations Committee:

House:

- 5/22, 10:00 AM - Nutritious foods in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- 5/22, 10:00 AM - Dept. of State FY2025 Request
- 5/23, 10:00 AM - Federal Aviation Administration FY2025 Request
- 5/23, 10:00 AM - United Nations FY2025 Request
- 5/23, 1:30 PM - Member Day, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Senate:

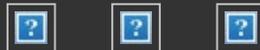
- 5/21, 10:00 AM - Army FY2025 Request
- 5/21, 2:30 PM - Dept. of State FY2025 Request
- 5/22, 10:00 AM - Dept. of Energy FY2025 Request, including the National Nuclear Security Administration
- 5/22, 2:30 PM - Sergeant at Arms, Doorkeeper of the Senate, and Capitol Policy FY2025 Request
- 5/23, 10:00 AM - National Institutes of Health FY2025 Request

Homeland Security Committee:

House: NONE

Senate:

- 5/22, 10:00 AM - Restoring Congressional Oversight over Emergency Powers: Exploring Options to Reform the National Emergencies Act



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