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**May 9, 2025**

**Executive Insight Brief**

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['Lot of other countries in the queue': UK trade deal is a first step on a long road](#)

[JD Vance says Russia has asked for territory it hasn't won](#)

[Exclusive: Pakistan's Chinese-made jet brought down two Indian fighter aircraft, US officials say](#)

[FEMA's acting administrator is replaced a day after congressional testimony](#)

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## View From The Hill

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Capitol Hill was buzzing with activity this week, and, as always, there was plenty of drama and angst riling Members of Congress on everything from budget reconciliation to confirmations and air travel. First, the House Natural Resources committee [held](#) a markup of its relatively minor portion of the budget reconciliation effort, voting to expand minerals mining and oil drilling while reforming the cumbersome federal permitting process. Republicans on the panel hope the revenues generated by the legislation will cut the federal deficit by as much as \$15 billion, an overall drop in the bucket in the broader House GOP effort to pay for the massive Trump legislative agenda.

Other committees, namely the House Energy and Commerce, Education, and Ways and Means Committees, delayed their tentatively planned reconciliation markups, amidst ongoing internal GOP heartburn concerning proposed cuts to Medicaid and taxing the wealthiest Americans. There also remains entrenched opposition from moderate GOP Members for limits on state and local tax deductions (SALT) for their constituents in blue states with high property taxes. This has been a point of contention ever since the initial enactment of the Trump tax legislation in 2017. Taken together, these challenges are making the overall prospect of Speaker Mike Johnson's (R-LA) stated goal of passing the House's budget reconciliation measure by the Memorial Day recess murkier.

While reconciliation continues to play out across the Capitol, the White House released its so-called "[skinny budget](#)," prompting Trump administration officials to begin the annual tradition of visiting Capitol Hill to make the case for the president's budget before Congress. Hearings were [held](#) by the House Appropriations Committee for agencies like the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, and the

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Anyone who spends time engaging in this process will privately admit that cabinet officials are often loath to defend any proposed cuts to their agencies by the White House in any administration; however, it is also true that administration appointees almost never publicly distance themselves from the official line. That's why eyebrows were raised on Wednesday when FBI Director Kash Patel [expressed](#) dissatisfaction with cuts to his agency while testifying before the House, stating he believed his agency needed more resources—not less. It remains to be seen how those remarks will play out, as the FBI has come under withering criticism by President Trump, Hill Republicans, and the MAGA base in the last several years.

Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC), who is up for reelection in a battleground state in 2026, [announced](#) his opposition to President Trump's nominee for U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Ed Martin, who defended rioters charged with entering the Capitol during the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection. If Tillis's opposition holds firm, it will effectively kill Martin's nomination, rendering him without the requisite votes to make it out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Embattled Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA) faced new questions about his fitness for office this week. Recent media [reporting](#) has revealed concerns by former staffers of the senator about his mental and physical wellbeing, with some going as far as to say they were concerned about a firearm purchase he made, as well as whether or not he had been taking his medication. Fetterman, known for his unwavering support for Israel and willingness to break from his party on key votes and messaging, has become somewhat of a lightning rod in the Democratic Party. This reputation appears to have blunted colleagues' public defense of the senator amidst these reports. Fetterman suffered a severe stroke during his campaign for the Senate, leaving him with auditory and verbal processing challenges. He also was forced to check himself into the hospital with severe depression a few months into his first term.

As Congress continues wading into the murky waters of how and whether to engage in regulation of the burgeoning Artificial Intelligence revolution, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, [held](#) a hearing on Thursday with OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Microsoft President Brad Smith, and AMD CEO Lisa Su. Cruz's tone at the hearing underscored the broader GOP desire to hold back on heavy-handed regulation of AI technology, even as others have suggested the federal government has a role to play in AI safety and "rules of the road."

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## Pentagon News

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In the latest Department of Defense (DoD) [restructuring](#) move, Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered a broad reduction in the military's top ranks. The [plan](#) includes a 20 percent cut of four-star generals and admirals, as well as a 10 percent reduction across the larger flag officer corps, and a 20 percent decrease in National Guard Generals. Hegseth, who has been openly critical of top brass, framed the move as a necessary modernization effort—not a "slash and burn exercise"—arguing that fewer high-ranking officers will lead to more streamlined and effective operations.

The restructuring will unfold in two phases. The first targets immediate reductions in active-duty four-stars, while the second involves a deeper review of the classified Unified

Command Plan, potentially consolidating major combatant commands like U.S. European and Africa Commands or Northern and Southern Commands. The Army is separately preparing to eliminate 40 general-led positions.

Hegseth called the initiative the most comprehensive defense [leadership review](#) since the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, with the goal of boosting efficiency and combat readiness. The White House has backed the effort, which aligns with broader administration priorities to remake federal institutions and reduce bureaucratic overhead.

The personnel shakeup inside the Pentagon isn't the only move aiming to reshape the defense workforce—Congress is also stepping in with its own plan to tap overlooked talent.

A new bipartisan bill out of Congress is aiming to tap into a pool of young Americans eager to serve but barred from military duty for medical reasons. The [Defense Workforce Integration Act](#), introduced this week by Armed Services Committee members from both chambers, including Sens. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Mike Rounds (R-SD), along with Reps. Jen Kiggans (R-VA) and Joe Courtney (D-CT). This legislation would steer those disqualified from service toward civilian roles in the defense and national security workforce—a move framed as both patriotic and pragmatic.

By reforming the workforce pipeline to national security-related fields, including the defense and shipbuilding industrial bases, the Pentagon would be required to provide these individuals with information about open civilian positions to help retain motivated talent.

If enacted, the bill would also establish a broader “warm hand-offs” practice, inspired by the Air Force, to guide disqualified candidates directly to DOD civilian hiring channels, rather than simply being dismissed from service pipelines. The legislation is co-sponsored by Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), and Kevin Cramer (R-ND), as well as Reps. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) and Don Bacon (R-NE).

For Democrats like Shaheen and Kaine, the legislation addresses critical workforce capacity concerns at sites like Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, while for Republicans like Kiggans and Rounds, it ensures talent preservation and military readiness. Either way, the bill signals growing bipartisan interest in solving the military's workforce woes—not by lowering standards, but by thinking beyond the uniform.

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## Next Week's Hearings

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### Armed Services Committee

#### U.S. House of Representatives

- 5/14, 3:30 PM - National Security Space Programs
- 5/15, 3:00 PM - Defense Intelligence Enterprise Posture Hearing

#### U.S. Senate

- 5/12, 3:30 PM - To receive a closed briefing on space superiority.

- 5/13, 9:30 AM - To examine the nominations of Richard Anderson, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Adam Telle, of Mississippi, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, and Matthew Napoli, of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, National Nuclear Security Administration.
- 5/13, 4:45 PM - To examine Department of Defense missile defense activities in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2026 and the Future Years Defense Program.

## **Appropriations Committee**

### **U.S. House of Representatives**

- 5/14, 10:00 AM - Oversight Hearing – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
  - 5/14, 10:00 AM - Oversight Hearing – The Federal Judiciary
  - 5/14, 2:00 PM - Oversight Hearing – The United States Navy and Marine Corps
  - 5/14, 2:00 PM - Oversight Hearing – The United States Coast Guard
  - 5/15, 10:00 AM - Oversight Hearing – U.S. Customs and Border Protection
  - 5/15, 10:00 AM - Oversight Hearing – The U.S. Federal Trade Commission
  - 5/15, 10:00 AM - Budget Hearing – U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
  - 5/15, 10:00 AM - Budget Hearing – Environmental Protection Agency
  - 5/15, 10:00 AM - Budget Hearing - U.S. Department of Labor
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- 5/14, 10:30 AM - To examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2026 for the Environmental Protection Agency.
  - 5/14, 3:00 PM - To examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2026 for the Senate Sergeant at Arms and United States Capitol Police.

## **Homeland Security Committee**

### **U.S. House of Representatives**

- 5/14, 10:00 AM - A New Era of Homeland Security: A Review of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security
- 5/15, 2:00 PM - In Defense of Defensive Measures: Reauthorizing Cybersecurity Information Sharing Activities that Underpin U.S. National Cyber Defense

### **U.S. Senate**

- 5/13, 2:30 PM - To examine the insurance industry's claims practices following recent natural disasters.



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