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Executive Insight Brief

April 25, 2025

Notable Headlines



- [Trump says he's got his 'own deadline' for Ukraine talks as tensions flare](#)
- [Twelve states ask trade court to halt Trump tariffs](#)
- [Former Pentagon official on Hegseth turmoil: 'It looks like they actually broke the law'](#)
- [Exclusive: Slotkin has a 'war plan' to beat Trump: Don't be 'weak and woke'](#)
- [Civil rights groups sue to restore jobs at Homeland Security oversight offices that were gutted](#)

View From The Hill



Congress was still out of town for its Passover/Easter recess, however, that didn't stop Hill-related news from making the rounds across Washington. Notably, the budget reconciliation process continues to take shape, with initial House committee markups scheduled to begin when lawmakers return to DC next week. These markups will be focused on defense and border security spending, while the House Energy and Commerce Committee continues to work through its plans to find \$800 billion in spending cuts within its jurisdiction, while allegedly avoiding cuts to social safety net programs like Medicaid. This issue will continue to be a source of contention, particularly among more moderate House GOP Members, who are concerned about the political ramifications of deep spending cuts. Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) has settled on a plan to try and muscle reconciliation through the House by the week of May 19th, passing the measure just in time for the Memorial Day recess. This puts Capitol Hill Republicans behind their previously stated schedule of getting the bill to the President's desk before Memorial Day but is still considered an ambitious pace for the complex political and parliamentary machinations of Congress.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), the second-highest ranking Senate Democrat, [announced](#) on Wednesday that he would not be seeking reelection in 2026, marking an end to the 80-year old's tenure atop the Senate Democratic Caucus. Durbin's exit will open up a leadership race to succeed him as Democratic Whip, a position believed to be coveted by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). It also means replacing him as ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is likely to go to Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). In other 2026 news, Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI) [jumped](#) into an increasingly crowded race to replace retiring Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), and Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) [threw](#) his hat into the ring in the campaign to succeed outgoing Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Amidst [new](#) and continued fallout from Sec. of Defense Pete Hegseth's use of the messaging platform Signal, as well as ongoing [drama](#) within the upper echelons of the Pentagon surrounding the embattled former Fox News host, Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) [became](#) the first House GOP Member to call on Hegseth to step down. Bacon referred to Hegseth as "An amateur person."

Pentagon News



Amid rising tariffs and declining rapport between the U.S. and China, the latter has [returned](#) two Boeing planes, with another expected to follow, in its latest retaliatory move. Boeing had another 50 planes expected to go to customers in China this year, but they will no longer accept Boeing's delivery. In response, the aerospace company has announced that they are taking planes back from China in a pragmatic approach to remarket the planes to people who want them. This ordeal was driven by a 145% tariff on imports from China, which was then countered by China's 125% tariff on American goods.

Over at the Pentagon, big changes are underway that could shake up how software gets approved for military networks. Acting CIO Katie Arrington announced a dramatic [overhaul](#) of the current approval system, calling the long-standing Risk Management Framework (RMF) and Authorization To Operate (ATO) process "stupid" and "archaic." In their place? A new AI-driven system called SWIFT, designed to cut months (or even years) off the process.

The new system will ditch paperwork in favor of automated backend reviews, pulling cybersecurity and performance data from existing government databases. Contractors will now have to submit Software Bills of Materials (SBOMs)—essentially ingredient lists for code—to prove their tools are secure, both in test and production environments.

It's a bold move that marks a break from over a decade of defense cybersecurity norms. Arrington made clear this isn't just a tech upgrade—it's a philosophical shift. "I want the RMF eliminated," she said, pushing for faster approvals, zero trust frameworks, and continuous monitoring as the new standard. Her directive is already being signed out, with follow-up memos and industry requests rolling out within weeks. The message from the Pentagon is loud and clear: move fast, or get left behind.

Awaiting the release of President Trump's budget request, L3Harris has maintained [strong positioning](#) as a key contributor to the administration's Golden Dome efforts. On Thursday, CEO Chris Kubasik expressed the potential for the company to provide missile warning/missile tracking (MW/MT) technologies over the next four years, optimistic about working alongside the DoD through the contracting process. L3Harris has already demonstrated a clear grasp on these advanced systems, having developed a [Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor](#) (HBTSS) under a Missile Defense Agency (MDA) contract earlier this year.

Fostering partnerships with Amazon's Project Kuiper, Shield AI, and Palantir, Kubasik is committed to an open-systems approach, accelerating the company's capabilities on a timeline that is necessary to meet mission-critical needs. The company has also maintained its business abroad, securing a deal with the Netherlands for a \$1.1 billion software-defined radio program, and exploring potential opportunities with Poland and Germany.

Next Week's Hearings



Armed Services Committee:

House: NONE

Senate:

- 4/29, 9:30 AM - To consider the nominations of: Mr. Michael P. Cadenazzi, Jr. to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy; and Vice Admiral Scott W. Pappano, USN to be Principal Deputy Administrator National Nuclear Security Administration
- 4/30, 9:30 AM - To receive testimony on industry views on partnership with the Department of Defense and defense of the Defense Industrial Base

Appropriations Committee:

House:

- 4/29, 10:00 AM - Budget Hearing – John C. Stennis Center for Public Service, Office of Congressional Workplace Rights, and Congressional Office for International Leadership
- 4/29, 10:30 AM - Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration - Member Day
- 4/30, 10:00 AM - Oversight Hearing - U.S. Postal Service

Senate:

- 4/29, 10:00 AM - A Review of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Requests for the Congressional Budget Office, the Government Accountability Office, and the Government Publishing Office
- 4/30, 10:30 AM - Biomedical Research: Keeping America's Edge in Innovation

Homeland Security Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE



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