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## Nuclear Cooperation with Other Countries: A Primer

**By Paul K. Kerr; Mary Beth D. Nikitin | Published 2025-09-09**

In order for the United States to engage in significant civilian nuclear cooperation with other states, it must conclude a framework agreement that meets specific requirements under Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act (AEA). Significant nuclear cooperation includes the export of reactors, critical parts of reactors, and reactor fuel. The AEA also provides for export control licensing procedures and criteria for terminating cooperation. Congressional review is required for Section 123 agreements; the AEA establishes special parliamentary procedures by which Congress may act on a proposed agreement.

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## Venezuela: Political Crisis and U.S. Policy

**By Clare Ribando Seelke | Published 2025-09-08**

Over the past several Congresses, some Members have expressed concerns about authoritarian rule under Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro (2013-present). Maduro took office after a narrow electoral victory following the death of Hugo Chávez (in office 1999-2013), founder of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Maduro has remained in power following elections in 2018 and 2024 that were both considered fraudulent by international observers and the U.S. government. After the July 2024 election, Maduro claimed victory even though precinct-level vote tabulations comprising more than 80% of votes cast indicated that opposition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia won 67% of the vote. On January 10, 2025, Maduro began a third term. The Trump Administration has coordinated removal flights to Venezuela and prisoner swaps with Maduro officials while increasing pressure on Maduro and allied criminal groups. The Administration has designated the Tren de Aragua (TdA) prison gang and the Cartel de los Soles (Cartel of the Suns) as foreign terrorists, enabling new sanctions, law enforcement and immigration actions, and potential military action against these entities and their members. Congress may assess how the implementation of these policies may affect U.S. interests in Venezuela and regional security. Congress could consider legislation or oversight actions to authorize, restrict, or otherwise shape U.S. policies, including U.S. military operations near or in Venezuela. Political Situation Venezuela, which the nongovernmental organization Freedom House categorized as “partly free” under President Chávez, has deteriorated to “not free” under Maduro. Chávez, a charismatic politician, benefited from high oil prices and strong popular support. In contrast, Maduro experienced narrow wins and some electoral defeats (including the 2015 legislative elections). The opposition remained united as the Unitary Platform (PUD) under the leadership of Maria Corina Machado from 2022 to 2024 but has since split over whether to participate in future elections. Most PUD...

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## China Primer: China’s Global Development Initiative

**By Ricardo Barrios | Published 2025-09-08**

Shifts in the U.S. approach to foreign assistance under the Trump Administration have prompted increased interest from Congress in the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC’s, or China’s) overseas development activity. Per AidData, a non-profit U.S.-based research group, between 2013 and 2021 PRC-based institutions made total development financing commitments of about $794 billion. Since late 2021, the PRC has engaged in international development through its Global Development Initiative (GDI), for which Beijing has so far pledged at least $11 billion. Some Members have expressed concern that the PRC could leverage development activities—such as those conducted under the GDI—to expand its influence in developing countries and enhance its strategic position. The GDI is the first of several “global initiatives” China has launched since 2021. Others include the Global Security Initiative (2022) and the Global Civilization Initiative (2023). Overseas and PRC observers view these initiatives as aiming to further China’s vision for global governance. Background The PRC has engaged in what it now calls “international development cooperation” to varying degrees for decades. This development cooperation includes foreign assistance grants and loans that meet the standards for what the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) categorizes as “official development assistance” (ODA). China’s development cooperation also includes economic development programs that would not be considered ODA, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to develop China-centered—and controlled—global infrastructure, transportation, trade, and production networks. (See CRS In Focus IF11735, China’s “One Belt, One Road” Initiative: Economic Issues.) Since the 2000s, the foreign assistance component of PRC development cooperation has consisted of development finance- and grant-supported projects. Between 2013 and 2018, loans accounted for approximately $22.1 billion (53%) of that assistance by value, with the remaining $19.8 billion comprised of grants, per the PRC’s latest (2021) development cooperation white paper. (Comparatively, the United...

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## National Park Service: Fee Increases for International Visitors

**By Jill H. Wilson; Laura B. Comay | Published 2025-09-08**

Congress has debated various measures to generate additional funds for the National Park System in light of a large backlog of deferred maintenance on system lands. One option under discussion has been to raise park entrance fees for international visitors, in line with policies of some other nations that assess different national park fees for domestic versus international visitors. On July 3, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14314, “Making America Beautiful Again by Improving Our National Parks.” The order directed the Secretary of the Interior to increase specified National Park Service (NPS) fees for “nonresidents” of the United States and also directed a price increase for multiagency passes sold to nonresidents. Congress may conduct oversight of the E.O.’s implementation. Also, Congress could consider bills introduced in the 119th Congress related to international visitors to national parks and federal recreational lands. President Trump’s Executive Order E.O. 14314 directs the Secretary of the Interior to “appropriately” increase NPS “entrance fees and recreation pass fees for nonresidents,” in order to “increase revenue and improve the recreational experience at national parks.” The E.O. also directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, working together, to take steps to increase the price nonresidents pay for the America the Beautiful—National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass (ATB Pass), which provides access to recreational lands of multiple federal agencies, including NPS. The E.O. directs that the revenues generated from these changes are to be used to improve infrastructure and enhance enjoyment or access, consistent with provisions on fee use (16 U.S.C. §6807) in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). FLREA authorizes NPS and some other agencies to charge entrance and/or recreation fees on federal recreational lands and to set fee levels according to specified criteria. FLREA also authorizes the establishment and sale of the...

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## U.S. Tariff Actions and U.S.-South Korea Trade

**By Liana Wong | Published 2025-09-08**

Since January 2025, the Trump Administration has imposed tariffs affecting most exports from South Korea. In 2024, South Korea was the sixth-largest U.S. goods trading partner, with bilateral trade in goods totaling $200 billion. The U.S.-South Korea (KORUS) Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the second-largest comprehensive U.S. FTA by value, eliminated virtually all tariffs on imports from the other country upon entry into force in 2012. In July 2025, the U.S. and South Korean governments announced a trade deal in response to the Trump Administration’s tariff actions, though its details have yet to be finalized. Congress may consider whether U.S. tariff actions and the July trade deal are consistent with U.S. obligations under the KORUS FTA, which was ratified by Congress, and whether the finalized trade deal requires congressional approval. Some Members have introduced legislation that would require a joint resolution of approval for the President to impose tariffs against U.S. FTA partners. U.S. Tariff Actions Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1964 Steel and Aluminum. In 2018, President Trump invoked Section 232 to impose tariffs on U.S. imports of steel (25%) after the Commerce Department determined that such imports “threaten to impair” U.S. national security. South Korea, a top supplier of U.S. steel imports, subsequently negotiated an import quota in lieu of the 25% tariff on South Korean-origin steel. Since March 2025, President Trump has eliminated all country exemptions and most product exclusions, expanded the scope of covered products, and raised steel and aluminum tariffs to 50%. In 2024, U.S. steel imports from South Korea were valued at $2.9 billion (fourth-largest U.S. source). Autos. In March 2025, President Trump announced 25% tariffs on U.S. imports of automobiles and certain automobile parts based on the findings of a 2019 Section 232 investigation. The President stated that 2018 revisions to...

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## Middle East Oil

**By Phillip Brown | Published 2025-09-09**

/ Middle East Oil Oil production, trade, and refining in the Middle East are important for global oil markets. Three maritime transit points for crude oil and petroleum products are in or near the region. Conflicts within and among Middle East countries and regional militant groups have included attacks—more than 200 since 2017 1 —targeting oil infrastructure, including production fields, pipelines, processing and refining facilities, storage terminals, and tankers. Crude oil includes crude, shale/tight oil, oil sands, and lease condensate or gas condensates that require further refining. Oil products include gasoline, diesel/ gasoil, fuel oil, and other refined petroleum products. Spare capacity changes monthly and is defined by the U.S. Energy Information Administration as “the volume of production that can be brought on within 30 days and sustained for at least 90 days.” Most spare oil production capacity is controlled by Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members. BPD = Barrels per day. UAE = United Arab Emirates. ME = Middle East. \* Included in Other ME. Sources: 1. S&P Global Commodity Insights, “Energy Security Sentinel: An Interactive Study of Geopolitical Risk and Energy Prices” (accessed August 14, 2024). 2. S&P Global, “Commodity Midstream Essentials Gold Worldwide” (accessed July 3, 2024). 3. U.S. Energy Information Administration, Country Analysis Brief: World Oil Transit Chokepoints, June 25, 2024. 4. Energy Institute, “Statistical Review of World Energy,” 73rd ed., 2024. 5. International Energy Agency, Oil Market Report, August 13, 2024. Map geography: U.S. Department of State. Information prepared by Phillip Brown, Specialist in Energy Policy; Calvin DeSouza, Geospatial Information Systems Analyst; and Amber Wilhelm, Visual Information Specialist, on September 9, 2025.

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## Productivity Growth: Trends and Policy Issues

**By Lida R. Weinstock | Published 2025-09-09**

Productivity is broadly defined as the ratio of output to inputs. With respect to the economy, productivity measures how efficiently goods and services can be produced by comparing the amount of economic output with the amount of inputs (e.g., labor, capital) used to produce goods and services. Gains in efficiency—that is, fewer inputs relative to output—mean growth in productivity. Productivity growth is typically the most consequential determinant of long-term economic and income growth and substantive improvements in individual living standards. There are two prominent measures of economic productivity: labor productivity (a single-factor productivity measure) and total factor (sometimes called multifactor) productivity (TFP). Labor productivity is defined as the ratio of real (inflation-adjusted) output per labor hour. TFP is a measure of productivity that compares real private business sector output to the level of combined inputs (labor and capital for sector estimates and additionally energy, materials, and purchased services for industry estimates) used to produce goods and services. Policy can affect productivity growth by affecting its determinants: human capital, physical capital, technological growth, and other efficiency gains. One-time improvements in the determinants will lead to one-time increases in productivity. Sustained improvements and increases in the determinants are required for longer-term increases in the growth rate of productivity. Examples of policies that can impact productivity growth include those related to immigration, education, taxes, public investment, interest rates, patent law, industry support, technology, and trade. Recent trends in productivity growth have generally been positive, with an uptick in growth during the current business cycle (beginning in 2020) as compared to the previous business cycle. Over a longer-term horizon, productivity growth has been decelerating, matched by a long-term deceleration in real economic growth. Hypotheses to explain this downturn in productivity growth include a decline or uneven pattern in innovation, lingering but temporary effects from...

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## Expiring Health Provisions of the 119th Congress

**By Alison Mitchell; Evelyne P. Baumrucker; Sylvia L. Bryan; Alexa C. DeBoth; Bernadette Fernandez; Jim Hahn; Elayne J. Heisler; Alexandria K. Mickler; Paulette C. Morgan; Varun Saraswathula; Amanda K. Sarata; Kavya Sekar; Hassan Z. Sheikh; Jared S. Sussman; Jessica Tollestrup; Marco A. Villagrana; Nora Wells; Laura A. Wreschnig; Kirsten J. Colello | Published 2025-09-09**

This report provides information on selected health provisions that have expired or are scheduled to expire during the 119th Congress (i.e., calendar years [CYs] 2025 and 2026). For purposes of this report, expiring provisions are defined as portions of law that are time-limited and will lapse once a statutory deadline is reached, absent further legislative action. The expiring provisions included in this report are any identified provisions related to Medicare, Medicaid, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or private health insurance programs and activities. The report also includes any identified expired or expiring public health and other health care-related provisions. In addition, this report describes health provisions within the same scope that expired during the 118th Congress (i.e., in CY2023 and CY2024). Although the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has attempted to be comprehensive in its research, it cannot guarantee that every relevant provision is included in this report. This report focuses on two types of health provisions within the scope discussed above. The first, and most common, type of provision provides or controls mandatory spending, meaning it provides temporary funding, temporary increases or decreases in funding or payment rates (e.g., Medicare provider bonus payments), or temporary special protections that may result in changes in funding levels (e.g., Medicare funding provisions that establish a payment floor). The second type of provision defines the authority of government agencies or other entities to act, usually by authorizing a policy, project, or activity, and includes a definitive expiration or “sunset” date. Such provisions also may temporarily delay the implementation of a regulation, requirement, or deadline or establish a moratorium on a particular activity. Expiring health provisions that are discretionary authorizations of appropriations are excluded from this report. Certain types of provisions with expiration dates that otherwise would meet the criteria set forth above...

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## The U.S. Army’s Typhon Mid-Range Capability (MRC) System

**By Andrew Feickert | Published 2025-09-09**

What Is the Army’s Mid-Range Capability (MRC) System? Improved Chinese and Russian long-ranged artillery systems, uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs), and the proliferation of special munitions (such as precision, thermobaric, loitering, and top-attack munitions) have renewed concerns about the potential impact of Russian and Chinese fires on U.S. combat operations. In response, the U.S. Army is seeking to improve its ability to deliver what it refers to as long-range precision fires (LRPF) by upgrading current artillery and missile systems, developing new longer-ranged systems (including hypersonic weapons), and modifying existing air-and sea-launched missiles for ground launch. MRC is part of the Army’s LRPF modernization portfolio and is intended to hit targets at ranges between the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) and the developmental Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) system. The MRC system leverages existing Raytheon-produced SM-6 missiles and Raytheon-produced Tomahawk cruise missiles modified for ground launch. The MRC system is also known as the “Typhon” missile system (Figure 1). Figure 1. Typhon Launchers and Battery Operations Center / What Is Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)? Anti-Access (A2) is an action, activity, or capability, usually long-range, designed to prevent an advancing enemy force from entering an operational area. Area Denial (AD) is an action, activity, or capability, usually short-range, designed to limit an enemy force’s freedom of action within an operational area. Source: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, November 2021. Source: The Drive: https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/army-fires-tomahawk-missile-from-its-new-typhon-battery-in-major-milestone, accessed July 6, 2023. MRC Weapon System Components According to the Army, the MRC battery is planned to consist of four launchers and a battery operations center (BOC) (Figure 1). MRC batteries are to be equipped with a number of prime movers, trailers, generators, and support vehicles. Numbers of soldiers assigned to each battery is presently unknown. MRC Unit Organization The Army plans to field one MRC battery in...

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## FY2025 Military Construction Appropriations: A Summary

**By Andrew Tilghman | Published 2025-09-09**

Department of Defense (DOD) military construction and family housing programs fund infrastructure to support military operations and servicemembers around the world. The Biden Administration’s fiscal year 2025 (FY2025) budget submission to Congress requested $17.545 billion for DOD’s military construction (MILCON) and family housing programs. On May 28, 2024, the House Appropriations Committee reported a Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriation Act (MILCON-VA), 2025, H.R. 8580 (H.Rept. 118-528). On June 5, 2024, the House passed H.R. 8580, which would have provided $17.957 billion for DOD MILCON accounts, 2.3% more than the requested amount. On July 11, 2024, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported a version of the bill, S. 4677 (S.Rept. 118-191), which would have provided $19.307 billion for DOD MILCON and family housing accounts, 10.0% more than the requested amount. On March 15, 2025, President Trump signed H.R. 1968—the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025—into law as P.L. 119-4. The law generally authorized DOD appropriations provided for FY2024 to continue at the same levels for FY2025, but Division A, Title XI of the law contained exceptions that provided new FY2025 appropriations for some MILCON and family housing accounts. The law provided a total of $17.509 billion for these accounts. (Additional information about the appropriations act is available in CRS Report R48517, Section-by-Section Summary of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Division A of P.L. 119-4), coordinated by Drew C. Aherne). Congress also provided additional funding for DOD’s FY2025 MILCON and family housing accounts in the American Relief Act, 2025, which became P.L. 118-59 on Dec. 1, 2024. This law appropriated $1.765 billion for the Navy and Air Force “for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Typhoon Mawar” on U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force facilities on the U.S. territory of Guam. Table 1. FY2025 MILCON-VA Appropriations for...

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## Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies: Overview of FY2025 Appropriations

**By Mark K. DeSantis; Carol Hardy Vincent | Published 2025-09-04**

The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill—often called the Interior bill—contains funding for about three dozen agencies and entities. They include most of the Department of the Interior and agencies within other departments, such as the Forest Service (Department of Agriculture) and the Indian Health Service (Department of Health and Human Services). The bill also provides funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, arts and cultural agencies, and other entities. Perennial issues for Congress include determining the amount, terms, and conditions of funding for agencies and programs. From the start of FY2025 on October 1, 2024, until March 15, 2025, Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies were funded at FY2024 levels, with certain exceptions, under short-term continuing appropriations resolutions. FY2025 full-year appropriations of $43.37 billion for the Interior bill were provided in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4), enacted on March 15, 2025. Most agencies and entities in the Interior bill received FY2025 appropriations at the FY2024 level, and some received lower appropriations in FY2025 than in FY2024. However, the total FY2025 appropriation was $2.04 billion (4.9%) more than the FY2024 total of $41.33 billion; this was due in part to increases for DOI wildland fire management, the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Indian Health Service, among other agencies and programs. Relative to other FY2025 proposed totals, the FY2025 appropriations law contained $666.4 million (1.6%) more than President Biden’s FY2025 request of $42.71 billion, $1.30 billion (3.1%) more than the FY2025 House-passed amount of $42.07 billion, and $1.56 billion (3.5%) less than the FY2025 Senate Appropriations Committee-reported total of $44.93 billion. The $43.37 billion was broken out unevenly across the three major titles in the FY2025 Interior bill, as is typically the case. DOI agencies in Title I received $15.25...

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## Proxy Advisor Regulation: Recent Litigation, State Law Developments, and Federal Legislation

**By Jay B. Sykes | Published 2025-09-04**

Shareholders of public companies have the right to vote on certain matters—such as director elections, executive compensation plans, and shareholder proposals—at annual and special meetings. Today, most voting shareholders vote by proxy instead of attending annual and special meetings in person. Institutional investors (such as mutual funds and pension funds) dominate corporate voting because of their size and propensity to vote: institutions now own more than 70% of the U.S. stock market and vote their shares at considerably higher rates than retail investors. Many of these institutions retain proxy advisors to provide them with research, voting recommendations, and administrative services related to the proxy voting process. The proxy advisor industry has long been a subject of debate and scrutiny. In particular, critics argue that the leading proxy advisors—Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) and Glass, Lewis & Co. (Glass Lewis)—exert an outsized influence on corporate governance, operate with conflicts of interest, fail to correct errors in their work product, and pursue social agendas that harm shareholder value. Defenders of proxy advisors contend that the industry’s influence is overstated and that its institutional clients are largely satisfied with the quality of its services. Proxy advisor regulation has received increased attention in the past several months. In July 2025, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit concluded that proxy voting advice does not constitute proxy “solicitation” under Section 14 of the Securities Exchange Act. Based on that holding, the D.C. Circuit affirmed a lower court decision vacating certain Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) regulations concerning proxy advice. While the D.C. Circuit’s decision may limit the SEC’s authority to regulate proxy advisors under existing law, it is unlikely to end scrutiny of the industry. The previous month, Texas enacted a first-of-its-kind statute (Texas SB 2337) regulating proxy advice related to public companies incorporated...

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## Child Welfare: Purposes, Federal Programs, and Funding

**By Emilie Stoltzfus | Published 2025-09-02**

The Work of Child Welfare Agencies Children depend on adults—usually their parents—to protect and support them. The broadest mission of public child welfare agencies is to strengthen families so that children can depend on their parents to provide them with a safe and loving home. Child welfare agencies also aim to prevent abuse or neglect of children in their own homes. If this has already occurred, they must identify and offer services or referrals that aim to ensure children do not reexperience maltreatment. For some children, this means foster care. Federal child welfare policy has three primary goals: ensuring children’s safety, enabling permanency for children, and promoting the well-being of children and their families. Foster care is understood as a temporary living situation. When a child enters care, the first task of the child welfare agency is to provide services to enable the child to safely reunite with family. If that is not possible, then the agency must work to find a new permanent adoptive or legal guardianship family for the child. Youth in care who are neither reunited nor placed with a new permanent family are typically emancipated at their state’s legal age of majority. These youth are said to have aged out of care. Children Served During FY2023, public child protective services (CPS) agencies screened abuse or neglect allegations involving 7.8 million children and carried out investigations or other responses involving 3.1 million of those children. Among children receiving CPS services after such responses, an estimated 84% received them while living at home. More than 175,000 children entered care during FY2023. Neglect and/or parental drug abuse are the concerns most often linked with entry. Across all states, some 360,500 children were in care on the last day of FY2023. Among those for whom data were available, 79% lived...

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## U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview

**By Emily M. McCabe | Published 2025-09-05**

Background The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) served as the lead international humanitarian and development arm of the U.S. government. It was established in 1961, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 10973, to implement components of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA). Congress codified USAID in statute in Section 1413 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Division G of P.L. 105-277; 22 U.S.C. 6563). Section 1522 of that law states, “The Administrator of the Agency for International Development, appointed pursuant to section 624(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2384(a)), shall report to and be under the direct authority and foreign policy guidance of the Secretary of State.” Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on July 1, 2025, that “as of July 1st, USAID will officially cease to implement foreign assistance.” According to the statement, “Foreign assistance programs that align with administration policies—and which advance American interests—will be administered by the State Department.” In FY2024 (the most recent year for which complete data are available), USAID managed more than $35 billion in combined appropriations, representing more than one-third of the funds provided in the FY2024 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) appropriations and international food aid provided in the Agriculture appropriations. Some USAID appropriations accounts had been co-managed with the Department of State (State), making many calculations of USAID’s exact budget imprecise. (For more on SFOPS, see CRS Report R48231, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2025 Budget and Appropriations.) According to the FY2023 Agency Financial Report (the most recent report CRS was able to access), USAID’s workforce totaled more than 10,000 at the end of FY2023, with approximately two-thirds serving overseas (not including institutional support contractors). The agency maintained more than 60 country and regional missions...

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## Federal Research and Development (R&D) Funding: FY2026

**By Joe Angert; Rachel Lindbergh; Kavya Sekar; Emily G. Blevins; Marcy E. Gallo; Laurie Harris; Todd Kuiken | Published 2025-09-03**

The U.S. government supports a broad range of scientific and engineering research and development (R&D). The purposes of this R&D include addressing national defense, public health, public safety, the environment, and energy security; advancing knowledge generally; developing the U.S. scientific and engineering workforce; strengthening the capacity of U.S. institutions and firms to conduct cutting-edge research and to develop innovative technologies; and enhancing the competitiveness of the United States in the global economy. Most of the R&D funded by the federal government is performed in support of the unique missions of individual funding agencies. Congress typically provides R&D appropriations through the annual appropriations process, including through 9 of the 12 regular appropriations bills, supplemental appropriations, or continuing resolutions. Using information provided by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding funding for activities and assets characterized as R&D, CRS calculated that President Trump’s budget proposal for FY2026 includes approximately $181.4 billion for R&D, $10.7 billion (-6%) below the FY2025 estimated level of $192.2 billion (see figure). The requested $181.4 billion, which includes advance and supplemental appropriations, would support federal investments in the conduct of R&D as well as R&D-related physical assets (such as the construction of R&D facilities or equipment). Federal Research and Development Funding, FY2024-FY2026 Request (budget authority, in current dollars) / Source: CRS, calculated from Office of Management and Budget, email communication with author, July 2, 2025. The majority of R&D funding is concentrated in a subset of federal agencies. For example, approximately 92% of the total R&D funding requested in the President’s FY2026 budget would go to five agencies—the Department of Defense (DOD), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Energy (DOE), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF)—with DOD (62%) and NIH (15%), combined, accounting for 77% of all...

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## U.S.-China Trade Relations

**By Karen M. Sutter | Published 2025-09-09**

The People’s Republic of China (PRC or China) is the second-largest global economy and has been a top U.S. trading partner since joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. China is a key export market for U.S. aircraft, agriculture, semiconductor equipment/chips, gas turbines, and medical devices, and a top source of U.S. consumer goods and manufacturing intermediates (e.g., auto parts and active pharmaceutical ingredients). At the same time, U.S. firms face a lack of market access reciprocity, trade barriers in key areas, a growing PRC state role in commercial activity, expanding industrial policies, and rules governing economic security and data. Trade concerns raised by U.S. officials and executives since the 1990s have broadened into a U.S. government focus on strategic competition with the PRC. The executive branch and Congress have debated approaches and acted to counter PRC practices that challenge U.S. economic leadership, distort markets, and hinder fair competition. PRC Trade and Investment Terms The PRC government controls or influences the purchase, financing, and price of the top U.S. exports to China—aircraft, semiconductors, medical equipment, agriculture, and energy. It has sought to enhance control of this trade and reduce reliance on U.S. imports by diversifying trade with other countries and advancing industrial policies that exploit foreign commercial ties to develop PRC capabilities in top import sectors. The PRC government also funds some PRC firms in strategic areas and foreign acquisitions in priority areas with preferential lending and state-funded venture capital to gain capabilities. While foreign firms may initially fill PRC gaps with their products, services, and capabilities, PRC plans set targets to displace foreign firms once China gains competencies. Examples include Aerospace: To meet PRC terms, some U.S. firms have partnered with and transferred advanced U.S. technology to PRC state firms to jointly develop a PRC aircraft (C-919). Semiconductors:...

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## Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974

**By Andres B. Schwarzenberg; Danielle M. Trachtenberg | Published 2025-09-09**

Title III of the Trade Act of 1974 (Sections 301-310, 19 U.S.C. §§2411-2420), titled “Relief from Unfair Trade Practices,” is often collectively referred to as “Section 301.” Under Section 301, Congress grants the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) a range of responsibilities and authorities to investigate and take action (e.g., impose a tariff) to enforce U.S. rights under trade agreements and respond to certain foreign trade practices. There are three ongoing investigations under Section 301 related to practices by the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China), Nicaragua, and Brazil and one recently concluded investigation into PRC shipping practices. Tariffs on imports from China imposed in 2018 under Section 301 during the first Trump Administration remain in effect. The 119th Congress could consider the effectiveness of Section 301 actions in deterring certain foreign trade practices, the impact of actions taken under Section 301 on the U.S. economy, and whether the authorities are being used in the way Congress intends. Section 301 Investigations An investigation under Section 301 may occur if the rights of the United States under any trade agreement are being denied, or an act, policy, or practice of a foreign government (1) violates, is inconsistent with, or denies benefits to the United States under a trade agreement; or (2) is “unjustifiable” and “burdens or restricts” U.S. commerce. The law does not limit the scope of investigations and defines “commerce” to include services and investment. Initiation. Any interested person may file a petition with USTR requesting that the agency initiate an investigation under Section 301. USTR must determine whether to initiate an investigation within 45 days. The law does not specify criteria for USTR to use when determining whether to initiate an investigation from a petition. USTR may also “self-initiate” a case after consulting with appropriate...

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## Russia’s War Against Ukraine: Diplomatic Talks and U.S. Policy

**By Cory Welt; Andrew S. Bowen | Published 2025-09-05**

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. More than three-and-a-half years later, Russia and Ukraine remain engaged in Europe’s largest war in scope and scale since World War II. With estimates of over 1 million killed or wounded, and with Russia in control of about 20% of Ukraine’s territory, neither side appears poised to achieve a decisive military victory. Since taking office in January 2025, President Trump has made efforts to facilitate an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, which he has characterized as a “horrific and brutal conflict” that “should have never started.” In August 2025, President Trump held separate meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as well as a multilateral meeting with Zelensky and several European leaders. President Trump also has called for Putin and Zelensky to meet. Members of Congress may evaluate the costs and benefits of, and prospects for, U.S. mediation between Russia and Ukraine, including implications for U.S. strategic interests. Aspects of Negotiations Talks have addressed or may address a number of issues, including the following: Ceasefire or Comprehensive Settlement. August 2025 talks centered in part on the question of whether negotiations should seek to achieve an interim ceasefire prior to a comprehensive peace settlement. Ukrainian officials have expressed support for an initial ceasefire. Russian officials have said talks should instead focus on achieving a comprehensive settlement, including neutrality for Ukraine and constraints on Ukrainian military power. After initial talks in March 2025, the White House announced agreement on a partial ceasefire, but the agreement did not hold. Before his August meeting with Putin, President Trump stated he would not “be happy if I walk away without some form of a ceasefire.” In his subsequent meeting with Zelensky, President Trump said he likes “the concept of a ceasefire”...

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## The Good Cause Exception to Notice and Comment Rulemaking

**By Jared P. Cole; Andrew S. Coghlan | Published 2025-08-27**

If authorized by Congress, federal agencies can issue rules that bind the public with the force and effect of statutes. The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) generally requires agencies to provide public notice and opportunity for comment before they issue such rules, but the statute allows agencies to skip these steps when they “for good cause find” that compliance with ordinary rulemaking procedures would be “impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest.” 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(B). Agencies regularly invoke this “good cause” exception to issue a subset of their rules without any pre-publication notice or opportunity for public comment. In doing so, however, these agencies often provide opportunities for post-publication comment and issue superseding rules that respond to those comments. Federal courts have scrutinized agencies’ reliance on the good cause exception in dozens of cases. See, e.g., California v. Azar, 911 F.3d 558, 575–78 (9th Cir. 2018); United States v. Reynolds, 710 F.3d 498, 509–14 (3d Cir. 2013); Mack Truck, Inc. v. EPA, 682 F.3d 87, 93–95 (D.C. Cir. 2012). While these judicial inquiries are fact-bound and context-dependent, several generalizable patterns emerge. For instance, courts have widely held that the good cause exception should be narrowly construed, that rulemaking procedures are “unnecessary” only when agencies take non-discretionary actions or issue rules that are of little or no interest to the public, and that rulemaking procedures are most often “impracticable” or “contrary to the public interest” if regulatory delay would threaten public health or welfare—but only if those threats are documented in an administrative record. See, e.g., Util. Solid Waste Activities Grp. v. EPA, 236 F.3d 749, 754–55 (D.C. Cir. 2001); Hawaii Helicopter Operators Ass’n v. FAA, 51 F.3d 212, 214 (9th Cir. 1995). Courts sometimes reject agencies’ good cause findings. When they do so, courts may nullify rules that were...

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## Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy

**By Christopher M. Blanchard | Published 2025-09-05**

Since the December 2024 collapse of the government of Bashar Al Asad, Syrians have pursued political and economic opportunities created by the end of the country’s twelve-year civil war. Internal tensions and external pressures pose obstacles to the country’s transition. Interim president Ahmed Al Sharaa led a group long designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization. Interim authorities have outlined a five-year transitional constitutional framework after limited consultation with Syrian citizens. Elections are planned in September 2025 for a partially and indirectly elected legislative assembly. The government does not exercise control over all of Syria, with areas of the northeast under the control of ethnic Kurdish-led forces and areas south of the capital, Damascus, controlled by members of the Druze religious minority. Authorities plan to delay elections in these areas. Turkish forces remain in parts of the north, while Israeli forces have moved into formerly demilitarized areas between Syria and Israel and into some Syrian territory near the frontier. Sectarian violence involving government forces, their backers, and members of minority communities has marred the transition in 2025, highlighting the interim government’s limited capacity to ensure security and impose discipline. In this context, some observers have expressed skepticism about the interim government’s commitments to inclusivity and the protection of all members of Syria’s diverse religious and ethnic fabric. Others have warned that opponents of the interim government may be exploiting communal tensions to advance their own agendas. The Trump Administration has outlined a policy of conditional support for the interim government, pairing endorsement of its leaders’ calls for the maintenance of Syria’s unity and territorial integrity with insistence that they adopt a protective and inclusive approach toward all Syrian communities. The United States is supporting dialogue between the interim government and authorities in areas of northeast Syria under the...

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## Marginal Effective Tax Rates: Changes in P.L. 119-21, the 2025 Reconciliation Act

**By Mark P. Keightley; Jane G. Gravelle | Published 2025-09-08**

The 2025 reconciliation act, P.L. 119-21, commonly known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), made a number of changes that affect marginal effective tax rates (METRs) on investment. These changes largely extend or restore provisions enacted in the 2017 tax revision, P.L. 115-97, commonly known as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). This report summarizes these changes and presents updated METRs. The OBBBA makes the individual rate reductions, pass-through deduction, and changes in the standard deduction enacted in the TCJA permanent; further increases the standard deduction and the amounts of income taxed at the two lowest marginal tax rates; reinstates 100% expensing (or bonus depreciation) for equipment and other shorter-lived assets (40% expensing was allowed in 2025); reinstates 100% expensing and basis adjustment for the tax credit for research investments; and provides 100% expensing for manufacturing structures. The individual provisions were already in effect for 2025, so the change for 2025 was primarily through the expensing provisions. Under both the TCJA and OBBBA tax regimes, the tax system favors equipment and intangible assets, but METRs on them are lower under the OBBBA regime. The most significant reduction was for manufacturing structures, where METRs fell from 23.5% to 1.9%. The aggregate tax rate for corporate assets fell from 12.5% to 7.0%, while the rate for noncorporate assets fell from 16.1% to 11.7%. The rate reductions under the OBBBA are larger when compared to the regime that would have occurred under pre-OBBBA law (under which expensing, the pass-through deduction, and lower individual rates would have expired in 2026): The METRs would have been 14.8% in the corporate sector and 24.4% in the noncorporate sector. Rates under the OBBBA in these sectors are lower than the rates in the TCJA before any phaseouts began (8.7% and 13.5%), and below pre-TCJA...

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## Department of Veterans Affairs FY2025 Appropriations

**By Madeline E. Moreno; Jared S. Sussman; Sidath Viranga Panangala | Published 2025-09-08**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers numerous programs that provide benefits and services to eligible veterans and their families. These benefits include medical care, disability compensation, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), pensions, education, vocational rehabilitation and employment services, assistance to homeless veterans, home loan guarantees, and administration of life insurance, as well as traumatic injury protection insurance for servicemembers and benefits that cover burial expenses. On March 11, 2024, President Biden submitted his budget proposal for FY2025. The Biden Administration requested $339.51 billion for VA. The request included $129.10 billion in discretionary appropriations and $210.41 billion in mandatory appropriations. The budget also requested $376.47 billion in advance appropriations for FY2026, including $22.80 billion for the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund (TEF). TEF funding is categorized as mandatory funding. In its budget submission to Congress, the Administration indicated that the lower discretionary budget request for FY2025 ($129.10 billion) compared with the FY2024 enacted amount ($134.77 billion) was based on the nondefense (or “nonsecurity”) discretionary limits (or “caps”) set by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (P.L. 118-5). On June 5, 2024, the House passed its version of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations (MILCON-VA) bill for FY2025 (H.R. 8580; H.Rept. 118-528). The House-passed bill would have provided $339.64 billion for VA for FY2025, which included $129.22 billion in discretionary appropriations and $210.41 billion in mandatory appropriations. The House-passed bill (H.R. 8580, 118th Congress) would have provided $376.47 billion in advance appropriations for FY2026, including $22.80 billion for TEF. In July 2024, the then-VA Secretary notified Congress of a funding shortfall of $2.88 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) for FY2024 for mandatory benefits payments, and a $12.0 billion shortfall for TEF to cover medical care in FY2025. The Secretary attributed this shortfall to the increased...

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## Section 232 Automotive Tariffs: Issues for Congress

**By Kyla H. Kitamura | Published 2025-09-05**

In 2025, President Donald Trump has imposed 25% tariffs on U.S. imports of automobiles and certain automobile parts under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 (19 U.S.C. §1862, as amended). Section 232 authorizes the President to take action if the Secretary of Commerce determines that imports of a good “threaten to impair” U.S. national security. President Trump imposed auto tariffs based on the findings of a 2019 investigation, which concluded that U.S. auto imports were a threat to U.S. national security. Congress may consider whether to support, curb, or bolster oversight of Section 232 auto tariffs. Issues include implications of auto tariffs for the U.S. economy, relationships with key trade partners, and congressional authorities over trade policy. Background In 2024, the United States imported 8.1 million vehicles ($249.1 billion). Five partners—Mexico, the European Union (EU), Japan, South Korea, and Canada—collectively provided 94% of 2024 U.S. vehicle imports by value and 96% by quantity (see Figure 1). As of 2024, foreign automakers have invested $124 billion in U.S. operations, and in 2024 produced 4.9 million out of 10.2 million vehicles in the United States. Figure 1. U.S. Vehicle Imports by Value and Quantity, 2019-2024 / Source: CRS, based on U.S. Census Bureau data, as presented by Trade Data Monitor, accessed July 2025. For most vehicles not traded under a U.S. free trade agreement (FTA), which sets terms for reduced or zero tariffs among agreement parties, the United States has imposed a most-favored-nation (MFN) tariff of 2.5% on passenger vehicles and 25% on light trucks. The United States traded largely duty-free with Canada and Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and South Korea under the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS). Under KORUS, the U.S. light truck tariff is...

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## Defense Primer: U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM)

**By Anya L. Fink; Robert Switzer | Published 2025-09-08**

U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM or STRATCOM) is a Department of Defense (DOD) functional (as opposed to geographic) combatant command (CCMD) responsible for deterring “strategic attack through a safe, secure, effective, and credible, global combat capability” and “when directed, is ready to prevail in conflict.” DOD’s 2024 Report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States defined “strategic attack” as any nuclear attack or a “significant, high-consequence non-nuclear attack” with “strategic-level effect.” In various parts of the DOD budget, Congress authorizes and appropriates funding for personnel, operations, and capabilities provided by the military services for STRATCOM to execute its mission. Such capabilities include the U.S. nuclear triad, which consists of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) on ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), and bomber aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The Senate has confirmed individuals appointed to the grade of general or admiral and assigned to the position of STRATCOM commander under 10 U.S.C. §601. On September 5, 2025, DOD announced the nomination of Navy Vice Admiral Richard Correll to serve as STRATCOM Commander. Background STRATCOM history dates back to the U.S. Air Force’s Strategic Air Command (SAC), created in 1946. SAC was responsible for managing two of three legs of the nuclear triad—bombers and ICBMs—while the U.S. Navy was responsible for managing SSBNs. In the 1950s, the Navy began the deployment of Polaris SLBMs, prompting Navy and Air Force leaders to create a Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS). In 1961, the JSTPS produced the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), a master plan that integrated the services’ plans and capabilities against a target set. STRATCOM was originally created in 1992 when SAC was deactivated after the end of the Cold War. As part of this new arrangement that emphasized jointness and centralized command and control over U.S. strategic...

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## The Islamic State and Its Affiliates

**By Clayton Thomas | Published 2025-09-08**

The Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIS, ISIL, or Da’esh) is a transnational Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group. At its 2015 height, the group controlled large areas of Iraq and Syria from which it launched and inspired attacks in the region and beyond. While the group no longer controls territory in Syria and Iraq, U.S. military officials warn that it continues to operate there. Greater threats to U.S. interests appear to come from IS affiliates (in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia), which may have stronger military capabilities and claims to global leadership of the group. The 2025 Annual Threat Assessment (ATA) of the U.S. Intelligence Community noted that while the Islamic State “has suffered major setbacks,” it “remains the world’s largest Islamic terrorist organization, has sought to gain momentum from high-profile attacks, and continues to rely on its most capable branches and globally dispersed leadership to weather degradation.” Congress has authorized, funded, and overseen the use of various U.S. policy tools to counter the Islamic State, including military and economic actions. Origins and Leadership The Islamic State grew out of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), made up of former Al Qaeda (AQ) elements. Some ISI members traveled to Syria in 2011 to establish a new AQ affiliate, the Nusra Front. In 2013, then-ISI leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi announced that ISI and the Nusra Front had merged to form the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS/ISIL). AQ leaders rejected Baghdadi’s move to subsume the Nusra Front under his leadership and severed ties with ISIS in 2014. Baghdadi later declared a “caliphate” and renamed his group the Islamic State. After years of operations by a U.S.-led military coalition and Iraqi and Syria partner force, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) captured the last IS-held outpost...

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## Federal Crop Insurance: Specialty Crops

**By Stephanie Rosch; Zachary T. Neuhofer; Renée Johnson | Published 2019-01-14**

The federal crop insurance program offers subsidized crop insurance policies to farmers. Farmers can purchase policies that pay indemnities when their yields or revenues fall below guaranteed levels. While the majority of federal crop insurance policies cover yield or revenue losses, the program also offers policies with other types of guarantees, such as index policies that trigger an indemnity payment based on weather conditions. The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), a government corporation within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), pays part of the premium—about 63%, on average—across the federal crop insurance portfolio during crop year 2017, while policy holders—farmers and ranchers—pay the balance. Private insurance companies, known as Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs), deliver the policies in return for administrative and operating subsidies from FCIC. AIPs also share underwriting risk with FCIC through a mutually negotiated Standard Reinsurance Agreement. The USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) administers the federal crop insurance program. The federal crop insurance program primarily covers traditional field crops (such as wheat, corn, and soybeans) that are supported by USDA’s revenue-support programs. Unlike these traditional crops, specialty crops—defined in statute as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture)” (7 U.S.C. §1621 note)—have not been a major part of federal crop insurance support. Specialty crops are also generally not eligible for USDA’s revenue-support programs. USDA estimates that the statutory definition of specialty crops covers more than 300 agricultural commodities, including fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, nursery plants (trees, shrubs, and flowering plants), herbs, spices, coffee, tea, honey, and maple syrup. Legislative changes, coupled with ongoing administrative efforts by USDA, have expanded federal crop insurance coverage for specialty crops, and they now account for a small but growing number of federal crop insurance policies bought by farmers. Among the issues...

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## Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations

**By Clare Ribando Seelke; Rebecca M. Nelson; Phillip Brown; Rhoda Margesson | Published 2022-12-06**

Venezuela remains in a deep economic and humanitarian crisis under the authoritarian rule of Nicolás Maduro, who has consolidated power since his reelection in a 2018 presidential vote widely deemed fraudulent. Maduro, narrowly elected in 2013 after the death of Hugo Chávez (president, 1999-2013), and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) took de facto control of the National Assembly, the last independent branch of government, in January 2021. From 2019 through 2021, Maduro resisted U.S. and international pressure to cede power and allow a transition government led by Juan Guaidó, the National Assembly president elected in 2015 and once regarded as interim president by nearly 60 countries, to convene elections. Opposition parties, organized under a Unitary Platform since 2021 that includes Guaidó’s party as one of many, resumed negotiations with Maduro officials in November 2022 to create better conditions for presidential elections due in 2024. Despite a nascent economy recovery, Venezuela’s economy contracted by roughly 75% from 2014 through 2021, exhibiting among the world’s highest rates of hyperinflation, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While hyperinflation may have technically abated, food insecurity and a collapse of health and other social services have left 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and led another 7.1 million Venezuelans to flee the country as of November 2022, according to U.N. agencies. U.S. Policy The U.S. government ceased recognizing Maduro as Venezuela’s legitimate president in January 2019, and the Trump Administration sought to compel him to leave office through diplomatic, economic, and legal pressure. The Biden Administration initially maintained a similar policy, although U.S. officials held direct talks with Maduro in March and June 2022 that led to a policy shift. In November 2022, the Biden Administration issued a license to allow Chevron to resume some operations in Venezuela after the...

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## Public Broadcasting: Background Information and Issues for Congress

**By Brian E. Humphreys | Published 2025-09-08**

Discussion of public interest in educational or noncommercial programming dates to the early days of broadcasting. In 1938, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set aside a portion of available radio channels for noncommercial and educational broadcasting, periodically updating policy as technology evolved. In 1965, the Carnegie Corporation of New York created the Carnegie Commission on Public Television to make policy recommendations on public broadcasting. It recommended that Congress create a private, nonprofit corporation to support the development of local and national programming for public television (and later radio). This was enacted as part of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 (PBA; P.L. 90-129). The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was subsequently incorporated in 1967 as a private nonprofit corporation governed by a board of directors appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The CPB was funded by federal appropriations from its founding until it was defunded by Congress in July 2025. Appropriations to the CPB remain under the jurisdiction of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees should Congress decide to fund the CPB in the future. Beginning in 1975, Congress provided two-year advance appropriations to the CPB to facilitate long-term programming decisions outside the pressures of the one-year budget cycle. For example, the FY2027 advance appropriation for the CPB of $535 million was made under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4). Advance appropriations for FY2026 and FY2027 were rescinded on July 24, 2025, by the Rescissions Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-28). In addition to funds appropriated to it directly by Congress, the CPB may receive federal grant funds from other agencies for educational programming, support of public broadcasting emergency alerting functions, and other purposes. On August 1, 2025, the...

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## Glacial Lake Outburst Floods: Mendenhall Glacier Case Study and Issues for Congress

**By Anna E. Normand; Caitlin Keating-Bitonti | Published 2025-09-05**

On August, 13, 2025, a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) streamgage on the Mendenhall River north of Juneau, AK, passed its 2024 record level of 15.99 feet, cresting at 16.65 feet. The river’s rise was due to a sudden release of glacial water—known as a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)—from Suicide Basin. Following advance notifications and warnings from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Weather Service (NWS), the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) urged residents to evacuate potential flood inundation areas. Ultimately, most of the flooding was mitigated by temporary flood barriers installed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) earlier in 2025. The first reported GLOF at Suicide Basin occurred in 2011, and experts anticipate these GLOFs may recur annually while Mendenhall Glacier is present. Although GLOFs may not occur as frequently as weather-event flooding, GLOFs also can threaten life and property. A 2024 GLOF damaged over 300 Juneau homes (Figure 1) and was declared a major disaster. As such, Congress may be interested in federal efforts toward addressing GLOF risk and may consider the federal role in mitigating future impacts. Figure 1. August 2024 Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) Inundation in Juneau, AK / Source: Alaska National Guard, “Alaska Guard Assists Juneau Following Glacial Flooding.” Mendenhall GLOFs GLOFs typically occur when a glacial lake’s dam—which may be dammed by ice or glacial sediment deposit—suddenly fails. Continuing climate warming may accelerate ice-dam thinning and generate GLOFs. GLOFs associated with ice-dammed lakes tend to occur in the summer or early autumn, when the water level in a glacial lake reaches a critical threshold (see Figure 2). GLOFs also may be triggered by the displacement of the lake’s water from mass wasting of unstable slopes (e.g., avalanche, landslide), causing the water to overtop the dam. Figure 2. Mechanism...

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## China Primer: The People’s Liberation Army (PLA)

**By Caitlin Campbell | Published 2025-09-04**

Overview The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) serves the Communist Party of China (CPC), the ruling party of the People’s Republic of China (PRC or China). The PLA was established in 1927 during the rise of the CPC and China’s civil war, and predates the founding of the PRC in 1949. Since 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has referred to China as the “pacing challenge” for the U.S. military. For a quarter-century, Congress has formally monitored the PLA’s modernization and conducted oversight of U.S.-China military exchanges. As policymakers across the U.S. government have prioritized “great power competition” with China, Congress has authorized programs and appropriated funds with the goal of competing militarily with the PRC. PLA Organization The PLA encompasses four services (the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Rocket Force) and four service arms (the Aerospace Force, Cyberspace Force, Information Support Force, and Joint Logistics Support Force). The CPC oversees these forces through its Central Military Commission, which serves some functions similar to those of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Central Military Commission also oversees a paramilitary force, the People’s Armed Police (which includes the China Coast Guard), and China’s militia forces. Xi Jinping, CPC general secretary and PRC president, also chairs the Commission. In 2015, Xi launched the most ambitious reform and reorganization of the PLA since the 1950s. This overhaul appears to have two overarching objectives: (1) reshaping and improving the PLA’s structure to enable joint operations among the services; and (2) eliminating corruption and ensuring PLA loyalty to the Party and Xi. A decade later, Xi’s effort to reshape the PLA remains a work in progress. He has purged dozens of PLA leaders (particularly since 2023) and has continued to make changes to the PLA’s command structure. Opacity surrounding personnel changes has led some...

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## Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure

**By Jill H. Wilson | Published 2025-08-28**

When civil unrest, violence, or natural disasters erupt in countries around the world, concerns arise over the ability of foreign nationals present in the United States who are from those countries to safely return. Congress created temporary protected status (TPS) in 1990 to provide protection from removal to such individuals—regardless of their immigration status. The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the discretion to designate a country for TPS for periods of 6 to 18 months and can extend these periods if the country continues to meet the conditions for designation. A foreign national from a designated country who is granted TPS receives a registration document and employment authorization for the duration of the TPS designation. In addition to TPS, there is another form of blanket relief from removal known as deferred enforced departure (DED). DED is a temporary, discretionary, administrative stay of removal granted to foreign nationals from designated countries. Unlike TPS, a DED designation emanates from the President’s constitutional powers to conduct foreign relations and has no statutory basis. As of March 31, 2025, 17 countries were covered by TPS designations: Afghanistan, Burma, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Lebanon, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. The second Trump Administration has announced terminations of TPS designations for several of these countries, and some terminations are subject to ongoing litigation. As of March 31, 2025, approximately 1,297,635 foreign nationals in the United States from these countries were protected from removal by TPS. In addition, certain, Lebanese, Liberians, and residents of Hong Kong living in the United States currently maintain relief under DED. A DED grant for certain Palestinians expired on August 13, 2025. Over the past decade, there has been debate about whether foreign nationals who have been living in the...

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## Second Trump Administration Releases First Unified Agenda, Listing Upcoming Regulations

**By Maeve P. Carey | Published 2025-09-04**

On September 4, 2025, the second Trump Administration released the Spring 2025 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions. The Unified Agenda, which is published twice a year, is a government-wide publication of rulemaking actions agencies are currently working on and expect to take in the coming months. The Unified Agenda contains both regulatory actions (i.e., new regulations) and deregulatory actions (i.e., reductions in or elimination of current regulations). It also includes regulations that have been withdrawn since the most recent edition of the Unified Agenda—e.g., rules that the Biden Administration had been working on in late 2024, but the second Trump Administration no longer appears to be pursuing. The Unified Agenda is compiled by the Regulatory Information Service Center (RISC) in coordination with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). OIRA is the entity within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that reviews federal agencies’ regulations prior to when they are issued. OIRA is also responsible for implementing any broad regulatory reform agenda of the current President, such as President Trump’s one-in, ten-out policy for regulations established in Executive Order 14192 (see memorandum M-25-20 for OIRA’s guidance implementing that order). Contents of the Unified Agenda The Unified Agenda lists regulatory activities, by agency, in three categories: “active” actions, including rules in the prerule stage (e.g., advance notices of proposed rulemaking that are expected to be issued in the next 12 months, or actions that include a review of current regulations); proposed rule stage (i.e., notices of proposed rulemaking that are expected to be issued in the next 12 months, or for which the closing date of the comment period is the next step); and final rule stage (i.e., final rules, interim final rules, or other final actions that are expected to be issued in the next 12...

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## U.S.-Canada Trade Relations

**By Kyla H. Kitamura | Published 2025-09-04**

The United States and Canada have had one of the largest bilateral trade relationships in the world, including highly integrated energy and automotive markets. Since 1989, U.S.-Canada trade has been governed by the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, then by the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and now by the 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The United States and Canada are engaged in bilateral trade talks related to U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods and Canadian retaliatory tariffs. The two countries, along with Mexico, also are scheduled to engage in a review of USMCA in July 2026. Congress may consider whether to exercise its legislative prerogatives related to the U.S.-Canada economic relationship, such as evaluating the potential benefits and costs of tariffs as well as U.S. economic integration with Canada, and engaging with the USMCA joint review process. U.S.-Canada Trade Overview According to U.S. Census Bureau data, Canada was the third-largest source of U.S. goods imports in 2024 ($412 billion) and the top destination for U.S. goods exports ($350 billion). When taking into account both goods and services trade, Canada was the second-largest U.S. trade partner in 2024 (see Figure 1). Figure 1. Top U.S. Trade Partners (2024) / Source: CRS, with data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, June 2025. According to Statistics Canada data for 2024, Canada exported 76% of its goods to, and imported half of its goods from, the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Statistics Canada, as of 2024, the United States was the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) by stock in Canada ($459.6 billion), and Canada was the second-largest source of U.S. FDI ($732.9 billion). Canada has become the largest supplier of U.S. energy imports—including crude oil, natural gas, and electricity. Canada’s share of U.S. crude...

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## Free Exercise of Religion at School: The Supreme Court’s Mahmoud v. Taylor Ruling

**By Whitney K. Novak | Published 2025-09-05**

On June 27, 2025, the Supreme Court issued its opinion in Mahmoud v. Taylor, a case addressing the application of the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause in public schools. In Mahmoud, parents challenged school curriculum that involved “LGBTQ+-inclusive” books—and a policy disallowing opt-outs from that curriculum—which they argued violated their right to raise their children in accordance with their religious beliefs. In its decision, the Court held that the school must allow opt-outs from the LGBTQ+-inclusive books. The Court concluded that a government action that substantially interferes with the religious development of a child or poses “a very real threat of undermining” the religious beliefs a parent wishes to instill in his or her child should be reviewed under a heightened constitutional standard—strict scrutiny—regardless of whether the action is neutral and generally applicable. The Court viewed the case as falling within an exception to its general rule in Free Exercise Clause cases, that the government may incidentally burden religious exercise so long as its action is neutral and generally applicable with respect to religion. This Legal Sidebar explains the decision and discusses some implications it may have for Free Exercise jurisprudence, as well as potential impacts on public education. First Amendment: Background The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment forbids the government from “prohibiting the free exercise” of religion. The Supreme Court has explained that the Free Exercise Clause “protects not only the right to harbor religious beliefs inwardly and secretly” but also the ability to live out one’s faith through “the performance of (or abstention from) physical acts.” According to the Court, government action implicates the Free Exercise Clause when it penalizes religious practice or coerces someone—either directly or indirectly—into acting contrary to their religious beliefs. The Free Exercise Clause also protects religious observers against “unequal treatment,” such...

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## Introduction to U.S. Economy: Personal Income

**By Lida R. Weinstock | Published 2025-02-27**

What Is Income? Income is a measure of resources accruing to an individual over a period of time. In general, individuals receive income from their labor, assets, and government transfers. In its broadest terms, income is a measure of the maximum amount of goods and services an individual can consume in a given period without diminishing their net worth (the difference between their assets and liabilities) at the end of the period. Income is measured over a period of time. In contrast, net worth is measured at a given point in time. Measures of Income There are two prominent sources of data on personal income in the United States: the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Census Bureau. Although both agencies attempt to measure personal income, their definitions of income and how they collect data differ significantly. The BEA has a broader measure of income that includes both money income (e.g., wages and salary) and nonmoney income (e.g., employer-sponsored health care, housing, and meals). BEA data are generally reported at the aggregate level (e.g., economy-wide, states, regions) but also offer limited information at the individual level. Additionally, BEA collects income figures from both federal agency administrative data and surveys. BEA also provides income data both before and after tax remittances. In contrast, the Census Bureau’s measure of income includes only money income. The Census collects income data through surveys at the household level but also reports the data at the individual and family level because of the recognition that individuals within a household or family generally share resources and make economic decisions together. A household generally includes all individuals that live at the same address, while a family includes all individuals living at the same address who are related to each other by birth, marriage, or adoption. The Census...

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## Transportation Security: Background and Issues for the 119th Congress

**By Bart Elias; John Frittelli; Ben Goldman; Chris Jaikaran; Jennifer J. Marshall; Paul W. Parfomak | Published 2025-05-23**

The nation’s aviation, mass transit, passenger and freight rail, maritime, and pipeline transportation systems are geographically dispersed and designed for accessibility and efficiency. These characteristics make them vulnerable to attack. While securing the transportation sector is difficult, measures can be taken to deter attackers. A key challenge facing Congress is how to implement and finance a system of deterrence, protection, and response that effectively reduces the likelihood and mitigates the consequences of attacks without interfering with travel, commerce, and civil liberties. Transportation security has been a major policy focus since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In the aftermath of those attacks, Congress passed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA; P.L. 107-71). ATSA established the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), mandated federal screening of airline passengers and their baggage, and ordered the deployment of air marshals on all high-risk commercial passenger flights. Congress has since passed legislation intended to further enhance transportation security measures. The FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-190) and the TSA Modernization Act (P.L. 115-254, Division K) included provisions intended to improve screening technologies, streamline passenger screening, mandate more rigorous background checks of airport workers, strengthen airport access controls, increase passenger checkpoint efficiency, and enhance security in public areas of airports and at foreign airports where flights depart for the United States. Numerous challenges remain regarding aviation and transportation security, including developing and deploying capabilities, including the potential use of biometrics, to verify the identities of transportation workers and travelers; developing risk-based approaches to vetting and screening transportation workers who access secured areas of airports and other sensitive areas of transportation networks; developing cost-effective solutions to screen air cargo and freight without impeding the flow of commerce; and improving coordination among state, local, and federal homeland security and law enforcement personnel to...

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## The Retirement Savings Contribution Credit and the Saver’s Match

**By Brendan McDermott | Published 2025-09-04**

The Retirement Savings Contribution Credit (Internal Revenue Code [IRC] §25B)—commonly referred to as the Saver’s Credit—is a tax expenditure meant to encourage low- and moderate-income taxpayers to save for retirement. The SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 (“SECURE 2.0”; Division T of P.L. 117-328) created a Saver’s Match, scheduled to largely replace the Saver’s Credit beginning in 2027. This In Focus describes these two subsidies for saving and their effects (actual or potential) on saving. The Saver’s Credit Eligible taxpayers can claim a nonrefundable tax credit for contributions to certain retirement accounts. The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA; P.L. 107-16) created the Saver’s Credit. The credit took effect in 2002 and was scheduled to expire after 2006, but the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-290) made it permanent. To claim the tax credit, the saver must (1) be at least 18 years old; (2) not be claimed as a dependent on someone else’s tax return; (3) not be a full-time student; and (4) fall under specified income thresholds. The maximum credit amount is $1,000 per person (up to $2,000 per married couple filing jointly). Taxpayers calculate the credit by multiplying their qualified retirement account contributions (up to a limit) by a credit rate (which declines as income rises). The credit is nonrefundable, meaning the credit cannot exceed income tax liability. Since low-income taxpayers typically owe little to no income tax, nonrefundable credits like the Saver’s Credit may have little to no effect on their tax liability. Retirement account contributions of up to $2,000 per person qualify for the credit. Eligible contributions include those to traditional and Roth Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and defined contribution (DC) retirement plans, such as 401(k) plans. P.L. 115-97 let taxpayers claim the Saver’s Credit for contributions to their own Achieving...

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## The Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause’s Substantive Limits on Criminal Laws

**By Dave S. Sidhu | Published 2025-09-04**

Criminal law marks a boundary between conduct that society deems permissible and behavior that it deems worthy of punishment. Courts have expressed that those who cross the line may be subject to penalty and social disapproval. In addition to fines and imprisonment, transgressors may face wide-ranging collateral consequences. The authority of the government to impose criminal punishment is not unlimited. The Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution serves as one restraint on that authority. As relevant here, the Eighth Amendment forbids the government from subjecting individuals to “cruel and unusual punishments.” This prohibition applies on its own terms to federal criminal laws and, by operation of the Fourteenth Amendment, also applies to states and their political subdivisions. Enacted in 1791, the “Cruel and Unusual Punishments” Clause operates to bar the imposition of some forms of punishments for particular offenses (e.g., death for non-murder offenses or treason) or classes of offenders (e.g., death for the intellectually disabled or juveniles). In the 1960s, the Supreme Court issued twin decisions—in Robinson v. California, 370 U.S. 660 (1962) and Powell v. Texas, 392 U.S. 514 (1968)—that also articulated a substantive component to the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause, limiting not only what punishments may follow a criminal conviction but also what a government may criminalize to begin with. Robinson and Powell addressed whether imposing criminal punishment on individuals with an addiction to alcohol or narcotics violated the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause. These cases gave rise to confusion in the lower courts as to whether, among other things, the Clause created a status-conduct distinction, meaning the Clause outlaws only the punishment of an individual’s status (e.g., “being an addict”) but is not offended if a government punishes some identifiable conduct (e.g., “being intoxicated in public”). It was not until 2024, in City of Grants...

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## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) FY2026 Budget Request and Appropriations

**By Caitlin Keating-Bitonti; Eva Lipiec | Published 2025-09-05**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency in the Department of Commerce. NOAA’s mission, as defined by the agency, is to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; to share that information; and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. In March 2025, Congress passed and the President signed into law a full-year continuing resolution of discretionary appropriations for NOAA for the remainder of FY2025 (P.L. 119-4). For FY2026, the Administration is requesting a decrease in funding for NOAA broadly, with proposals to eliminate funding for climate-related offices and programs, among other changes. NOAA’s work is divided among six line offices: National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS); National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); National Ocean Service (NOS); National Weather Service (NWS); Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR); and Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO). NOAA’s Mission Support provides planning, leadership, finances, information technology, educational programming, and other support across the line offices. Congress typically provides NOAA with annual mandatory and discretionary appropriations. Mandatory appropriations, which generally comprise a small percentage of total NOAA funding, are disbursed to various accounts that support programs in NOS, NMFS, and OMAO. NOAA’s discretionary appropriations typically are included in annual Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations laws. Discretionary appropriations support two broad accounts—Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) and Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC)—and a few smaller accounts. Annual appropriations are one part of the agency’s discretionary direct obligations or funding level, which also include transfers and recoveries from prior year obligations. For more about NOAA’s budget structure, see CRS Report R48157, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Budget and Funding: Overview and Issues for Congress. Agency Funding NOAA has requested between $4.7 billion and $7.2 billion in nominal dollars per year...

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## Unemployment Compensation, Labor Disputes, and Strikes

**By Julie M. Whittaker; Katelin P. Isaacs | Published 2024-04-11**

Introduction Labor disputes among workers and employers may involve temporary work stoppages. Strikes occur when workers initiate the work stoppage. Lockouts happen when employers refuse to allow employees to work. For 2023, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that a total of 33 major work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers began, impacting approximately 458,900 workers. This is the largest number of major work stoppages since 2000 (when there were 39). Because of the complexity of most labor disputes, BLS’ estimates do not distinguish between strikes and lockouts in its work stoppage statistics. Workers involved in a strike or lockout may or may not be members of a union. In the case of strikes or lockouts involving union members, unions may provide their members with payments in the form of strike assistance if they have the financial resources to do so. Additionally, there has been state and federal legislation introduced to provide striking workers with income replacement through the Unemployment Compensation (UC) program. This In Focus discusses the role of UC in labor disputes and strikes, including current UC eligibility and disqualification related to labor disputes as well as examples of recent state and federal legislation to expand UC access in labor dispute situations. It also summarizes the role of union strike assistance. Unemployment Compensation The joint federal-state UC program provides income support through UC benefit payments. The UC program is financed through employer taxes imposed by the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) and state payroll taxes required under each state’s State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA). Although there are broad requirements under federal law regarding UC benefits and financing, state specifics are set out under each state’s laws. States administer UC benefits with U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) oversight, resulting in 53 different UC programs operated in the...

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## Centro de Trabajadores Unidos v. Bessent: D.C. Circuit Considers IRS-ICE Information-Sharing Agreement

**By Justin C. Chung | Published 2025-09-04**

On April 7, 2025, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU or information-sharing agreement) to establish procedures between the two agencies to share information for the enforcement of criminal immigration laws. Four organizations that serve immigrants (plaintiffs) have filed a lawsuit (Centro de Trabajadores Unidos v. Bessent) against the government and asked the court to stop the information sharing, alleging that the agreement violates the statutorily provided confidentiality of federal tax returns and return information. The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia denied the plaintiffs’ request for a preliminary injunction, finding in part that the government is likely to succeed on its argument that the MOU comports with an exception to such confidentiality for disclosures for nontax criminal investigations and proceedings. The plaintiffs have appealed the denial of the preliminary injunction to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Oral argument is scheduled for October 3. This Legal Sidebar discusses the confidentiality of federal tax returns and return information and the exception to such confidentiality at issue in the case. It gives background on the IRS-ICE MOU and what the MOU requires from each agency. It then summarizes the parties’ arguments before the appeals court. Finally, it presents considerations for Congress. Although this Sidebar does not address a separate lawsuit filed by a taxpayer rights group over the Department of Government Efficiency’s access to IRS data, many of the arguments raised by the taxpayer rights group in a motion in that case against the MOU are similar to the plaintiffs’ arguments in Centro de Trabajadores Unidos. Confidentiality of Federal Tax Returns and Return Information Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code (I.R.C.) establishes that federal tax returns and return information are confidential by default unless...

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## United States National Symbols: Congressional Designation and Past Practices

**By Jacob R. Straus | Published 2025-09-04**

As codified in Title 36 of the U.S. Code, Congress has designated a national anthem (“The Star-Spangled Banner”), a national motto (“In God we trust”), a national floral emblem (the rose), a national march (“The Stars and Stripes Forever”), a national tree (oak), a national mammal (North American bison), and a national bird (bald eagle). These recognitions can be referred to as “National Symbols,” even though the term does not appear to have a specific statutory definition. [T]he bald eagle has long been associated with and a symbol of the United States. It was first adopted in the Great Seal of the United States in 1782. Versions of the Great Seal are used in the Seal of the President of the United States, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and by countless Federal agencies and departments. The bald eagle appears on the flags and insignia of our military, on our passports, and on our currency. It appears on the flags and the seals of several States as well. The bald eagle is also important to Native American Tribes across the United States. It plays a key role in sacred belief systems and traditions, stories, ceremonies, and insignias. Despite this long and intertwined history of the United States, the bald eagle has not been officially designated as our national bird.... This bill would ... enshrine the bald eagle as the national bird along with our national anthem, national motto, and other symbols of our country. —Representative Russell Fry, Congressional Record, December 16, 2024, p. H7171. National Symbols of the United States National Anthem In 1931, Congress designated “The Star-Spangled Banner” as the national anthem (36 U.S.C. §301). Written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key near Fort McHenry, Maryland, during the War of 1812, “The Star-Spangled Banner” described the attack on the...

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## The Indian Prime Minister’s 2025 Visit to China and India-China Relations

**By Ricardo Barrios; K. Alan Kronstadt | Published 2025-09-04**

On August 31, 2025, India’s Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi traveled to the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China), where he met PRC leader Xi Jinping. The visit—Modi’s first to China in seven years—took place as numerous analysts in the United States and India expressed concerns that current U.S. policies (including secondary sanctions on India for ongoing purchases of Russian oil), and remarks made by President Donald Trump and his advisors. have put the two-decades-old U.S.-India partnership at risk. The international press portrayed the Xi-Modi meeting as a rapprochement driven by a common opposition to U.S. policies. Congress for the past two decades has offered broad support for successive administrations’ efforts to develop the strategic partnership with India, the world’s largest democracy and fifth-largest economy, in part to address China’s growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. Xi, Modi Signal Willingness to Cooperate PM Modi met with Xi on August 31 on the sidelines of the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. According to official readouts, Modi and Xi affirmed that India and China are “partners” and not “rivals,” and Modi “deemed it necessary to expand common ground.” The two each held separate meetings with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, suggesting that the three leaders wish to signal their commitment to a multipolar rather than U.S.-centric order. India and China together account for more than one-third of the global population and one-fifth of global GDP, and they share millennia-old ties and extensive, if asymmetric, commercial relations. China is a major source of imports for India, which relies on China for electronic goods and consumer durables. Two-way trade reached $128 billion in 2024, making China India’s second-largest trading partner after the United States. The two countries exhibit some mutual dependence: India relies on China for advanced electronics, pharmaceutical ingredients, and rare...

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## U.S.-Japan Critical Minerals Agreement: Background and Issues for Congress

**By Kyla H. Kitamura | Published 2025-09-03**

Amid growing global demand for critical minerals, Congress has been deliberating how to secure U.S. access to such goods. The United States has become highly reliant on foreign imports of critical minerals, and Members of Congress have expressed interest in both encouraging U.S. production capacity, through measures such as tariffs and federal incentives, and increasing collaboration with trading partners to secure critical minerals from countries around the world, including through sectoral trade agreements such as critical minerals agreements (CMAs). According to the International Energy Agency, international critical mineral supply chains face a high risk of disruptions from weather, trade barriers, and geopolitical factors. In addition, mining and processing being concentrated in a small number of countries makes critical minerals supply chains more vulnerable to disruptions. The People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China) now has a dominant role in global critical minerals supply chains. China and PRC firms control a large share of global mining and processing of critical minerals, as well as production of key downstream goods—for example, in 2024, China produced 72% of global EVs, and PRC firms owned 85% of global EV battery manufacturing capacity. In March 2023, during the Biden Administration, the United States and Japan signed a CMA covering five key minerals related to the production of batteries for electric vehicles (EVs). In the U.S.-Japan CMA, the United States and Japan agreed to confer on measures related to critical minerals trade and investment in their respective countries, including discouraging the importation of goods made with forced labor and affirming their participation in the development of international standards on critical minerals, among other things. The U.S.-Japan CMA entered into force immediately upon signature. The U.S.-Japan CMA was negotiated after Japan raised concerns about being excluded from certain content requirements for consumer tax credits in P.L. 117-169,...

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## The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund

**By Anthony R. Marshak | Published 2025-09-04**

Introduction The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) provides federal funding for the protection, conservation, and restoration of Pacific salmon species (Oncorhynchus spp.) and steelhead trout (O. mykiss) that are listed or at risk of being listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 16 U.S.C. §§1531-1544). Specifically, the PCSRF supports West Coast Pacific salmon recovery efforts by providing grants to the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, California, and Alaska and to federally recognized Tribes of the Columbia River and Pacific Coast. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) administers the PCSRF. Currently, 17 evolutionarily significant units of Pacific salmon and 11 distinct population segments of steelhead trout are listed under the ESA (Table 1). Other species at risk of being listed and potentially eligible for assistance through the PCSRF might include state-designated salmonids of concern (e.g., by the State of California). Table 1. Pacific Salmon and Steelhead Trout Population Groups Listed Under the Endangered Species Act Species Number of ESUs or DPSs Geographies of ESUs or DPSs Chinook Salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) 9 ESUs Coastal CA, CCV, CR (Lower, Upper), PS, Sacr R, SR, UWR Chum Salmon (O. keta) 2 ESUs CR, HC Coho Salmon (O. kisutch) 4 ESUs Central CA Coast, CR (Lower), OR Coast, Southern OR / Northern CA Coast Sockeye Salmon (O. nerka) 2 ESUs OL, SR Steelhead Trout (O. mykiss) 11 DPSs CCV, CR (Lower, Middle, Upper), CA Coast (Northern, Central, South-Central, Southern), PS, SR Basin, UWR Source: CRS, using information from NMFS, “Pacific Salmon and Steelhead: ESA Protected Species.” Notes: CA = California; CCV = California Central Valley; CR = Columbia River; DPS = Distinct Population Segment; ESU = Evolutionarily Significant Unit; HC = Hood Canal; OL = Ozette Lake; OR = Oregon; PS = Puget...

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## Mid-Decade Congressional Redistricting: Key Issues

**By Sarah J. Eckman; L. Paige Whitaker | Published 2025-08-11**

States typically begin their congressional redistricting processes following the decennial U.S. census and apportionment, at which point states with multiple House seats draw congressional district boundaries to account for population changes in the intervening decade. After redistricting plans are enacted, states may face legal challenges regarding elements of their plans; these lawsuits can continue for a number of years and result in courts approving subsequent modifications to states’ congressional district maps. Aside from these court-ordered redistricting efforts, many states have not typically undergone significant redistricting efforts until after the next decennial census. On July 30, 2025, state legislators in Texas presented a new proposed congressional district map, which is currently under consideration in a 30-day special session of the Texas state legislature. State officials in several other states, including California, Florida, New York, and Missouri, are reportedly considering the possibility of redrawing their congressional district boundaries before the 2030 census. This practice is often referred to as mid-decade redistricting. Mid-decade redistricting is prohibited by neither the U.S. Constitution nor federal law. Congressional Apportionment and Redistricting Background Article I, Section 2, of the U.S. Constitution, as amended by Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment, requires that representation in the House of Representatives is based on state population size, as determined by a national census conducted within each 10-year period. Dividing House seats among the 50 states is referred to as apportionment; determining where district boundaries exist within a state is referred to as redistricting. The Constitution does not specify how House seats are to be distributed within each state, but it does limit the number of Representatives to no more than one for every 30,000 persons, provided that each state receives at least one Representative. States largely set, and can potentially revise, their own practices for redistricting, including its timing, and...

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## Defense Primer: U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM)

**By Jennifer DiMascio; Robert Switzer | Published 2025-09-04**

U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM or SPACECOM) is one of 11 unified combatant commands (CCMDs) within the Department of Defense (DOD) and is responsible for U.S. military operations in space. The term unified combatant command refers to “a military command which has broad, continuing missions and which is composed of forces from two or more military departments,” according to 10 U.S.C., §161. SPACECOM is distinct from, and complementary to, the U.S. Space Force (USSF), which is an armed service under the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Background SPACECOM was initially established in 1985. In 2002, Congress approved a broad reorganization of the CCMDs to facilitate DOD’s shift in focus to counterterrorism and homeland defense. This reorganization included the disestablishment of SPACECOM, and its responsibilities and assets were transferred to U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM). Driven by the increase in adversary space and counterspace capabilities, Congress, in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019 NDAA; P.L. 115-232, §169), reconstituted SPACECOM as a subordinate unified command under STRATCOM. In 2019, the first Trump Administration elevated SPACECOM to a unified CCMD, citing space’s importance to U.S. national security. Mission and Organization According to SPACECOM, the command “plans, executes, and integrates military spacepower into multi-domain global operations in order to deter aggression, defend national interests, and when necessary, defeat threats.” The command is responsible for conducting space operations, sensor management, satellite communications management, and trans-regional missile defense. While DOD refers to SPACECOM as a geographic combatant command, the command’s area of responsibility is astrographic in nature, beginning at the Kármán Line, 62 miles, or 100 km, above mean sea-level and extending beyond the moon (see Figure 1). SPACECOM is led by a four-star general or admiral; the current SPACECOM commander is USSF General Stephen Whiting. The command is currently...

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## The 45F Tax Credit for Employer-Provided Child Care

**By Brendan McDermott; Conor F. Boyle; Margot L. Crandall-Hollick | Published 2025-09-04**

Introduction Many working families across the country struggle to find affordable child care. Employer-provided child care is one model that could align the needs of some working families with the needs of some employers. Families may find that employer-provided care is easier to access, while employers may find that providing child care expands their potential labor force and improves employee recruitment and retention. A Bureau of Labor Statistics survey found that about 13% of civilian workers had access to employer-provided child care in 2024, and that lower-wage workers were less likely to have access than higher-wage workers. An existing incentive for employers to provide in-kind child care to their employees is the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 45F credit. Available data indicate that the 45F credit is rarely claimed, raising questions about whether the credit is an effective incentive and whether employers view providing child care as a net benefit. Calculating the 45F Credit In 2025, the 45F credit allows businesses to reduce their income tax liability by up to $150,000 per year. The credit is calculated as 25% of qualified child care expenditures plus 10% of qualified child care resource and referral service expenditures incurred by the business, up to the $150,000 per year limit. Qualified child care expenditures subject to the 25% limit are the costs of acquiring, constructing, rehabilitating, or expanding property used as a qualified child care facility; the costs of operating a qualified child care facility (including training costs, certain compensation for employees, and scholarship programs); and the costs for contracting with a qualified child care facility to provide child care. Qualified child care resource and referral service expenditures subject to the 10% limit are expenses incurred to help employees find child care services. A qualified child care facility must generally have child care as...

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## The August 2025 U.S.-South Korea Summit

**By Mark E. Manyin; Daniel J. Longo; Liana Wong | Published 2025-09-03**

Introduction On August 25, 2025, President Donald Trump hosted President Lee Jae Myung of South Korea (officially the Republic of Korea, or ROK) for a summit at the White House. It was their first meeting since Lee assumed the presidency in June 2025 to serve a single, five-year term. Lee’s election followed the impeachment and removal from office of his predecessor, Yoon Suk Yeol. During their summit, Trump and Lee had an hour-long press availability in the Oval Office, followed by a private luncheon. Afterwards, Lee delivered a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), attended a roundtable of U.S. and ROK business leaders, visited Arlington National Cemetery, and traveled to Philadelphia to visit a shipyard acquired in 2024 by the ROK-based firm Hanwha. In their public interactions, Trump and Lee appeared at ease, and amid Lee’s frequent praise of Trump, they repeatedly touted the strength of the U.S.-ROK relationship. Whether the summit produced concrete outcomes, however, is unclear. The two governments have not released any joint documents, reportedly due to their inability to finalize a July trade and investment deal. The U.S.-ROK Trade and Investment Deal In July 2025, the U.S. and ROK governments announced an agreement to address certain U.S. tariff actions, but have yet to publish details. Some analysts note that this may be due to continued negotiations. Reportedly, Trump confirmed to Lee that tariffs on U.S. imports from South Korea remain at 15% despite ROK negotiators seeking lower auto tariffs. In practice, the 15% auto tariffs have not been implemented and remain at 25%. During the press availability, Trump said the two countries “need each other,” adding the United States could meet ROK energy needs, and ROK shipbuilding companies could build ships for the United States and invest in U.S. shipyards, a plan...

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## U.S. Sanctions: Overview for the 119th Congress

**By Liana W. Rosen; Liana W. Rosen; Rebecca M. Nelson | Published 2025-09-04**

Introduction Economic sanctions represent a constellation of coercive measures imposed for foreign policy or national security reasons. They may be imposed unilaterally or multilaterally against a target to bring about a change in behavior. Sanctions may aim to uphold international norms, prevent adversaries from achieving certain military-related capabilities, deter other malign actors from engaging in problematic behavior, and increase costs associated with a certain political decision or activity. Sanctions are public action short of (or a precursor to) direct military action. Sanctions can take many forms and variously impose restrictions on customary international economic activity, including flows of goods, people, or services. Restrictive measures can include trade embargoes; export controls; import limitations; tariffs; procurement bans; conditions on or denials of foreign assistance, loans, or investments; blocking of property; prohibitions on transactions; and travel restrictions, such as visa bans or air space access. Sanctions targets may be narrowly or comprehensively defined to include foreign jurisdictions, governments, individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and other entities. Secondary sanctions may be used to impose additional pressure on a sanctions target. They seek to deter third parties from engaging in activities with the primary target and further restrict the primary target’s access to third-party resources, which may otherwise be available to advance malign intentions, evade sanctions, or mitigate the economic toll of sanctions. A sanction’s impact may be measured in terms of its economic effect on the country imposing sanctions, the target, and third-party stakeholders; humanitarian consequences and other harms to the civilian populace; and ability to achieve near- and long-term political objectives. The effectiveness of sanctions may depend on domestic compliance and enforcement, whether other countries participate in the sanctions regime, the extent to which a target is dependent on economic or political ties to the sanctioning country or countries, and whether the target is able...

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## Hypersonic Weapons: Background and Issues for Congress

**By Kelley M. Sayler | Published 2025-08-27**

The United States has actively pursued the development of hypersonic weapons—maneuvering weapons that fly at speeds of at least Mach 5—as a part of its conventional prompt global strike program since the early 2000s. In recent years, the United States has focused such efforts on developing hypersonic glide vehicles, which are launched from a rocket before gliding to a target, and hypersonic cruise missiles, which are powered by high-speed, air-breathing engines during flight. As former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command General John Hyten has stated, these weapons could enable “responsive, long-range, strike options against distant, defended, and/or time-critical threats [such as road-mobile missiles] when other forces are unavailable, denied access, or not preferred.” Critics, on the other hand, contend that hypersonic weapons lack defined mission requirements, contribute little to U.S. military capability, and are unnecessary for deterrence. Funding for hypersonic weapons has been relatively restrained in the past; however, both the Pentagon and Congress have shown a growing interest in pursuing the development and near-term deployment of hypersonic systems. This is due, in part, to the advances in these technologies in Russia and China, both of which have a number of hypersonic weapons programs and have likely fielded operational hypersonic glide vehicles—potentially armed with nuclear warheads. Most U.S. hypersonic weapons, in contrast to those in Russia and China, are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead. As a result, U.S. hypersonic weapons will likely require greater accuracy and will be more technically challenging to develop than nuclear-armed Chinese and Russian systems. The Pentagon’s FY2026 budget request for hypersonic research was $3.9 billion—down from $6.9 billion in the FY2025 request. The Missile Defense Agency additionally requested $200.6 million for hypersonic defense in FY2026, up from its $182.3 million request...

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## Campaign Finance: Supreme Court Scheduled to Consider Constitutionality of Coordinated Party Expenditure Limits

**By L. Paige Whitaker | Published 2025-09-03**

The Supreme Court is scheduled to once again consider the constitutionality of a federal campaign finance law. In National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) v. Federal Election Commission (FEC), the Court has been asked to evaluate whether the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibits a federal law that limits coordinated political party expenditures. This federal law and the relevant FEC regulations governing political party expenditures that are coordinated with a federal candidate are known as the “coordinated party expenditure limits.” The en banc U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit (Sixth Circuit) upheld the limits, determining that the 2001 Supreme Court decision in FEC v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee (known as Colorado II to distinguish it from a similarly named case on party expenditures decided earlier), which reached the same conclusion, is binding precedent. Nonetheless, the Sixth Circuit characterized the holding in Colorado II as “questionable,” emphasizing that the Supreme Court’s recent campaign finance decisions have applied a different approach when evaluating the constitutionality of such laws. The NRSC appealed the Sixth Circuit’s ruling, and the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral argument during its October 2025 term. After prevailing in its defense of the coordinated party expenditure limits in the appellate court, the federal government in a “rare” instance is now arguing before the Supreme Court that the limits are constitutionally invalid. This Legal Sidebar begins by providing background on federal campaign finance law relevant to the NRSC v. FEC dispute, focusing on the coordinated party expenditure limits and the Supreme Court ruling in Colorado II that upheld the constitutionality of the limits. It then discusses the Sixth Circuit ruling and the pending appeal to the Supreme Court. The Sidebar concludes with considerations for Congress. Federal Campaign Finance Law, Coordinated Party Expenditure Limits, and the Supreme Court:...

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## Zapad-2025: Russian and Belarusian Strategic Military Exercise

**By Anya L. Fink; Andrew S. Bowen | Published 2025-09-02**

Russia and Belarus have announced plans to conduct the strategic exercise Zapad-2025 from September 12 to 16, 2025. According to Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov, Zapad-2025 is the “key event” for the Russian and Belarusian militaries in 2025. Consisting of a series of exercises on training ranges in Belarus and Russia, Zapad-2025 is planned as the annual strategic command staff exercise of the Union State forces (the Union State is a supranational organization consisting of Russia and Belarus). Russia has reduced the size and scope of its military exercises since 2022, likely due to the demands of its war in Ukraine. Views on the exercises are mixed. Some observers assert that the resumption of strategic exercises does not indicate an immediate threat, while others caution they could be an indication of Russia’s efforts to reconstitute its military from losses sustained in Ukraine and prepare for a possible future conflict with NATO. Members of the 119th Congress may evaluate Zapad-2025 and other Russian military exercises for their potential implications for U.S. and European security, and in conducting oversight over aspects of executive branch policies toward Russia and Belarus. Zapad-2025 Prior to its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia routinely conducted two types of military exercises: annual strategic command staff exercises and combat readiness inspections. Command staff exercises are used to test the Russian military’s ability to conduct large-scale operations, refine operational concepts, deploy new technology and equipment, and assess mobilization and readiness levels. Prior to 2022, the location of the exercises rotated among each of Russia’s then-four Military Districts. Zapad-2025 is the first strategic command staff exercise since 2021 to be held in the Moscow Military District (the district bordering Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland). According to Russian and Belarusian officials, the Zapad-2025 exercises will focus on defensive scenarios, including “repelling strikes...

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## Technology Regulation: CRS Legal Products for the 119th Congress

**By Valerie C. Brannon | Published 2025-09-03**

In recent years, some Members of Congress have considered policy options related to social media platforms and other information and telecommunications technologies. These deliberations may continue to be of interest to the 119th Congress. Discussions have sometimes focused on the largest internet technology companies, or “Big Tech.” Members have introduced a wide variety of proposals intended to achieve a number of distinct goals. Some proposals have focused on competition concerns and sought to amend antitrust and consumer protection laws. Some have targeted data protection and privacy. Some have focused on social media companies’ content moderation practices, addressing sometimes conflicting concerns about the circulation of harmful content and the removal of lawful content. Finally, some have weighed in on the debate over net neutrality. This Legal Sidebar compiles CRS products discussing legal issues related to regulating information and telecommunications technologies. Some of the products discuss bills from past Congresses. The legal considerations in those products may be relevant to Members considering new proposals that raise the same or similar issues. The text of this Sidebar focuses on regulatory proposals, but as the linked products discuss, some Members have also argued against increased regulation. Congressional staff may contact the author of this Sidebar or the authors of the following products with questions about these issues. Antitrust Antitrust laws are designed to protect economic competition. In recent years, some Members of Congress have expressed concern about the competitive practices of Big Tech firms and have introduced bills specifically addressing competition issues in the digital economy. CRS In Focus IF11234, Antitrust Law: An Introduction, by Jay B. Sykes (2025) CRS Report R46875, Antitrust Reform and Big Tech Firms, by Jay B. Sykes (2023) CRS Report R47228, The American Innovation and Choice Online Act, by Jay B. Sykes (2022) CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11216, District Court...

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## Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet on Leaders and Elections

**By Carla Y. Davis-Castro | Published 2025-08-29**

This fact sheet tracks current heads of government in Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. It provides dates of the last and next elections for the head of government and the national independence date for each country.

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## Overview of FY2026 Budget Request for the Census Bureau

**By Taylor R. Knoedl | Published 2025-09-02**

Introduction As a Department of Commerce agency, the Census Bureau is funded through the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill. This In Focus provides an overview of the U.S. Census Bureau’s FY2026 budget request; certain comparisons to previous years’ levels; and information about congressional action to date on the Census Bureau’s FY2026 budget. Information presented is drawn from the Census Bureau’s FY2026 Congressional Budget Justification and relevant congressional documents. The FY2026 request is divided between the bureau’s two major accounts: Current Surveys and Programs, and Periodic Censuses and Programs. This product provides comparisons with FY2025 enacted amounts for these two major Census Bureau accounts. The FY2025 full-year continuing resolution (CR) funded these accounts in the same amounts and under the same authorities and conditions as enacted in FY2024. The FY2026 budget document includes detailed figures for actual FY2024 amounts; actual FY2025 amounts are not described in detail. To remain consistent with more detailed budget items, comparisons are made to FY2024 actual amounts. Figure 1. Census Budget Figure is interactive in the HTML version of the In Focus / Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, FY2026 Congressional Budget Justification. FY2026 Budget Request The Trump Administration’s FY2026 budget request for the Census Bureau is $1.677 billion, which is a $294 million increase from the FY2024 enacted level of $1.383 billion. Current Surveys and Programs The Administration requests $289 million for the Current Surveys and Programs account in FY2026, a decrease of about $40 million from the FY2024 enacted amount of $329 million. This account includes Current Economic Statistics and Current Demographic Statistics. Current Economic Statistics Current Economic Statistics include business, construction, manufacturing, general economic, foreign trade, and government statistics. According to the FY2026 budget justification, Current Economic Statistics programs “provide timely, accurate, and essential data on the structure and...

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## Burma: Background and Issues for Congress

**By Ben Dolven | Published 2025-09-02**

Overview Burma (also known as Myanmar) is a multi-ethnic Southeast Asian nation of 57.5 million that has been under some degree of military rule since 1962 and under an authoritarian military junta since a February 2021 coup d’état. The coup ended a decade-long period of partial democratization and ushered in a broad nationwide conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people. After more than four years of conflict and a devastating March 2025 earthquake, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), estimates that 3.6 million people—6% of the country’s population—have been displaced since the coup. The military currently is fighting numerous ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) as well as anti-junta militias across much of the country. Some anti-junta groups have gained control over large regions in Burma. Anti-junta activists overseas, including members of the ousted National League for Democracy (NLD), the political party of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, have created a shadow government called the National Unity Government (NUG) and seek diplomatic recognition. Against this backdrop, criminal activity in Burma has flourished. Large cyber-scam operations, many reportedly run by international criminal enterprises, have grown in regions bordering the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China) and Thailand. Human trafficking and illegal trafficking in narcotics, wildlife, and sanctioned materials such as gemstones, continues. Congress has taken considerable interest in Burma since the emergence of the pro-democracy movement in the late 1980s. In the 117th Congress, the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023 NDAA; P.L. 117-263) included provisions related to the 2021 coup that had been part of the proposed Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act (BURMA Act; H.R. 5497/S. 2937). The FY2023 NDAA stated that it is U.S. policy to “support the people of Burma in their struggle...

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## President Trump’s April 2025 Executive Order on American Seafood Competitiveness: Considerations for U.S. Fisheries

**By Anthony R. Marshak | Published 2025-09-02**

Introduction On April 17, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14276, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,” which required multiple federal agency actions related to U.S. fisheries science and management, the seafood trade, and commercial fishing in marine national monuments (MNMs). President Trump directed the Secretary of Commerce (hereinafter the Secretary), whose authorities include administration of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), as amended, to address U.S. seafood trade practices, including the U.S. seafood supply chain and seafood imports, and the regulation of domestic and foreign fishing in U.S. waters. The Department of Commerce includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which is the primary federal agency responsible for the regulation and management of U.S. fisheries and seafood. Congress, through its enactment of MSA and other living marine resource (LMR)-related statutes, has regularly shown interest in U.S. fisheries and seafood production, including their sustainable management and economic contributions. Executive Order 14276 E.O. 14276 builds on elements of E.O. 13921, “Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth,” issued on May 7, 2020, which included directives related to U.S. fisheries, international seafood trade, aquaculture production, and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. E.O. 14276 identifies most American fish stocks as healthy and having “viable markets.” NMFS noted in its 2023 Report to Congress on the Status of U.S. Fisheries, the most recent such report, that 94% of the U.S. stocks and stock complexes for which overfishing status was known at the time were not subject to overfishing. Similarly, data in the report indicated that 82% of stocks and stock complexes for which overfished status was known at the time were not classified as overfished. Additionally, the report noted that nearly 30% of U.S. fish stocks and stock complexes have unknown overfishing status and that...

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## CRS Model Estimates of Marginal Effective Tax Rates on Investment Under Current Law

**By Jane G. Gravelle; Mark P. Keightley | Published 2025-09-02**

For more than 40 years, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has maintained a model for estimating marginal effective tax rates (METRs) on new investment. This report uses the CRS model to provide estimates of METRs, which can be used to understand how changes to tax law affect the size and allocation of investment in the economy. It compares METRs across assets, sectors, and sources of finance, identifying which are treated more or less favorably by the tax system. The Appendices document the CRS model used to generate these estimates. The METR is a forward-looking measure that estimates, in present-value terms, the share of the rate of return on a prospective investment that is paid in taxes over the life of that investment. It differs from the statutory tax rate, which measures the rate on taxable income, and the average effective tax rate, which measures taxes paid in a year as a percentage of income. Under the current and past tax regimes, METRs are lowest on intangible assets, followed by equipment; oil, gas, and mining structures; and power structures in both the corporate and the noncorporate sectors. Manufacturing structures were provided more favorable treatment in the recent 2025 reconciliation law (P.L. 119-21), commonly known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). Some assets, notably research and development and certain other noncorporate intangible assets, as well as owner-occupied housing, are subject to subsidies (negative METRs). The highest METRs are on land, inventories, some nonresidential structures, and residential structures in that order. These METRs reflect the differences in the speed with which investment costs can be deducted, the research credit, and the exclusion of imputed rent on owner-occupied housing. The tax system heavily favors debt-financed investments over equity-financed investments. In the noncorporate sector, and for many assets in the corporate sector, debt-financed...

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## Europe: Fact Sheet on Parliamentary and Presidential Elections

**By Sofia Plagakis | Published 2025-09-02**

This report provides a map of parliamentary and presidential elections that are scheduled to be held at the national level in Europe in 2025, and a table of recent and upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections at the national level in Europe. It includes dates for direct parliamentary elections only, and excludes indirect elections. Europe is defined in this product as the 50 countries under the portfolio of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. The report does not include the Holy See (Vatican City), as there are no direct presidential or parliamentary elections held there. Electoral rules and governance structures can vary widely across European countries. Fourteen European countries have held or are scheduled to hold direct presidential and/or parliamentary elections in 2025. Some dates may be subject to change due to snap elections, parliamentary votes of no confidence, or other factors. CRS has gathered information for this report from numerous sources, including the U.S. Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA’s) World Factbook, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Election Guide, Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), and other news sources.

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## Criminal Lacey Act Offenses: An Overview of Selected Issues

**By Cassandra J. Barnum | Published 2025-09-02**

The Lacey Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 3371–3378, is among the oldest federal wildlife laws. Enacted in 1900 and amended several times since, the Act imposes civil and criminal penalties for wildlife trafficking activity. It generally prohibits transacting in fish, wildlife, or plants that have already been illegally taken (i.e., killed), possessed, transported, or sold. The Act also prohibits false labeling of wildlife. The substantive trafficking provisions of the Lacey Act prohibit importing, exporting, transporting, selling, receiving, acquiring, or purchasing illegal wildlife. The offense has a two-step structure. The first step is the underlying violation in which wildlife is taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of federal, tribal, state, or foreign law. The second step, which completes the Lacey Act violation, is the subsequent import, export, transport, sale, receipt, acquisition, or purchase of that wildlife. This two-step structure creates legal complexity regarding the timing, sequencing, and nature of the underlying violation. Generally, the “first step” illegal act must precede and be transactionally distinct from the “second step” act, and the underlying law must be one specifically related to wildlife. The requirements for the second step differ depending on whether the underlying law is federal, tribal, foreign, or state. Where the underlying law is federal or tribal, the second step need not have any interstate or foreign commerce component. Where the underlying law is state or foreign, the second step must involve the wildlife crossing state lines or being imported/exported in order to establish federal jurisdiction over the offense. False labeling violations under the Lacey Act involve creating any false record, account, label for, or identification of wildlife that has been or is intended to be imported or exported, or transported in interstate or foreign commerce. Unlike the substantive wildlife trafficking provisions, the false labeling offense applies to all wildlife (not...

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## “Set Aside” and Vacatur Under the Administrative Procedure Act

**By Benjamin M. Barczewski | Published 2025-09-02**

A growing dispute over the scope of judicial remedies permitted under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) has generated considerable discussion across multiple levels of the federal judiciary. In a 2022 high-profile exchange at the Supreme Court, the solicitor general argued contrary to decades of federal court practice that the APA does not permit a court to “vacate” (i.e., nullify) a regulation of a federal agency. Instead, she asserted, a court may only “set aside” an agency decision as it applies to the specific parties before the court. Chief Justice Roberts responded by calling the solicitor general’s position “fairly radical and inconsistent” with “established practice under the APA” and the practice of judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit—his former posting. On that court, the Chief Justice quipped, judges vacate regulations “five times before breakfast.” Justices Kavanaugh and Jackson echoed the Chief Justice’s concerns. Justice Gorsuch, however, was not as skeptical. He explained that he did not “have the benefit” of sitting on the D.C. Circuit like the Chief Justice and Justices Kavanaugh, Thomas, and Jackson. In apparent support of the solicitor general, he thought it was odd that Congress would include a sweeping new remedy in Section 706 when, in his view, another section of the APA addresses remedies. The Court’s decision in the case, United States v. Texas, did not resolve the dispute, leaving for another day whether the APA permits a court to vacate an agency action or simply set it aside. The lingering questions over the ability of courts to vacate agency actions may become more pronounced given the Court’s 2025 decision in Trump v. CASA, Inc. The CASA decision limited the availability of what are known as nationwide (or universal) injunctions and cast some doubt on the availability of universal remedies—court orders...

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## Energy and Water Development: FY2026 Appropriations

**By Mark Holt; Anna E. Normand; Anna E. Normand | Published 2025-08-29**

The Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies appropriations (E&W) bill funds civil works activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the Department of Defense; the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and Central Utah Project (CUP); the Department of Energy (DOE); the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC); the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC); and several other independent agencies. DOE typically accounts for about 80% of the bill’s funding. Overall Funding Totals President Donald Trump submitted his initial FY2026 budget request on May 2, 2025, followed by more details in late May and subsequent weeks. The Trump Administration request includes $54.438 billion in discretionary appropriations for energy and water development agencies, a decrease of $6.839 billion (-11%) below the FY2025 enacted amount, excluding emergency appropriations, mandatory appropriations, rescissions, offsets, and adjustments. The House Appropriations Committee approved its version of the bill (H.R. 4553; H.Rept. 119-213) on July 17, 2025, at 12% above the Administration request and less than 1% below the FY2025 level. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4) was signed by President Trump on March 15, 2025, providing annual appropriations for FY2025 at the FY2024 level for nearly all accounts. The FY2025 budget reconciliation measure (P.L. 119-21) includes rescissions and additional appropriations for several E&W programs. Many E&W accounts are also bolstered by supplemental, emergency, and advance appropriations from other acts. Energy and Water Development Appropriations, FY2025 and FY2026 Actions (in millions of nominal dollars and % change from FY2025 enacted) Agency FY2024 Enacted FY2025 Request FY2025 Enacted FY2026 Request (% Change) FY2026 House Com. (% Change) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 8,703 7,220 8,703 6,663 (-23%) 9,883 (14%) Bureau of Reclamation/CUP 1,923 1,616 1,889 1,290 (-31%) 1,895 (<1%) Department of Energy 50,247 51,978 50,170 46,772 (-7%) 48,763 (-3%) Independent Agencies 502...

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## Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment to Counter Illicit Drug Flows

**By Kristin Finklea | Published 2025-09-02**

In policy discussions around drug trafficking and elevated overdose deaths related to illicit opioids and other drugs, some observers have looked to the tools border officials have in place to help detect and stop the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. More specifically, attention has turned to the use of non-intrusive inspection (NII) equipment to scan commercial and private vehicles crossing into the country for illicit drugs and other contraband. Illicit Drug Flows into the United States There are no comprehensive data on the total quantity of foreign-produced illicit drugs successfully smuggled into the United States at or between official ports of entry (POEs) because these drugs have evaded detection and seizure by border officials. In lieu of these data, certain drug seizure data shed some light on how and where drug traffickers attempt to move their product across U.S. borders. Data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) indicate that, by weight, more illicit drugs are seized at POEs than between them, and most are seized along the Southwest border. Like seizure data, law enforcement intelligence indicates that the majority of illicit drugs flowing into the United States are moved across the Southwest border, through POEs. The Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA’s) 2025 National Drug Threat Assessment reports that Mexican drug trafficking organizations—namely the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel—are the primary groups producing the illicit drugs responsible for overdose deaths in the United States. They use privately owned vehicles, tractor trailers, and drug mules among other means to move contraband. Traffickers have been found to conceal illicit drugs such as fentanyl or methamphetamine in vehicle fuel tanks, voids in vehicle bodies, or tires. CBP’s Use of NII NII is one tool CBP uses to help screen vehicles, rail cars, cargo containers, luggage, packages, and mail for...

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## Small Business Joint Ventures in Federal Procurement

**By R. Corinne Blackford | Published 2025-09-02**

Joint ventures are teams of businesses that work together to obtain and perform a federal contract or subcontract. Certain joint ventures may seek and perform contracts specifically designated for “small” business contractors. For these contracts, joint ventures may consist of two or more firms and may consist of all small businesses, or a pair of firms with a mentor-protégé agreement in which one firm, the protégé, qualifies as a small business (13 C.F.R. §125.8). This In Focus provides an overview of the requirements and benefits for joint ventures seeking federal contracts, in addition to select policy issues of congressional concern. Firm Size Standards for Small Businesses Outside of a joint venture formed by a mentor-protege pair, each firm must be small under the size standard corresponding to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code assigned to the contract. Size standards are maintained by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and expressed in terms of the number of employees or revenue (average annual receipts). These measures vary by industry and each standard is a threshold which a business (including its subsidiaries and affiliates) must fall below in order to remain classified as a small business. Size standards are maintained “to ensure that a concern that meets a specific size standard is not dominant in its field of operation” (13 C.F.R. §121.102(b)). For joint venture teams that consist of a small and non-small business (a mentor-protégé team), the protégé must qualify as a small business concern. Mentor-Protégé Programs Small business mentor-protégé programs allow small businesses to work on federal contracts with more experienced businesses in mutually beneficial relationships. Mentors and their protégés may form joint ventures that are eligible to perform federal contracts set aside or reserved for small businesses. A key goal of these programs is to help small businesses become...

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## Process for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Projects

**By Nicole T. Carter; Anna E. Normand; Nicole T. Carter; Anna E. Normand | Published 2025-08-29**

Civil responsibilities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) include undertaking federal water resource development projects and assisting nonfederal environmental infrastructure (EI, typically municipal water and wastewater) projects, among others. This report discusses the processes for USACE projects and assistance. Authorization and Appropriations. Congress often considers new USACE authorization legislation biennially and discretionary USACE appropriations annually. The authorization bill is typically titled a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). After inclusion of a study, project, project modification, or EI assistance authorization in an enacted WRDA, USACE action on the authorization usually requires federal funding. Congress typically funds a subset of the authorized USACE EI activities through annual Energy and Water Development appropriations acts. Federal Water Resource Projects. USACE develops federal water resource projects principally to (1) improve navigable channels, (2) reduce flood risks along rivers and coasts, and (3) restore aquatic ecosystems. These federal projects may have additional project benefits; for example, some multipurpose projects may serve water supply storage, hydropower, and recreation purposes, among others. Standard Process for USACE Federal Water Resource Projects / Source: Congressional Research Service. The standard process for a USACE project consists of four phases: study, design, construction, and operations, as shown in the figure. This process generally requires two separate congressional authorizations—one for studying feasibility and a subsequent one for undertaking the project (e.g., construction)—as well as appropriations for each phase. An exception to the required two-authorization process is smaller projects (i.e., typically projects with a federal cost less than $15 million) that can be performed under USACE’s continuing authorities programs; these projects also largely follow the process described in this report. For most activities, Congress requires a nonfederal sponsor to share some portion of study and construction costs and to provide the necessary real estate interests for the project (e.g., lands, rights-of-way). The...

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## Preemption and Privacy Law

**By Chris D. Linebaugh | Published 2025-08-29**

Under the U.S. Constitution’s Supremacy Clause, Congress may displace state law when it is acting within its enumerated constitutional powers. In the realm of consumer privacy, Congress has largely chosen to leave state laws in place. Rather than adopting a single comprehensive consumer privacy law, Congress has enacted various privacy statutes that apply to particular industries and subcategories of data. These laws, which are often described as “sectoral” privacy laws, apply to health data, financial data, children’s data, telecommunications data, and credit reports, among other areas. These federal sectoral privacy laws generally leave room for states to supplement the federal requirements with their own standards. States, consequently, have increasingly adopted their own privacy laws. Many of these laws either build on the federal sectoral privacy laws or apply to new industries or types of data not covered by the federal laws. For example, some states have adopted laws that provide additional protections for genetic data, biometric data, or reproductive health data; some states have passed laws requiring online platforms to configure their settings to better protect children’s privacy; and some states have passed laws aimed at entities like data brokers, who compile and sell consumer data. An increasing number of states have taken the step of adopting comprehensive privacy laws that apply to nearly all forms of personal data within their jurisdictions. Between 2018 and the time of this writing, at least 19 states have adopted comprehensive consumer privacy laws. These laws generally provide a similar set of consumer rights (e.g., the right for consumers to request that businesses provide a copy of their personal data or to correct or delete their data) and business obligations (e.g., the obligation to give consumers the opportunity to opt out of the sale of their data or the use of their data for...

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## U.S.-India Relations: A Summary

**By K. Alan Kronstadt; Shayerah I. Akhtar | Published 2025-08-25**

India, the world’s largest democracy and most populous country, overtook Japan in 2025 to become the fourth-largest economy. India’s expanding strategic horizons and increased engagement with international partners; geography astride vital sea and energy lanes; growing defense and power projection capabilities; and vigorous space, science, and technology sectors have made it an attractive potential partner for U.S. policymakers. Since 2000, five successive U.S. presidential administrations have worked—with bipartisan congressional support—to establish and deepen a strategic partnership with India. India for decades pursued a “nonalignment” foreign policy, now described as “multi-alignment” or “strategic autonomy.” Some observers call India “the world’s ultimate swing state.” The first Trump and Biden Administrations called India a crucial partner in U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, as both governments share concerns about expanding power and influence of the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China). A Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad,” including Japan and Australia, has been a leading forum in this strategy since 2017. The Joint Statement released after Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi’s February 2025 meeting with President Donald Trump noted the launch of a new umbrella initiative, the “U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology),” meant to “drive transformative change across key pillars of cooperation.” The two leaders also announced initiatives for two multilaterals: the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and the I2U2 Group, which includes Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). President Trump since May has taken actions that observers say put the partnership at risk. The President has repeatedly taken credit for ending a May India-Pakistan military conflict; Indian officials say they met their security objectives and deny any third-party role in halting the fighting. Indian officials also have expressed frustration that the President has treated India and Pakistan as equals—including by hosting Pakistan’s army chief to lunch at the...

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## Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy

**By Sarah E. Garding; Cory Welt | Published 2025-08-28**

The Republic of Moldova is located in southeastern Europe near the Black Sea, between Romania and Ukraine. The current government of Moldova—like that of neighboring Ukraine—seeks greater integration with the West as it faces Russian political interference and territorial occupation. Moldova became an official candidate for European Union (EU) membership in 2022. In November 2024, Moldova’s incumbent president, Maia Sandu, was reelected on a pro-European platform despite allegedly substantial Russian election interference. Parliamentary elections, which could reinforce or weaken Moldova’s pro-European orientation, are scheduled for September 28, 2025. The outcome of the election also could have implications for U.S. strategic concerns in the Black Sea region. Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the United States and the EU expanded support for Moldova’s efforts to implement domestic reforms, curtail Russian influence, bolster energy security, and alleviate the humanitarian and economic effects of the Russia-Ukraine war. Moldova’s leaders have consistently expressed support for Ukraine and warned that a Russian victory in Ukraine could expose Moldova to heightened Russian aggression. One particular vulnerability is Moldova’s unresolved territorial conflict: since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova has contended with the Russia-backed de facto secession of the Transnistria region, an area bordering Ukraine that hosts a Russian military contingent. The United States and Moldova generally have had good relations since Moldova’s independence. Some Members of Congress have expressed interest in the two countries’ relationship, as well as in Moldova’s stability, security, and strategic role in the Black Sea region. In the 119th Congress, some Members of Congress may seek to shape and conduct oversight of U.S. policy toward Moldova and to monitor regional developments that could have implications for U.S. national interests. Areas of focus may include alleged Russian efforts to interfere in Moldova’s upcoming parliamentary election; Moldova’s efforts to...

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## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: A Primer

**By Gene Falk | Published 2025-08-26**

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant provides federal grants to the 50 states, District of Columbia, and territories (collectively, “states”), as well as Indian tribes. TANF helps fund state-run programs of cash assistance for needy families with children, known historically as welfare programs. However, TANF is not a program focused solely on cash assistance, but a broad-purpose block grant that helps fund a wide range of benefits and services for both cash assistance and non-cash benefit families. These benefits and services include employment and training, child care assistance, short-term economic aid, state refundable tax credits, services for children at risk for removal from the home because of neglect or abuse, pre-kindergarten programs, and programs for youth. P.L. 119-4 funds TANF through the end of FY2025 (September 30, 2025). Uses of TANF Funds, FY2023 / Source: CRS, based on data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). TANF was created in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA, P.L. 104-193), also known as the 1996 welfare reform law. That law ended the New Deal program that provided dedicated federal funds for cash assistance for needy families with children (Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC]) and related programs. Though created nearly 30 years ago, TANF financing remains rooted in the amount of funding that was provided in the pre-PRWORA programs in the early to mid-1990s. TANF is funded by both federal and nonfederal dollars. Both the TANF basic block grant and the minimum amount of nonfederal dollars that must be spent are based on expenditures in the pre-PRWORA programs in the early to mid-1990s. In the mid-1990s, the number of families receiving cash assistance reached its historical peak (5.1 million in March 1994). TANF funding levels have not been adjusted for...

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## U.S. Department of Transportation: Background on Modal Administrations

**By John Frittelli; Bart Elias; Ben Goldman; Ali E. Lohman; William J. Mallett; Jennifer J. Marshall; Naseeb A. Souweidane; Rachel Y. Tang | Published 2025-08-27**

The Trump Administration’s initiatives with respect to the staffing, funding, or management of several federal agencies have raised questions about possible reorganization plans for the Department of Transportation (DOT). Possible efforts to reorganize DOT may require congressional action due to the extent the department’s organization is delineated in statute. For instance, for some modal administrations, certain duties and powers are to be carried out by that modal agency, while others are left to the Secretary of Transportation. As another example, the statute establishing the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration states that the powers or duties of these agencies within DOT may be transferred to another part of DOT or another federal government entity when specifically provided by law. In contrast, all duties and powers of the Maritime Administration (MARAD) are statutorily vested in the Secretary of Transportation. DOT was established in 1966 (P.L. 89-670) and began operations on April 1, 1967. Its creation consolidated stand-alone agencies (e.g., the Federal Aviation Agency and the Bureau of Public Roads) and moved certain functions from other agencies (e.g., transferred railroad safety from the Interstate Commerce Commission to a newly created FRA). Other agencies were transferred or created after 1967, such as MARAD, FMCSA, and the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration. Reorganization efforts by former Administrations have sought to address a common observation about DOT—it is organized by transportation mode instead of by cross-modal functions, such as infrastructure planning and safety. In 1978, President Carter proposed to consolidate planning programs for highways and mass transit and sought to merge the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and other related agencies into a single surface transportation agency. In the Reagan Administration, the Grace Commission recommended that the land-based modal administrations...

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## Taiwan and the International Community

**By Susan V. Lawrence | Published 2025-08-25**

Introduction Taiwan, the self-governing Asian democracy that formally calls itself the Republic of China (ROC), has struggled to maintain “international space” for itself in the world. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) has never controlled Taiwan, but claims sovereignty over it and has vowed to “unify” with it, potentially by force. As part of its effort to pressure Taiwan to accept unification, the PRC has spent decades seeking to isolate Taiwan internationally. Congress and the executive branch have supported Taiwan’s efforts to maintain strong links to the international community. U.S. Policy The United States terminated diplomatic relations with the ROC on January 1, 1979, in order to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. Following this diplomatic break, Congress passed the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA, P.L. 96-8; 22 U.S.C. §§3301 et seq.), which provides a legal basis for unofficial relations with Taiwan. Section 4(d) of the act states, “Nothing in this Act may be construed as a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from continued membership in any international financial institution or any other international organization.” Since 1950, the U.S. government has considered Taiwan’s sovereignty status to be undetermined. Since 1994, U.S. policy has been to support Taiwan’s membership in international organizations for which statehood is not a requirement for membership, and to encourage “meaningful participation” for Taiwan in organizations in which its membership is not possible. The Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-135), as amended by the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act (TERA; Title LV, Subtitle A of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY2023, P.L. 117-263) states that it is U.S. policy to advocate “for Taiwan’s membership in all international organizations in which statehood is not a requirement and in which the United States is...

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## Constitutional Considerations in Member Involvement in Executive Agency Actions

**By Jason O. Heflin | Published 2025-08-29**

Members of Congress and their staffs interact with executive branch agencies for a number of purposes, including carrying out Congress’s functions of overseeing, investigating, and influencing the implementation of public policy by the executive branch and handling requests from constituents and other persons for assistance. Members’ interactions with agencies on behalf of constituents may be limited by statutory constraints and ethical considerations. Both the House and the Senate provide guidance to Members on these potential limitations. Apart from those considerations, however, constitutional principles also shape courts’ views of Members’ interaction with executive agencies. In some circumstances, a Member’s interaction with or attempt to influence an agency may not be otherwise prohibited but may nonetheless provide grounds on which to challenge that agency’s action or decision in federal court. Though the Supreme Court has not addressed this issue, lower federal courts have addressed situations involving Member attempts to influence the outcome of an agency action through various means—from letters, in-person discussion, and hearings regarding pending agency decisions to statements threatening to base certain funding decisions on the outcome of a decision that is pending with the agency. While affirming Congress’s legitimate oversight role, these judicial opinions suggest an outer bound on Member involvement in agency actions beyond which such intervention may render an agency action illegitimate. This Legal Sidebar begins with a brief discussion of two constitutional principles relevant to interaction between Members and executive branch agencies: the separation of powers and the guarantee of due process. It then reviews the ways in which courts faced with these questions have categorized different agency actions. It concludes with a discussion of selected federal judicial decisions relevant to Member involvement in different types of agency actions. For a discussion of principles governing communications during the agency rulemaking process, see CRS In Focus IF12368,...

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## Government Shutdowns and Executive Branch Operations: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**By Barbara L. Schwemle; Taylor N. Riccard; Clinton T. Brass | Published 2025-09-02**

If conflict within Congress or between Congress and the President impedes the enactment of annual appropriations acts or an interim continuing resolution before the beginning of the fiscal year (October 1), a temporary funding gap may occur at the beginning of that fiscal year. A funding gap may also occur in the middle of a fiscal year if appropriations are not enacted before a continuing resolution expires. If a funding gap begins and funding does not appear likely to resume during the first calendar day of the gap, the federal government generally begins a “shutdown” of affected activities. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have been organized in 12 subcommittees, with each subcommittee responsible for developing and managing the consideration of one regular appropriations act. It is possible for Congress to enact some of the 12 appropriations acts, and not others, before the beginning of a fiscal year or the expiration of a continuing resolution. This would lead to a partial government shutdown of the activities covered by appropriations acts that were not enacted in time. This CRS report is intended to address frequent questions related to government shutdowns and possible effects of shutdowns on executive agency operations and executive branch employees. The questions generally proceed chronologically through various processes that precede a shutdown, events that may occur during a shutdown, and events that occur in the wake of a shutdown. This report will be updated annually.

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## Landslides: Federal Role in Research, Assessment, and Response

**By Linda R. Rowan | Published 2025-08-22**

Landslide hazards may occur across the United States and its territories, and landslide risks may be increasing. A landslide is a movement of a mass of rock, debris, or soil down a slope. Mountainous, hilly, or cliff terrains (e.g., vertical shorelines, roadcuts, surface mining walls) are most susceptible to landslides. Landslides are most often triggered by rainfall, particularly rainfall on burned, steeply sloped terrain (e.g., a post-wildfire debris flow). Earthquakes or volcanic activity that cause ground motion also can trigger a landslide. Landslides may harm people and damage property; in addition, they may block roads, waterways, and water drainage systems, leading to further damage and economic losses. Landslide risks may increase in the near future due to increased development in hazardous regions and the potential for more frequent weather-related hazards (e.g., intense rainstorms, hurricanes, wildfires) that may trigger landslides. The U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS’s) Landslide Hazards Program (LHP) is the only federal program dedicated to landslide hazard science and applications. Other federal agencies involved in landslide science and applications as components of larger programs include the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration, federal land management agencies, U.S. Department of Transportation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency. The National Landslide Preparedness Act (NLPA; P.L. 116-323, 43 U.S.C. §§3101 et seq.) directed the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the USGS, to establish a National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program (NLHRP). NLHRP activities include identifying, mapping, assessing, and researching landslide hazards; responding to landslide events; and coordinating with state, local, territorial, and tribal entities to reduce landslide risks. In particular, the act required development of a national strategy for landslide risk reduction that includes goals and priorities for the NLHRP and an interagency plan that details programs, projects, and budgets to implement...

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## The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA): Frequently Asked Questions

**By Carol Hardy Vincent; Laura B. Comay | Published 2025-09-02**

What Is the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)? The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152) established in the U.S. Treasury a new fund—the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)—with mandatory spending authority to address deferred maintenance (DM) needs of five federal agencies. These agencies are the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), all in the Department of the Interior (DOI), and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), in the Department of Agriculture. The GAOA also made changes to an existing fund—the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The GAOA made $900.0 million in deposits to the LWCF available as mandatory spending. It also made other changes to the LWCF Act (54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.). Does the GAOA Expire? Under current law, the LRF (the new fund established in the GAOA) is to receive funding through FY2025. Provisions of the GAOA pertaining to the LWCF do not expire. What Funding Did the GAOA Provide the LRF? The GAOA provides for the LRF to receive up to $1.9 billion annually over five years (FY2021-FY2025). More specifically, the fund receives annual deposits equivalent to 50% of all federal energy development revenues (from oil, gas, coal, or renewable energy) credited in the preceding fiscal year as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury, up to an annual $1.9 billion cap. For each of FY2021-FY2025, the maximum amount was deposited in the fund. Thus the five-year total to address DM across the five agencies (BIE, BLM, NPS, FWS, and FS) was $9.5 billion. How Is DM Defined? In a 2024 handbook, the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board defines deferred maintenance and repairs (DM&R) as “maintenance and repairs that were not performed when they should have been or were...

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## HOME Program 2025 Final Rule: In Brief

**By Henry G. Watson | Published 2025-04-25**

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program is a federal block grant program that provides funding to states and eligible localities to be used exclusively for affordable housing activities to benefit low-income households. On January 6, 2025, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published in the Federal Register a final rule related to the HOME program: “HOME Investment Partnerships Program: Program Updates and Streamlining.” The final rule makes several significant changes to the implementation of the HOME program, and represents the first major regulatory update since 2013. Major provisions include tenancy addenda that create tenant protections for residents of HOME-assisted rental housing and recipients of HOME tenant-based rental assistance, changes to maximum per-unit subsidy limits, changes to periods of affordability, updated guidance and policy changes for HUD-assisted homebuyer housing, and several provisions intended to streamline participation in the HOME program. This report summarizes the major provisions of the final rule.

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## Enforcement of Congressional Rules of Conduct: A Historical Overview

**By Jacob R. Straus; Jacob R. Straus | Published 2025-08-28**

The Constitution vests Congress with broad authority to discipline its Members. Only since 1964, however, have the Senate and House of Representatives established formal rules of conduct and disciplinary procedures to address allegations of illegal or unethical conduct by Senators, Representatives, officers, and staff. These rules and procedures also provide a framework for addressing allegations through investigations and potential punishments. In 1964, the Senate established its first permanent ethics committee—the Select Committee on Standards and Conduct, which was renamed the Select Committee on Ethics in 1977. In 1967, the House first established a permanent ethics committee—the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, which was renamed the Committee on Ethics in 2011. Previously, Congress had dealt case by case with allegations of misconduct, used ad hoc and select investigatory committees, and relied on election results as the ultimate arbiter in questions of wrongdoing. This report examines the creation of House and Senate codes of conduct, the formation and evolution of the House and Senate ethics committees, and the House and Senate ethics processes. For additional information, please refer to CRS Report 98-15, House Committee on Ethics: A Brief History of Its Evolution and Jurisdiction, by Jacob R. Straus; CRS Report RL30650, Senate Select Committee on Ethics: A Brief History of Its Evolution and Jurisdiction, by Jacob R. Straus; CRS Report R40760, House Office of Congressional Conduct: History, Authority, and Procedures, by Jacob R. Straus; and CRS Report R45078, Expulsion of Members of Congress: Legal Authority and Historical Practice, by Todd Garvey.

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## U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)

**By Shayerah I. Akhtar; Nick M. Brown; Nick M. Brown; Shayerah I. Akhtar | Published 2025-08-29**

DFC, a federal agency, uses financial tools to promote private investment in less-developed countries. Its purpose, by statute, is to mobilize private capital to advance U.S. development and foreign policy interests, taking into account its projects’ economic and financial soundness (see text box). DFC’s seven-year authorization is to expire in October 2025, after which DFC would need legislative action to issue new financing. In the context of debate over reauthorization and potential reform, Congress may consider DFC funding, leadership and structure, and role in the changing foreign policy and trade policy landscape. DFC History and Authorizing Legislation Two distinct but overlapping rationales emerged in Congress to establish DFC. One sought to enhance U.S. development finance impact. A second focused on expanding U.S. policy tools to counter China and its “One Belt, One Road” initiative. Launched in late 2019, DFC is authorized by the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act of 2018 (BUILD Act, Div. F of P.L. 115-254, 22 U.S.C. §§9612 et seq.). This law replaced the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) with DFC and transferred the Development Credit Authority (DCA) from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to DFC. It gave DFC new functions (e.g., equity), a larger financing cap ($60 billion), and a multiyear authorization. Overview Organization. The BUILD Act vests all DFC powers in a Board of Directors with presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed members. The Board’s nine statutory positions are held by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO); the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, and Commerce; the USAID Administrator; and four nongovernment members (three-year terms, renewable once). The Secretary of State is Board Chair, and the USAID Administrator is Vice Chair. In addition, by statute, DFC operates under the Secretary of State’s general foreign policy guidance. The Board is to meet quarterly, and a quorum...

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## Plastic Pollution and Policy Considerations: Frequently Asked Questions

**By Claire M. Jordan; Clare Y. Cho; Kristen Hite; Angela C. Jones; Omar M. Hammad; Jonathan D. Haskett; Eva Lipiec; Jerry H. Yen; Laura Gatz; Angela C. Jones | Published 2025-03-07**

Global and domestic plastic production has increased substantially since the mid-20th century—doubling in the last two decades. The durability, moldability, and versatility of plastic have led to its ubiquitous use, benefiting many aspects of society, including the food, medical, technology, textile, and transportation industries, among others. As plastic production and use have grown, so have concerns about the impacts of plastic on the environment. These include concerns about increasing rates of plastic waste generation, insufficient management of plastic waste, and the plastic pollution that results when plastic waste enters, or “leaks,” into the environment, including land-based, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. Some are also concerned about the potential environmental and human health effects of the chemicals used to produce plastics and the air emissions generated across the plastic lifecycle. Plastic waste generation has increased alongside the rise in plastic production and use, more than doubling over the last two decades globally. Infrastructure for solid waste management and recycling has not kept pace with this growth. While some plastic is recycled, most plastic waste is landfilled or incinerated. Some plastic waste is also mismanaged (i.e., littered or improperly disposed). Mismanaged plastic is the main source of larger plastics (i.e., macroplastics) entering into the environment. Plastic waste enters the environment through a variety of pathways across the plastic lifecycle. Once in the environment, macroplastics may fragment into smaller pieces of plastic (i.e., microplastics, ranging in size from 5 millimeters down to a 5-millionfold-smaller 1 nanometer). Both macroplastics and microplastics pose risks to the environment, including land-based, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. Some of the impacts of concern include wildlife ingesting plastic or becoming entangled in plastic waste, which can lead to suffocation or starvation. Microplastics are also persistent and may accumulate in the environment—such as in deep ocean sediments, water columns of oceans and...

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## Navigating the Appropriations Status Table

**By Justin Murray; Carol Wilson; Ben Leubsdorf; Ben Leubsdorf; Carol Wilson | Published 2025-08-28**

The CRS Appropriations Status Table is an online tool for tracking legislation that provides annual funding for federal programs, projects, and activities. It displays the status of regular appropriations bills, continuing resolutions, supplemental appropriations measures, and budget resolutions. This report describes how to access and navigate information presented on the Appropriations Status Table. A companion video is available on CRS.gov.

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## The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program: Issues for the 119th Congress

**By Ling Zhu | Published 2025-08-29**

Under Section 60102 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58), enacted in late 2021, Congress directed the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information (“Assistant Secretary”) to establish and administer the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. Specifically, Congress directed the Assistant Secretary, who leads the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA; an agency within the Department of Commerce), to make BEAD grants to 56 states and territories (hereinafter “states”) to “bridge the digital divide.” States are required to use these grants to competitively award subgrants to fund a variety of broadband projects in their jurisdictions, with a priority to provide “affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband” service to locations currently lacking such access. A broadband network built with BEAD funding must be capable of providing broadband service with (1) at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads; (2) a low network latency enabling real-time, interactive applications; and (3) a low network outage rate (less than 48 hours over any 365-day period). In Division J of the IIJA, Congress appropriated $42.45 billion for the BEAD Program, which is the single largest federal investment in broadband infrastructure to date. To access the grant funds allocated to a state using a formula set by the IIJA, the state must submit and have the Assistant Secretary approve its grant documents, including initial and final proposals. In the initial proposal, the state must identify all broadband-serviceable locations in its jurisdiction that are eligible for BEAD funding. In the final proposal, the state must provide a detailed plan that specifies how the state will allocate its BEAD funding for broadband deployment in those locations. As of August 2025, all states have continued to complete final program requirements, and no BEAD funding has been distributed for any...

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## Stanley v. City of Sanford: Supreme Court Rejects Retiree’s Americans with Disabilities Act Claim

**By April J. Anderson | Published 2025-08-29**

On June 20, 2025, the Supreme Court issued its opinion in Stanley v. City of Sanford. The Court held that a retired firefighter could not pursue a claim, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), that her employer discriminated against her with respect to her retirement benefits. In reaching this conclusion, the Court determined that the ADA generally applies only to job applicants and employees, not retirees who neither hold nor desire a job. The decision resolved a division between circuit courts on how to apply the ADA. The Court’s ruling separates ADA claims from several other types of employment claims, as retirees may bring claims under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars employment discrimination based on race, sex, and religion. Background The plaintiff in Stanley developed Parkinson’s disease and retired after 19 years of working as a firefighter for the City of Sanford. If she had been able to work for 25 years, as she had planned, she would have received medical benefits until the age of 65. City employees on disability retirement, as the plaintiff found herself, got two years of medical benefits. She sued, alleging disability discrimination. The district court concluded that her suit could not go forward, citing circuit precedent barring retirees’ ADA claims. In the district court’s view, the plaintiff faced the alleged harm—reduced health care benefits—only after she left a job. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit (federal appeals courts are hereinafter referenced by their number or jurisdiction alone) affirmed, but it acknowledged a circuit split: the Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth Circuits also would bar a nonemployee from claiming discrimination; the Second and Third Circuits would allow a retiree to sue. The Supreme Court granted certiorari to resolve the split. The Court’s Decision in Stanley The...

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## Points of Order, Rulings, and Appeals in the Senate

**By Valerie Heitshusen; Valerie Heitshusen | Published 2025-08-29**

The Senate’s presiding officer typically does not have responsibility for proactively ensuring that Senate consideration of matters complies with the chamber’s rules of procedure. Instead, Senators may enforce the Senate’s rules and precedents by raising points of order whenever they believe that one of those rules or precedents is, or is about to be, violated. In most cases, the presiding officer issues a ruling, based on Senate rules and precedents, on whether or not the point of order is well taken. A Senator may appeal such a ruling, in which case the Senate takes action in relation to the appeal—action by which the body either affirms or overturns the chair’s ruling. In certain specific procedural circumstances, the Senate instead takes action to directly decide (or otherwise dispose of) the point of order itself. Through its action on an appeal, or directly on certain points of order, the Senate affirms existing precedent or establishes new precedent.

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## An Overview of Medical Debt: Collection, Credit Reporting, and Related Policy Issues

**By Karl E. Schneider | Published 2025-08-29**

Medical debt is a fairly common occurrence for Americans who have received medical care. This In Focus discusses medical debt; how that debt is collected and reported to credit reporting agencies (also called credit bureaus); and proposals to change those practices from industry, some Members of Congress, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Medical Debt Overview According to the CFPB, consumers owed $88 billion in medical debt on consumer credit reports as of June 2021. In 2017, a Census Bureau survey found that 19% of people reported having medical bills they could not fully repay during the year. Uninsured, Black, and Hispanic Americans are more likely to have medical debt. Unlike most consumer debts, the need for medical care for an acute illness can often be unexpected and not discretionary. According to a 2014 CFPB study, consumers are unlikely to know how much various medical services cost in advance, particularly those associated with accidents and emergencies. Moreover, resolving billing disputes with health insurance companies can be a complicated, lengthy, and often non-transparent process. Whether these debts should be included on credit reports is an area of active debate and action from industry, regulators, and Congress. In 2022, the three major credit bureaus took voluntary action to eliminate an estimated 70% of outstanding medical debt from credit reports. In June 2024, the CFPB finalized a rule to eliminate all medical debt from most credit reports and ban lenders from using medical debt collection information to make underwriting decisions. However, in July 2025, a judge overturned this rule, as discussed in more detail below. Debt Collection Market Background When consumers default on medical debts, medical providers often hire third parties to collect those debts. Debt collectors help medical providers recoup their losses when patients default. IBISWorld, a market research company, estimates...

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## Staff Pay, Selected Positions in House Member and Committee Offices, 2024

**By R. Eric Petersen | Published 2025-07-29**

Levels of pay for congressional staff are a source of recurring questions among Members of Congress, congressional staff, and the public. There may be interest in congressional pay data for multiple reasons, including assessment of the costs of congressional operations, guidance in setting pay levels for staff in Member offices, or comparison of congressional staff pay levels with those of other federal government pay systems. This In Focus provides 2024 pay data, provided in constant, 2025 dollars, for 17 staff position titles that are typically used in House Members’ offices (see Table 1) and 13 staff position titles that are used in House committees (see Table 2). Table 1. 2024 Median Pay, Selected Positions in House Member Offices, and Change, 2023-2024, Constant, 2025 Dollars Median 2024, 2025$ Change 2023-2024 Caseworker $68,907 2.59% Chief of Staff $192,456 0.29% Communications Director $103,106 -6.57% Constituent Services Director $89,324 -10.30% Constituent Services Rep. $63,590 -3.66% Deputy Chief of Staff $138,717 3.32% District Deputy Director $91,519 -1.79% District Director $122,085 -1.08% Field Representative $66,866 -2.49% Legislative Assistant $78,605 6.16% Legislative Correspondent $66,866 0.60% Legislative Director $120,715 3.95% Operations Director $94,281 -5.32% Press Secretary $78,605 5.47% Scheduler $75,032 -5.22% Senior Legislative Assistant $86,466 -6.51% Staff Assistant $58,920 -0.72% Source: Statement of Disbursements of the House, as collated by LegiStorm, and CRS calculations. Data and change, 2023-2024, based on 2025 dollars per the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Half1, 2025. Data were collected in the manner described in CRS Report R44322, House Committee Staff Pay, Selected Positions, 2001-2023, and CRS Report R44323, Staff Pay, Selected Positions in House Member Offices, 2001-2023. Table 2. 2024 Median Pay, Selected Positions in House Committees, and Change, 2023-2024, Constant, 2025 Dollars Median 2024, 2025$ Change 2023-2024 Chief Counsel $194,982 1.14% Communications Director $168,440 -4.31% Counsel $147,428 7.02% Deputy...

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## Staff Pay, Selected Positions in Senators’ and Senate Committee Offices, FY2024

**By R. Eric Petersen; Jane M. Wright | Published 2025-07-22**

Levels of pay for congressional staff are a source of recurring questions among Members of Congress, congressional staff, and the public. There may be interest in congressional pay data for multiple reasons, including assessment of the costs of congressional operations, guidance in setting pay levels for staff in Member offices, or comparison of congressional staff pay levels with those of other federal government pay systems. This In Focus provides fiscal year 2024 pay data, provided in constant, 2025 dollars, for 24 staff position titles that are typically used in Senate Members’ offices, see Table 1, and 15 staff position titles that are used in Senate committees, see Table 2. Table 1. FY24 Median Pay, Selected Positions in Senators’ Offices, and Change, FY2023-FY2024, Constant, 2025 Dollars Median FY2024, 2025$ Change FY2023-FY2024 Administrative Director $153,942 -1.71% Caseworker $66,289 0.16% Chief of Staff $219,928 6.23% Communications Director $158,231 0.69% Constituent Services Director $102,936 3.12% Constituent Services Rep. $63,596 2.25% Deputy Chief of Staff $183,264 -3.58% Deputy Press Secretary $67,541 -0.73% Digital Director $88,801 14.97% Executive Assistant $72,770 -- Field Representative $70,954 -0.25% Legislative Aide $72,101 3.04% Legislative Assistant $89,860 0.59% Legislative Correspondent $60,195 -0.48% Legislative Director $167,164 -3.60% Press Assistant $61,353 1.33% Press Secretary $90,677 0.38% Regional Director $93,875 13.45% Regional Representative $72,164 3.99% Scheduler $94,939 1.85% Scheduling Director $122,808 -0.27% Speechwriter $93,996 1.64% Staff Assistant $55,891 -1.13% State Director $171,476 4.33% Source: Report of the Secretary of the Senate, as collated by LegiStorm, and CRS calculations. Data and change, 2023-2024, based on 2025 dollars per the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Half1, 2025. “—” indicates pay data are unavailable for FY2023. Data were collected in the manner described in CRS Report R44324, Staff Pay, Selected Positions in Senators’ Offices, FY2001-FY2023, and CRS Report R44325, Senate Committee Staff Pay, Selected...

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## Tax Provisions in P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 Reconciliation Law

**By Nicholas E. Buffie; Grant A. Driessen; Jane G. Gravelle; Mark P. Keightley; Donald J. Marples; Brendan McDermott; Anthony A. Cilluffo | Published 2025-07-29**

P.L. 119-21 (H.R. 1 in the 119th Congress, also referred to as the FY2025 reconciliation act or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) was enacted into law on July 4, 2025. It was developed and considered as part of the budget reconciliation process triggered by the adoption of H.Con.Res. 14, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for FY2025. Subtitles A and C of Title VII of the law contain tax provisions. Many of the tax provisions are modifications or extensions of provisions of P.L. 115-97, commonly known as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act or TCJA. Several provisions in the TCJA were set to expire at the end of 2025, or have changed within the past several years. These provisions include changes such as modified individual income tax rates, a higher standard deduction and child tax credit, suspension of personal exemptions, a deduction for pass-through business income, bonus depreciation for business investments, changes to how business research costs are recovered, and changes to the limitation on deducting interest on indebtedness by certain businesses. This report provides a section-by-section summary of the tax provisions in P.L. 119-21. Specifically, a set of tables describes each provision in the law, by subtitle and chapter, and provides references to related CRS products.

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## Financial Fraud and Scams: The Roles of Federal Law Enforcement and Financial Regulators

**By Karl E. Schneider; Kristin Finklea | Published 2025-08-26**

Reported losses associated with financial fraud and scams have been increasing, garnering attention from law enforcement, private industry, policymakers, and the general public. In 2024, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received 2.6 million reports of fraud and scams, including $12.5 billion in reported losses. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received 859,532 complaints in 2024, including $16.6 billion in reported losses (of which $13.7 billion were attributed to cyber-enabled fraud). These frauds and scams can deprive victims of their savings, deteriorate their overall financial health, and undermine public confidence in the financial system. A range of federal entities have roles in countering scams; this In Focus highlights the roles of federal law enforcement, financial regulators, and the FTC. Overview of Fraud and Scams Fraud is a broad term that includes activities such as false representations, dishonesty, and deceit. While the terms fraud and scam are often used interchangeably, a scam is often described as a type of fraud that involves tricking people into willingly providing money—or their personal information that can in turn be used to gain access to funds. Scams come in many forms, including romance scams, phishing/spoofing, nonpayment/nondelivery crimes, and investment and tech support scams. Certain types of fraud are not scams. For instance, selling counterfeit goods as authentic and making financial transactions using someone’s stolen personal information are fraudulent activities but not scams. Due to the nature of communications and financial transactions in today’s world, most fraud has a cyber or technology component; the FBI reports that almost 83% of financial losses reported to the IC3 in 2024 were cyber-enabled and often initiated through technological means, such as through social media or email. Similarly, an April 2025 Pew Research Center survey found that “73% of U.S. adults have experienced some kind...

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## Bills, Resolutions, Nominations, and Treaties: Characteristics and Examples of Use

**By Jane A. Hudiburg | Published 2025-08-27**

In each chamber of Congress, four forms of legislative measures may be introduced (or, in the case of resolutions, submitted) and acted on: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and resolutions of one house (“simple resolutions”). In addition, under the U.S. Constitution, the Senate acts on two forms of executive business: nominations and treaties. This report provides a comparison of the formal characteristics and uses of these six different types of business. When Congress seeks to pass a law, it uses a bill or joint resolution, which must be passed by both houses in identical form and then presented to the President for the executive’s approval or disapproval. To regulate its own internal affairs, or for other purposes where authority of law is not necessary, Congress uses a concurrent resolution (requiring adoption by both houses) or a simple resolution (requiring action only in the house of origin). Bills are commonly used for lawmaking purposes such as authorizing programs, appropriating funds, raising or lowering revenues, and other major policy enactments. Joint resolutions are used chiefly for secondary, symbolic, or declaratory legislation but also for such matters as continuing appropriations, declarations of war, and proposing constitutional amendments. Concurrent resolutions are used for matters affecting both chambers, such as recesses, adjournments, and the congressional budget resolution. Simple resolutions are used for adopting chamber rules, committee assignments, discipline of Members, expressions of sentiment, and other housekeeping purposes in each chamber. The Senate also considers nominations and treaties. This “executive business” is so called because it is transmitted by the President, who must obtain the advice and consent of the Senate before the nomination or treaty becomes effective.

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## RICO: A Sketch

**By Charles Doyle; Charles Doyle | Published 2025-08-22**

Congress enacted the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) provisions as part of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970. Despite its name and origin, RICO is not limited to “mobsters” or members of “organized crime” as those terms are popularly understood. Rather, it covers those activities that Congress felt characterized the conduct of organized crime, no matter who actually engages in them. RICO proscribes no conduct that is not otherwise criminal. Instead, under certain circumstances, it enlarges the civil and criminal consequences of a list of state and federal crimes. In simple terms, RICO condemns (1) any person (2) who (a) uses for or invests in, or (b) acquires or maintains an interest in, or (c) conducts or participates in the affairs of, or (d) conspires to invest in, acquire, or conduct the affairs of (3) an enterprise (4) which (a) engages in, or (b) whose activities affect, interstate or foreign commerce (5) through (a) the collection of an unlawful debt, or (b) the patterned commission of various state and federal crimes. Violations are punishable by (1) the forfeiture of any property acquired through a RICO violation and of any property interest in the enterprise involved in the violation; (2) imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or for life if one of the predicate offenses carries such a penalty; and/or (3) a fine of not more than the greater of twice the amount of gain or loss associated with the offense or $250,000 for individuals ($500,000 for organizations). RICO has generally survived constitutional challenges, although its forfeiture provisions are potentially constrained by the Excessive Fines Clause and perhaps a cruel and unusual punishment disproportionality analysis. RICO violations also subject the offender to civil liability. The courts may award anyone whose business or property is injured by a...

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## Supreme Court Upholds State AgeVerification Requirement for Certain Websites

**By Victoria L. Killion | Published 2025-08-28**

In 2004, the Supreme Court held that a federal law enacted to protect minors from sexually explicit online content was likely unconstitutional because it unduly burdened adults’ ability to share protected speech. On June 27, 2025, the Supreme Court decided Free Speech Coalition, Inc. (FSC) v. Paxton, upholding a Texas law that requires certain websites with sexually explicit content to verify their users’ ages. While recognizing the Texas law burdened adults’ speech rights, the Court applied a less-stringent First Amendment test than it used to evaluate the federal law in the 2004 case, signaling a potential shift in the Court’s free-speech cases and possibly paving the way for additional state or federal online age-verification requirements. Background The First Amendment’s Free Speech Clause limits the government’s ability to restrict or burden private persons’ distribution of, or access to, speech, but it does not prohibit all forms of regulation. For at least the last three decades, the Supreme Court has applied tiers of scrutiny to decide many free-speech challenges to state and federal laws, as a way of balancing the government’s regulatory interests with the regulated party’s free-speech rights. The two most common tiers in free-speech cases are strict scrutiny, which requires the government to prove that the law is the least speech-restrictive means of serving a compelling government interest, and intermediate scrutiny, which requires the government to prove that the law is not substantially broader than necessary to serve an important government interest. Although the tests sound similar, in practice strict scrutiny is very difficult to satisfy and intermediate scrutiny allows the government more leeway in how it chooses to regulate. Customarily, the Court has applied strict scrutiny when a law regulates speech based on its content—that is, its subject matter, topic, or substantive message. By contrast, when a law regulates...

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## United Nations Issues: Congressional Representatives to the UN General Assembly

**By Matthew C. Weed; Luisa Blanchfield | Published 2025-08-28**

The annual session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly is held at UN Headquarters in New York City. The President generally appoints one Democrat and one Republican to serve as U.S. representatives to the session, alternating each year between the House and Senate. During the 79th session, Senators Ben Cardin and Dan Sullivan served as the U.S. representatives. Two individuals from the House of Representatives would typically be expected to serve during the 80th session, which is scheduled to begin on September 9, 2025. Overview of the UN General Assembly The UN General Assembly is composed of 193 UN member states, including the United States. It is the primary deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations. Each country, including the United States, has one vote. A two-thirds majority vote is required for decisions related to key issues such as peace and security, admission of new members, and the budget. A simple majority vote applies for all other matters. The Assembly’s annual regular session opens in September and runs for one year. The main part of the session, from September to December, includes most of the work of the Assembly’s six committees. The annual meeting of heads of state and government, often referred to as the “general debate,” is held at the beginning of the Assembly session. Selected Members of Congress generally serve as U.S. representatives during this period. History of Congressional Representation The concept of congressional representation to the UN General Assembly emerged from extensive participation by both Senators and Representatives in the 1945 San Francisco Conference on International Organization, which led to the adoption of the UN Charter. The practice began at the first Assembly session in 1946, when Members of the Senate and House held positions as representatives and alternate representatives, respectively. Since that time,...

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## Federal Support for Law Enforcement Agencies’ Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

**By Nathan Kemper | Published 2025-08-19**

Since 1930, The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has been the curator of national crime data voluntarily reported through their Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. For decades, the FBI collected crime data from federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies (LEAs) through a Summary Reporting System (SRS) and disseminated these data in annual reports. More recently, the FBI has been transitioning LEAs to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which is intended to address certain limitations of the SRS format. On January 1, 2021, the FBI attempted to fully transition all LEAs from SRS to NIBRS; however, only about 66% of LEAs had made the necessary changes to be able to report 2020 crime data in the NIBRS format. As such, crime data from thousands of LEAs were not included in the 2020 data. In 2022, the FBI went back to accepting both SRS and NIBRS data submissions for the UCR program. Both types of data were accepted for the 2024 data released on August 5, 2025, though it is not clear how long SRS data will continue to be accepted. This In Focus describes why the FBI is transitioning from SRS to NIBRS, how the federal government has facilitated the transition, factors preventing some LEAs from making this transition, and issues for congressional consideration. Benefits of NIBRS The FBI made the NIBRS submission process available to law enforcement in the late 1980s to address several shortcomings of SRS. First, with NIBRS LEAs can report on a greater number of offenses compared to what they could with SRS (81 offenses vs. 30 offenses, respectively), allowing for greater specificity and range in crime reporting. For instance, whereas SRS only had the option to report larceny-theft, under NIBRS LEAs can report eight different types of theft (e.g., purse-snatching, theft from...

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## Who Pays for Long-Term Services and Supports?

**By Isobel Sorenson; Kirsten J. Colello | Published 2025-08-28**

Long-term services and supports (LTSS) encompass a wide range of health and social services, as well as other types of assistance (e.g., medical devices and technology), that are needed by individuals over an extended period of time. The need for LTSS affects persons of all ages and is generally measured by limitations in an individual’s ability to perform daily personal care activities such as eating, bathing, or dressing. The probability of needing LTSS increases with age. As the U.S. population aged 65 and older continues to increase in size, and individuals continue to live longer post-retirement, the demand for LTSS is expected to increase. Furthermore, advancements in medical and supportive care may allow younger persons with disabilities to live longer (see CRS In Focus IF10427, Overview of Long-Term Services and Supports). CRS analyzed data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) National Health Expenditure Accounts (NHEA) to examine personal health expenditures for LTSS by payer. This analysis includes Medicare post-acute care spending for home health and skilled nursing facility (SNF) care in an expanded definition of LTSS spending. This is due to NHEA data providing expenditures by care setting (e.g., home health, nursing home, residential care), which do not distinguish whether care provided in a given setting is for post-acute or LTSS. Using this definition, total U.S. spending on LTSS is a significant component of all personal health care spending. In 2023, an estimated $563.7 billion was spent on LTSS, representing 13.7% of the $4.1 trillion spent on personal health care. NHEA data for LTSS expenditures include payments made for services in nursing facilities and in residential care facilities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and substance abuse issues. LTSS spending also includes payments for services provided in an individual’s own home, such as...

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## Hemp Restrictions in FY2026 Agriculture Appropriations

**By Renée Johnson | Published 2025-08-28**

The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations approved FY2026 Agriculture appropriations bills that include provisions seeking to redefine the statutory definition of hemp to restrict the commercial production, sale, and distribution of certain hemp-derived cannabinoid products. House appropriators have expressed that the provision would close “the hemp loophole that has resulted in the proliferation of unregulated intoxicating hemp products.” During Senate committee markup, Senator Mitch McConnell expressed that the existing hemp definition has resulted in “an unintended consequence that has allowed for intoxicating hemp-derived synthetic products to be made and sold,” calling for changes to reflect “the original intent of the 2018 farm bill” by closing the loophole. The Senate-passed FY2026 Agriculture appropriations (H.R. 3944) included S.Amdt. 3070, which removed the provision relating to hemp. While further House action is pending, media reports indicate there are ongoing efforts to similarly strip the hemp provision from the House bill. Both the House and Senate committee-reported bills (H.R. 4121, §759, and S. 2256, §781, respectively) would amend the statutory definition to clarify the types of hemp products considered lawful under the Domestic Hemp Production Program (7 U.S.C. §§1639o-s) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The current statutory definition was established in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), which legalized hemp cultivation by excluding it from the definition of marijuana (21 U.S.C. §802(16)), thus removing federal regulation of hemp from the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. §§801 et seq.) and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) oversight. Congress also preserved the laws and regulations of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. §§301 et seq.) regarding hemp-derived products (7 U.S.C. §1639r(c)), leading FDA to assert that consumer products containing cannabis and cannabis-derived cannabinoids under its jurisdiction are “unlawful.” Both hemp and...

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## Overview of Long-Term Services and Supports

**By Kirsten J. Colello | Published 2025-08-28**

What Are Long-Term Services and Supports? Long-term services and supports (LTSS) refers to a broad range of health and health-related services and supports needed by individuals who lack the capacity for self-care due to physical, cognitive, or mental disabilities or conditions. Often an individual’s disability or condition results in the need for hands-on assistance or supervision over an extended period of time. An individual’s need for LTSS may change over time as his or her needs or conditions change. Over 17.6 million adults in the United States are in need of LTSS, and over half (51%) are older adults aged 65 and over. Most are cared for in their own homes with the assistance of informal providers, such as family members or friends. LTSS is different from acute care services or post-acute care services. In general, acute care services are health services provided for the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of a medical condition. Acute care services are often performed by licensed health care providers (e.g., physicians) in a clinical setting, such as a doctor’s office or a hospital. In general, post-acute care services are health services provided over a short term, typically after a hospitalization, to assist an individual with recovery from injury or illness and return to as normal a condition as possible. While LTSS may be offered in combination with acute care or post-acute care services, LTSS is not intended to treat or cure a medical condition. In contrast, LTSS provides assistance in maintaining or improving an optimal level of physical functioning and quality of life. LTSS includes a variety of services and supports that can be provided in either community-based or institutional settings. Examples of community-based LTSS include a home health aide assisting a frail older adult with daily personal care activities such as bathing or dressing,...

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## Data Centers and Their Energy Consumption: Frequently Asked Questions

**By Ling Zhu; Martin C. Offutt | Published 2025-08-26**

In its simplest form, a data center is a physical facility that houses and runs large computer systems. U.S. data center annual energy use in 2023 (not accounting for cryptocurrency) was approximately 176 terawatt-hours (TWh), approximately 4.4% of U.S. annual electricity consumption that year, according to a report by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. A data center typically contains multiple computer servers, data storage devices, and network equipment that can provide information technology (IT) infrastructure service for organizations to store, manage, process, and transmit large amounts of data. Some projections show that data center energy consumption could double or triple by 2028, accounting for up to 12% of U.S. electricity use. Roughly one-half or greater of the electric power demand of data centers stems directly from the operation of electronic IT equipment. Much of the rest is for cooling. The operation of the IT equipment raises the temperature of the ambient room air, necessitating a cooling strategy. Centralized cooling resources are of two types: (1) those moving chilled air through large duct work; or (2) those moving chilled water in a piped cooling loop that exchanges heat with the environment. An alternative to these centralized systems is room-scale air conditioners. One type, called computer room air conditioners (CRACs), is common in smaller data centers. Exchanging the heat with the environment can happen faster with methods that directly consume water. The source of the water can be the local water utility and can also be on-site reservoirs or other colocated water resources. A study by the International Energy Agency estimates for illustration that a 100-megawatt U.S. data center would consume roughly the same amount of water as 2,600 households, accounting only for direct water consumption and averaged across the various cooling strategies. Currently, there are no legally binding energy standards that apply...

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## U.S. Export Controls and China: Advanced Semiconductors

**By Karen M. Sutter | Published 2025-08-22**

Semiconductors are strategic and uniquely important electronic devices. They are fundamental to most industrial and national security activities and serve as essential building blocks of other technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI). Policymakers, including top leaders in the United States, the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China), and elsewhere, see semiconductors and AI technologies as critical to future economic competitiveness, national security, and global leadership. In 2014, the PRC government issued a national semiconductor industrial policy with the stated goal of establishing a world-leading semiconductor industry in all areas of the integrated circuit supply chain by 2030. To achieve its goals of technology leadership and independence, China has used government financing and certain policies to foster targeted foreign commercial ties across the semiconductor supply chain. Since 2018, the U.S. government has sought to strengthen U.S. export controls of advanced semiconductors with the stated intent of both restricting PRC access to the technologies and ability to produce advanced chips, and curtailing PRC access to related computing and AI applications. U.S. actions have also sought to sustain U.S. leadership in advanced chips, related parts of the semiconductor supply chain, and computing and AI applications, while slowing China’s development of competitive capabilities. U.S. actions have been grounded in concerns about PRC efforts to build an indigenous, self-sufficient, and secure and controllable semiconductor ecosystem; and PRC military-civil fusion policies that seek to use commercial advancements in semiconductors, AI, and other technologies for military uses. Some analysts have noted that before 2018, some U.S. controls and licensing policies vis-a-vis China allowed some U.S. firms across the supply chain to contribute to the development of China’s semiconductor industry. U.S. efforts to enhance controls have restricted some advanced technologies and activities from China. Other parts of the semiconductor supply chain remain open to China. Congress and...

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## Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief

**By Ida A. Brudnick | Published 2025-08-28**

This report provides basic information on congressional salaries and allowances. First, the report briefly summarizes the current salary of Members of Congress; limits or prohibitions on their outside earned income, honoraria, and tax deductions; options for life and health insurance; and retirement benefits. Second, the report provides information on allowances available to Representatives and Senators to support them in their official and representational duties. These allowances cover official office expenses, including staff, mail, travel between a Member’s district or state and Washington, DC, equipment, and other goods and services. Although the House and Senate allowances are structured differently, both are determined by formulas based on variables from the district or state (e.g., distance from Washington, DC). Third, the report lists the salaries of Members of Congress and salary limits for House and Senate staff. The most recent laws that have changed benefits for Members of Congress include the following: the implementation of P.L. 111-148, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, changed the available health care options for Members of Congress and certain staff from the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) to health plans offered through health care exchanges established by the act; and P.L. 115-97, the 2017 tax revision, eliminated the tax deduction of up to $3,000 for living expenses incurred by Members of Congress. Further information on salaries of Members of Congress may be found in CRS Report 97-1011, Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables, by Ida A. Brudnick. Additional information on other topics may be found in reports referenced throughout.

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## U.S. Court of International Trade: Background, Judgeships, and Caseload Statistics

**By Barry J. McMillion | Published 2025-07-17**

Background of the Court In 1980, with the passage of the Customs Courts Act, Congress reorganized the U.S. Customs Court as the U.S. Court of International Trade. The judges serving on the Customs Court were reassigned to the new court, “the name of which signified its judicial functions and its expanded jurisdiction over cases related to trade.” Former Senator Dennis DeConcini, a sponsor of the 1980 act, stated that the “legislation will offer the international trade community, as well as domestic interests, consumer groups, labor organizations, and other concerned citizens, a vastly improved forum for judicial review of administrative actions of government agencies dealing with importations.” The subject matter jurisdiction of the court is determined by the Constitution and specific laws enacted by Congress. Cases heard before the court include disputes over import procedures, customs regulations, tariffs, and the application of trade agreements. More specifically, examples of the types of cases heard by the court include those related to antidumping and countervailing duties (which can involve foreign companies selling goods at prices below “normal value”), the classification and valuation of imported merchandise, and actions to recover unpaid customs duties and civil penalties. The geographic jurisdiction of the court is national in scope, with judges of the court assigned by the chief judge, as needed, to preside at trials at any location within the United States (the court also is authorized to hold hearings in foreign countries). Most cases are assigned to a single judge, but when “a case involves the constitutionality of an act of Congress, a Presidential proclamation, or an Executive order, or otherwise has broad and significant implications, the chief judge may assign the case to a three-judge panel.” A three-judge panel of the court, for example, recently issued a ruling in a case related to tariffs imposed...

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## The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS): Overview and 2024 Findings

**By Karen L. Shanton | Published 2025-07-08**

The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) is a biennial survey of state and local officials about the administration of federal elections. The survey is conducted for each regular federal election cycle by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which reports its findings to Congress and the public the year after the election. The EAVS is not the federal government’s only election data collection effort—the U.S. Census Bureau also surveys individuals about their voting and registration behavior, for example—but it is the most comprehensive regular survey of the state and local jurisdictions that oversee U.S. elections. It has the potential to offer insight into how, and how well, states and localities are running elections, so it may be useful to Members who are interested in identifying either possible problems with the conduct of elections or potential models for improving election administration. Overview of the EAVS Versions of the EAVS date back two decades, to the first regular federal election cycle after the creation of the EAC by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA; 52 U.S.C. §§20901-21145). The current iteration of the survey contains six sections, with questions about voter registration, military and overseas voting, and a range of other election administration topics (see Table 1 for details). The EAVS has been accompanied since 2008 by another survey—introduced with open-ended questions as the Statutory Overview and redesigned with closed-ended questions and renamed the Election Administration Policy Survey (Policy Survey) for 2018—that asks about states’ elections policies. Sections A and B of the EAVS are conducted to meet specific reporting requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA; 52 U.S.C. §§20501-20511), as amended, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (UOCAVA; 52 U.S.C. §§20301-20311), as amended, respectively. The Policy Survey and Sections C-F of...

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## United States v. Ahlgren: A Study in Lost Cryptocurrency Tax Revenue

**By Milan N. Ball | Published 2025-08-27**

On December 12, 2024, in United States v. Ahlgren, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas sentenced Frank Richard Ahlgren to 24 months in prison. The Department of Justice described the case as the “first criminal tax evasion prosecution centered solely on cryptocurrency.” Ahlgren, an early investor in Bitcoin, was charged in a seven-count indictment with filing false tax returns, based on the underreporting of cryptocurrency gains, and structuring cash deposits to evade financial institutions’ reporting requirements for transactions in currency over $10,000. Ahlgren pleaded guilty to one count of “willfully making and subscribing a false [2017] tax return in violation of [Internal Revenue Code (IRC)] § 7206(1).” According to the sentencing memorandum, in 2017, Ahlgren sold Bitcoin for about 10 times the price that he paid for it in 2015. Ahlgren obscured his Bitcoin transactions on the blockchain by using mixers and peer-to-peer exchanges, hid his earnings from Bitcoin by structuring cash deposits, and concealed his gains from Bitcoin sales by providing false information to his tax preparer. The circumstances surrounding the Ahlgren case highlight the challenges the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) faces in relying on self-reported income from digital asset transactions to determine taxable income. In July 2025, Congress passed the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins (GENIUS) Act, P.L. 119-27, which directs the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury to study and seek public comment on ways to improve the detection of illicit activity involving digital assets. This Legal Sidebar provides background on the taxation of Bitcoin, summarizes Ahlgren, and concludes with considerations for Congress related to taxpayers who use digital assets to evade taxes and third-party information reporting requirements. Taxation of Bitcoin On March 26, 2014, the IRS announced, in IRS Notice 2014-21, that “virtual currency” would be treated like...

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## Offshore Wind Energy Development: Legal Framework

**By Adam Vann | Published 2025-08-28**

Technological advancement, financial incentives, and policy concerns have driven a global expansion in the development of renewable energy resources. Wind energy, in particular, is often cited as one of the fastest-growing commercial energy sources in the world. Currently, most U.S. wind energy production capacity is based on land. A number of offshore projects have been proposed and are at various stages of the regulatory and commercial process. However, a recent executive order temporarily withdrew the entire U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) from wind energy leasing and disposition, leaving the status of those and other potential offshore wind power projects in question. The United States may permit and regulate offshore wind energy development within the areas under its jurisdiction. The federal government and coastal states each have roles in the permitting process, and those roles depend on whether the project is located in state or federal waters. Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct; P.L. 109-58) amended the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) to address previous uncertainties regarding offshore wind projects. Under the EPAct, the Secretary of the Interior has ultimate authority over offshore wind energy development. The statutory authority granted by Section 388 is administered by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), an agency within the Department of the Interior. Since the passage of EPAct, BOEM has promulgated rules and guidelines governing the permitting and operation of offshore wind facilities. In January 2023, BOEM issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that would establish a leasing system for offshore renewable projects similar to the one in place for offshore oil and gas leasing. In addition, several federal agencies have roles to play in permitting development and operation activities.

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## Illicit Fentanyl and Mexico’s Role

**By Clare Ribando Seelke; Liana W. Rosen; Shelby B. Senger | Published 2025-08-26**

For over a decade, the synthetic opioid fentanyl has been a key driver of the opioid crisis in the United States. Countering the international trafficking of fentanyl and its analogues and precursor chemicals has become a priority for U.S. policymakers. Since approximately 2019, Mexico has reportedly replaced the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China) as the main source of U.S.-bound illicit fentanyl. As a major production and transit country for other U.S.-destined illicit drugs, Mexico has long been a key collaborator in U.S. drug control policy. With Mexican criminal groups becoming the primary producers of illicit fentanyl, U.S. counternarcotics policy shifted to focus mainly on addressing synthetic opioid production, the trafficking and diversion of precursor chemicals, and dismantling organized criminal groups engaged in such activities. U.S. policy continues to emphasize law enforcement cooperation to target key organized crime figures in Mexico and to combat crimes such as arms trafficking and money laundering, which often facilitate the trafficking of synthetic opioids. The Trump Administration has concentrated on achieving discrete, tactical objectives to counter drug trafficking from Mexico. The Administration has used tariffs and tariff threats, sanctions, and threats of potential U.S. military action against criminal groups to pressure the Mexican government to do more to combat fentanyl. The 119th Congress has enacted legislation to stiffen penalties for fentanyl trafficking (S. 331/P.L. 119-26) and may consider other measures. Congress may assess the adequacy of U.S., Mexican, and bilateral efforts to address fentanyl trafficking and shape future efforts through legislation, including FY2026 appropriations measures. Background Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid that has been used medically as a painkiller since it was first synthesized in 1959. Due to fentanyl’s potential for abuse and addiction, the United Nations (UN) placed it under international control in 1964. Domestically, fentanyl is regulated by the Drug...

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## Unemployment Insurance: Legislative Issues in the 119th Congress

**By Katelin P. Isaacs; Julie M. Whittaker | Published 2025-08-25**

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) system is a joint federal-state partnership that consists of two types of benefits: (1) permanently authorized programs, including the Unemployment Compensation (UC) and Extended Benefit (EB) programs; and (2) temporary federal UI benefits created by congressional action to supplement the UC and EB programs during recessions. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provides oversight of state UC and EB programs and the state administration of federal UI benefits. Although there are broad requirements under federal law regarding UC benefits and financing, the program specifics are set under each state’s laws, resulting in 53 different UC programs operated in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. States operate their own UC and EB programs and administer any temporary federal UI benefits. State UC programs determine the weekly benefit amount and the number of weeks of UC available to unemployed workers. Most states provide up to 26 weeks of UC to eligible individuals. EB payment amounts and durations are based on each state’s UC program rules, with additional federal requirements specified in federal law. The UI system’s two primary objectives are to provide temporary and partial wage replacement to involuntarily unemployed workers and to stabilize the economy during recessions. The UC program, created under the Social Security Act of 1935, provides unemployment benefits to eligible individuals who become involuntarily unemployed for economic reasons and meet state-established eligibility rules. To augment the UC program, federal law includes an automatic expansion of the regular UC benefit with the EB program, which was established by the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970 (EUCA; P.L. 91-373). EB may provide up to an additional 13 or 20 weeks of benefits once regular UC benefits are exhausted, depending on worker eligibility, state law, additional federal eligibility...

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## Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables

**By Ida A. Brudnick | Published 2025-08-26**

Congress is required by Article I, Section 6, of the Constitution to determine its own pay. In the past, Congress periodically enacted specific legislation to alter its pay; the last time this occurred affected pay in 1991. More recently, pay has been determined pursuant to laws establishing formulas for automatic adjustments. The Ethics Reform Act of 1989 established the current automatic annual adjustment formula, which is based on changes in private sector wages as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The adjustment is automatic unless denied statutorily, although the percentage may not exceed the percentage base pay increase for General Schedule (GS) employees. Member pay has since been frozen in two ways: (1) directly, through legislation that freezes salaries for Members but not for other federal employees, and (2) indirectly, through broader pay freeze legislation that covers Members and other specified categories of federal employees. Members of Congress last received a pay adjustment in January 2009. At that time, their salary was increased 2.8%, to $174,000. Subsequent adjustments were denied by P.L. 111-8 (enacted March 11, 2009), P.L. 111-165 (May 14, 2010), P.L. 111-322 (December 22, 2010), P.L. 112-175 (September 28, 2012), P.L. 112-240 (January 2, 2013), P.L. 113-46 (October 17, 2013), P.L. 113-235 (December 16, 2014), P.L. 114-113 (December 18, 2015), P.L. 114-254 (December 10, 2016), P.L. 115-141 (March 23, 2018), P.L. 115-244 (September 21, 2018), P.L. 116-94 (December 20, 2019), P.L. 116-260 (December 27, 2020), P.L. 117-103 (March 15, 2022), P.L. 117-328 (December 29, 2022), P.L. 118-47 (March 23, 2024), and P.L. 119-4 (March 15, 2025). The maximum potential 2026 Member pay adjustment is 3.2% (+$5,600). The House-reported (H.R. 4249, §213), Senate-passed (H.R. 3944, as amended by S.Amdt. 3412, §211) and Senate-reported (S. 2257, §211) versions of the FY2026 legislative branch appropriations bill all include a provision...

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## Advances in DNA Analysis: Fourth Amendment Implications

**By Peter G. Berris | Published 2025-07-11**

Law enforcement has used deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, as an investigative tool for decades. DNA is “the fundamental building block for an individual’s entire genetic makeup” and may be “extracted from many sources, such as hair, bone, teeth, saliva, and blood.” Investigators routinely compare DNA from known suspects with DNA recovered from crime scenes or victims, or look for matches between crime scene DNA and law enforcement databases of offender DNA profiles. Federal courts, including the Supreme Court, have generally upheld statutory DNA identification regimes against Fourth Amendment challenges. This Sidebar provides legal background on DNA identification and the Fourth Amendment, with particular emphasis on the 2013 Supreme Court case Maryland v. King. It then examines selected Fourth Amendment issues, including lingering questions from King that could potentially be relevant to a newer DNA investigative technique, which the Department of Justice (DOJ) has called forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis and searching (sometimes described as investigative genetic genealogy or forensic genetic genealogy). The Sidebar concludes with congressional considerations. Maryland v. King: the Fourth Amendment and DNA Identification The Fourth Amendment imposes limits on searches and seizures by the government. Courts have determined that a Fourth Amendment search occurs if “the Government obtains information by physically intruding on a constitutionally protected area” or “when the government violates a subjective expectation of privacy that society recognizes as reasonable.” If a law enforcement activity qualifies as a search or seizure, then the Fourth Amendment requires that it must be reasonable, which ordinarily means that the search or seizure must be conducted pursuant to a warrant supported by probable cause, with some exceptions. Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) A prominent use of DNA by law enforcement is comparing biological material believed to be “deposited by a putative perpetrator” and “collected from a crime scene, a...

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## Private Sector: Accounting and Auditing Regulatory Structure

**By Raj Gnanarajah | Published 2025-08-26**

In the United States, accounting and auditing standards are promulgated and regulated by various federal, state, and self-regulatory agencies. Accounting and auditing standards are also influenced by practitioners from businesses, nonprofits, and government entities (federal, state, and local). Many of the foundational accounting and auditing concepts are similar across all three sectors. Congress has allowed financial accounting and auditing practitioners in the private sector to remain largely self-regulated while retaining oversight responsibility. At times, Congress has sought to achieve specific accounting- and auditing-based policy objectives by enacting legislation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-204) and Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act (HFCAA, P.L. 116-222). The accounting and auditing standards created for publicly traded companies (private sector) are subject to oversight by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Congress has oversight over the SEC and annually appropriates its funding. Throughout its history, the SEC has relied on self-regulatory organizations (SROs) or similar entities to establish financial reporting standards for the private sector known as Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Currently, the SEC recognizes the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) as the designated authority for establishing GAAP. Sarbanes-Oxley created the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) to oversee the auditing profession for the private sector. The SEC has oversight responsibility over FASB and PCAOB. Some of the ongoing issues that could be of interest to Congress is the accounting treatment of crypto assets. In March 2022, the SEC issued Staff Accounting Bulletin (SAB) 121 to provide guidance for how custodians of crypto assets should record and measure the value of assets they held on behalf of others. One aspect of SAB 121 that surfaced a range of perspectives was its requirement of a crypto asset custodian to record a liability and corresponding asset on its balance sheet. Subsequently, in January...

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## Suspension of the Rules: House Practice in the 118th Congress (2023-2024)

**By Jane A. Hudiburg | Published 2025-08-27**

Suspension of the rules is the most commonly used procedure to call up measures on the floor of the House of Representatives. As the name suggests, the procedure allows the House to suspend its standing and statutory rules in order to consider broadly supported legislation in an expedited manner. More specifically, the House temporarily sets aside its rules that govern the raising and consideration of measures and assumes a new set of constraints particular to the suspension procedure. The suspension of the rules procedure has several parliamentary advantages: (1) it allows non-privileged measures to be raised on the House floor without the need for a special rule, (2) it enables the consideration of a measure that would otherwise be subject to a point of order, and (3) it streamlines floor action by limiting debate and prohibiting floor amendments. Given these features, as well as the required two-thirds supermajority vote for passage, suspension motions are generally used to process less controversial legislation. In the 118th Congress (2023-2024), measures considered under suspension made up 66% of the bills and resolutions that received floor action in the House (681 out of 1,032 measures). The majority of suspension measures were House bills (80%), followed by Senate bills (14%), House resolutions (5%), and House concurrent resolutions (1%). The measures covered a variety of policy areas but most often addressed government operations, such as the designation of federal facilities or amending administrative policies. However, suspension procedure also governed the consideration of some major appropriations bills, which are commonly considered pursuant to a special rule. Most suspension measures are referred to at least one House committee before their consideration on the floor. The House Committee on Oversight and Accountability served as the committee of primary jurisdiction for the most suspension measures in the 118th Congress. Additional committees—such...

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## FISA Section 702 and the 2024 Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act

**By Andreas Kuersten | Published 2025-07-08**

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) provides a legal framework under which the U.S. government can conduct electronic surveillance of non-U.S. persons abroad. This surveillance is authorized programmatically rather than individually. That is, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court authorizes the government to carry out this surveillance within approved parameters for up to one year at a time. The government does not have to seek court authorization for every individual it targets. These authorizations also address the procedures pursuant to which the government can search (i.e., query) information collected under Section 702. Congress enacted Section 702 in 2008 with an automatic repeal date (i.e., a sunset date). Since then, Congress has included a sunset date each time it has reauthorized the section. The last time Congress reauthorized Section 702 was on April 20, 2024, via the Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act (RISAA), which provides that the section will sunset on April 20, 2026. Section 702 has generated significant debate since its inception. This debate tends to intensify as the sunset dates approach, and reauthorizations have historically been the means by which Congress has amended the section. In the run-up to Section 702’s previous sunset date and the RISAA’s enactment, government and private actors shared with Congress a number of concerns about the statute, including the government querying Section 702 data using U.S.-person search terms without warrants, a lack of data on “incidental collection” (i.e., the collection of U.S.-person communications in the course of targeting non-U.S. persons for surveillance under Section 702), and a lack of additional approval procedures for queries potentially targeting politically disfavored individuals or groups. The RISAA extensively amended Section 702, as well as other portions of FISA relevant to Section 702. For example, Congress expanded the definition of foreign intelligence information to include information...

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## Defense Primer: International Armaments Cooperation

**By Christina L. Arabia; Alexandra G. Neenan; Luke A. Nicastro | Published 2023-06-09**

What is International Armaments Cooperation? International armaments cooperation (IAC) refers to an array of research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E), procurement, and sustainment partnerships between the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and foreign governments, militaries, or commercial entities. IAC encompasses a broad array of activities, ranging from the exchange of basic RDT&E information to multi-billion dollar joint procurement programs. DOD considers IAC to be a form of security cooperation intended to accomplish operational, economic, technological, political, and industrial objectives. Legal and Policy Framework Statutory Authorities The statutory authorities for IAC activities are contained within Titles 10 and 22 of the U.S. Code. Title 10, Chapter 138 contains provisions that authorize: international cross-servicing agreements; international RDT&E agreements and projects; international acquisition agreements and projects; international logistic support agreements; acceptance of foreign financial contributions for cooperative projects; and international test facility agreements. Title 22, Chapter 39 contains provisions that authorize the President to establish international cooperative projects and enter into international loan agreements for research and development purposes. IAC Governance and Stakeholders DOD Directive 5132.03 establishes policy and responsibilities relating to security cooperation activities. The Undersecretary of Defense for Policy is designated as the principal staff assistant to the Defense Secretary for overall security cooperation policy and oversight. The Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD (A&S)) is responsible for “establish[ing] and maintain[ing] policies for the effective development of international acquisition, technology, and logistics programs, including international armaments cooperation.” The secretaries of the military departments (MILDEPS) are responsible for “conduct[ing] international armaments cooperation with eligible allied and partner nations.” Each MILDEP has a designated office responsible for oversight of IAC projects. For the Department of the Army, this is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Defense Exports and Cooperation (DASA DE&C); for the Department of the Navy, this is...

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## FY2024 National Security Supplemental Funding: Defense Appropriations

**By Cameron M. Keys; Luke A. Nicastro | Published 2024-04-25**

Background On October 20, 2023, the Biden Administration submitted to Congress a request for FY2024 emergency supplemental appropriations to address “key national security priorities.” President Biden characterized the request as a response to Hamas’ terrorist attacks against Israel and the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, and asked for approximately $58.6 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DOD), as well as funds for other executive departments and agencies (e.g., the Departments of State and Homeland Security). On February 13, 2024, the Senate passed the National Security Act, 2024 (H.R. 815), which would have, among other things, provided approximately $67.3 billion in budget authority to DOD for purposes relating to Ukraine, Israel, and the submarine industrial base. The House did not take up this bill, as passed by the Senate. On April 20, 2024, the House passed a series of bills—including the Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 (H.R. 8034), the Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 (H.R. 8035), and the Indo-Pacific Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 (H.R. 8036)—that included approximately $67.3 billion in DOD budget authority for purposes relating to Israel, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific. On April 23, 2024, the Senate approved these measures as a consolidated bill (H.R. 815), and on April 24, 2024, President Biden signed this bill into law as P.L. 118-50. The enacted appropriations included funding for military personnel (MILPERS); operation and maintenance (O&M); research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E); procurement; and military construction (MILCON) accounts, as well as for Defense Production Act of 1950 (DPA) purchases. P.L. 118-50 also made appropriations for non-defense accounts, and included policy provisions—such as the increase of Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA; 22 U.S.C. §2318) from $100 million to $7.8 billion for FY2024—relevant to defense issues. Table 1 provides information on requested, proposed, and enacted supplemental FY2024 DOD appropriations....

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## The Defense Production Act of 1950: History, Authorities, and Considerations for Congress

**By Luke A. Nicastro; Alexandra G. Neenan | Published 2023-10-06**

The Defense Production Act (DPA) of 1950 (P.L. 81-774, 50 U.S.C. §§4501 et seq.), as amended, confers upon the President a broad set of authorities to influence domestic industry in the interest of national defense. The authorities can be used across the federal government to shape the domestic industrial base so that, when called upon, it is capable of providing essential materials and goods needed for the national defense. Though initially passed in response to the Korean War, the DPA is historically based on the War Powers Acts of World War II. Gradually, Congress has expanded the term national defense, as defined in the DPA. Based on this definition, the scope of DPA authorities now extends beyond shaping U.S. military preparedness and capabilities, as the authorities may also be used to enhance and support domestic preparedness, response, and recovery from natural hazards, terrorist attacks, and other national emergencies. Current DPA authorities include Title I: Priorities and Allocations, which allows the President to require persons (including businesses and corporations) to prioritize and accept contracts for materials and services as necessary to promote the national defense. Title III: Expansion of Productive Capacity and Supply, which allows the President to incentivize the domestic industrial base to expand the production and supply of critical materials and goods. Authorized incentives include loans, loan guarantees, direct purchases and purchase commitments, and the authority to procure and install equipment in private industrial facilities. Title VII: General Provisions, which includes key definitions for the DPA and several distinct authorities, including the authority to establish voluntary agreements with private industry; the authority to block proposed or pending foreign corporate mergers, acquisitions, or takeovers that threaten national security; and the authority to employ persons of outstanding experience and ability and to establish a volunteer pool of industry executives who could...

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## Transfer of Defense Articles: U.S. Sale and Export of U.S.-Made Arms to Foreign Entities

**By Christina L. Arabia; Nathan J. Lucas; Michael J. Vassalotti | Published 2023-03-23**

An extensive set of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures govern the sale and export of U.S.-origin weapons to foreign countries (“defense articles and defense services,” officially). Congress has authorized such sales under two laws: The Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, 22 U.S.C. §2151, et seq. The Arms Export Control Act (AECA) of 1976, 22 U.S.C. §2751, et seq. The FAA and AECA govern all transfers of U.S.-origin defense articles and services, whether they are commercial sales, government-to-government sales, or provided with U.S.-appropriated funds through security assistance/security cooperation programs. These transfers can occur under Title 22 (Foreign Relations) or Title 10 (Armed Services) authorities. Arms sold or transferred under these authorities are regulated by the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the U.S. Munitions List (USML), which are located in Title 22, Parts 120-130 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.). The two main methods for the sale and export of U.S.-made weapons under these authorities are the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) licenses. Some other arms sales occur from current Department of Defense (DOD) stocks through Excess Defense Articles (EDA) provisions. For FMS, the U.S. government procures defense articles as an intermediary for international partners’ acquisition of defense articles and defense services, which allows partners to benefit from U.S. DOD technical and operational expertise, procurement infrastructure, and purchasing practices. For DCS, registered U.S. firms may sell defense articles directly to international partners. The U.S. government is not party to the arms agreement, but defense firms must still apply for an export license from the State Department. In some cases where U.S. firms have entered into international partnerships to produce some major weapons systems, comprehensive export regulations under 22 C.F.R. 126.14 are intended to allow exports and technical data for those systems without having...

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## Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2023: Overview and Selected Issues

**By Pat Towell; Cameron M. Keys | Published 2024-01-08**

The annual Department of Defense appropriations act provides discretionary funding for nearly all military-related activities of the Department of Defense (DOD) except the construction of facilities and the provision of family housing for authorized military personnel, which typically are funded in separate appropriations legislation. The Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2023, enacted as Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), provides $788.5 billion in discretionary budget authority, which amounts to $36.0 billion (4.8%) more than the Biden Administration’s $752.4 billion request for programs covered by the act. Compared to the corresponding funding legislation for FY2022, the FY2023 bill provides an increase of $68.9 billion (9.6%) for defense programs (see table below). Neither the House nor the Senate passed a freestanding FY2023 defense appropriations bill. The House Appropriations Committee (HAC), after 18 Subcommittee on Defense hearings from March to May 2022, voted 32-26 on June 22, 2022, to introduce such a bill (H.R. 8236) with an accompanying report (H.Rept. 117-388) comparing committee funding decisions to DOD’s requested amounts. Upon introduction, the House took no further action on that bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee (SAC) held eight Subcommittee on Defense (SAC-D) hearing sessions from March to June 2022. Concurrent with publication of the SAC chairman’s mark on the committee’s website, SAC-D Chairman Senator Jon Tester introduced an FY2023 defense appropriations bill (S. 4663) on July 28, 2022, on which neither the full Appropriations Committee nor the Senate took further action. Bicameral, bipartisan negotiations produced a final version of the defense appropriations bill, which, along with the texts of 11 other appropriations bills, was substituted for the text of H.R. 2617 by process of amendment. The defense bill was designated as Division C of the resulting Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, which the Senate passed on December 22, 2022, by a...

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## Rights-of-Way for Access On or Through Tribal Lands

**By Mariel J. Murray; Benjamin M. Barczewski | Published 2025-08-26**

Congress has constitutional authority over issues relating to federally recognized Tribes (hereinafter, Tribes), which it has used to regulate access on and through tribal lands. In addition, the federal government has a federal trust responsibility to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and water resources on behalf of Tribes and tribal citizens (e.g., Seminole Nation v. United States, 316 U.S. 286, 296-297 (1942)). Pursuant to these mandates, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) within the Department of the Interior (DOI) oversees the process for granting rights-of-way (ROWs) on or through tribal lands. An ROW is a kind of easement, or nonpossessory legal right to use or control land for a particular purpose. An ROW provides a right to the easement holder to pass through property owned by another—in this case, tribal land. This CRS product discusses BIA’s ROW process and selected issues for Congress. Overview of Tribal Lands The federal trust responsibility and various statutes make tribal lands a unique form of property in the American legal system. Each Tribe’s geographic location and history with the United States may impact current tribal land holdings. Many Tribes have reservations, which include lands reserved for a Tribe (or multiple Tribes) by treaty, statute, or other agreement. For tribally owned land within reservations, or in certain cases an area of land constituting the Tribe’s former reservation as defined by the Secretary of the Interior (25 C.F.R. §151.2), Tribes generally have the ability to decide how those lands are used. Tribal reservations may include a mix of tribal land types, such as trust lands, which are lands or interests in land that are held in trust by the federal government (BIA holds title to the land) for the benefit of a Tribe or tribal citizen. Trust lands generally may not be alienated or encumbered...

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## Proposed Transfer of Space Aligned National Guard Units

**By Sarah Gee; Jennifer DiMascio | Published 2024-05-14**

On March 29, 2024, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) submitted a legislative proposal (LP480) asking Congress to allow transfer of “covered space functions” of the Air National Guard (ANG) to the U.S. Space Force (USSF) and waive 32 U.S.C. §104(c) and 10 U.S.C. §18238, which generally require state governors to approve changes in the organization, allotment, relocation, or withdraw of National Guard units within their states. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) (the federal agency responsible for administration of the National Guard), governors from 50 states and 5 U.S. territories, and others oppose LP480. Congress may consider whether to accept, reject, or modify LP480 as part of the FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Background The FY2020 NDAA, P.L. 116-92, Subtitle D, established USSF as an armed service within the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Upon USSF establishment in 2019, space functions of the Air Force, and the Departments of the Army and Navy, transferred to the USSF. Some space functions remained in the Air National Guard (ANG). Congress has not enacted legislation to transfer space functions from the ANG to the USSF or to establish a Space National Guard. FY2024 NDAA, Section 924, directed the Secretary of Defense to study “the feasibility and advisability of transferring the space components of the Air National Guard to the Space Force,” and address three courses of action (1) maintaining the current model with ANG units and personnel performing space functions; (2) transferring ANG space functions, including units and personnel, to the USSF; and (3) establishing a Space National Guard. The resulting study, dated April 2024, recommends “transfer of covered space functions from the ANG to the Space Force,” including nine units totaling 578 positions in six states (see Table 1). Table 1. DAF Recommended Air National Guard Units for Space...

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## Automated License Plate Readers: Background and Legal Issues

**By Peter G. Berris; Kristin Finklea; Dave S. Sidhu | Published 2025-07-21**

Automated license plate readers (ALPRs) are camera systems that capture the license plate data of vehicles, along with related information. They are generally available in fixed and mobile formats. Fixed ALPR systems are mounted in specific locations, often using existing infrastructure such as light poles, traffic lights, buildings, or bridges. Mobile ALPR systems are frequently mounted on police vehicles or privately contracted vehicles. Although details vary by system and jurisdiction, information obtained from ALPR systems may be included in certain databases—whether maintained by public or private entities—that are accessible or searchable by law enforcement. Law enforcement agencies use ALPRs for a variety of proactive and reactive policing purposes, including to gather intelligence and evidence, help identify potential suspects, and facilitate crime scene analysis. Law enforcement use of ALPRs raises a range of questions for policymakers and the public. For instance, one consideration is how ALPR use may, while aiding criminal investigations, potentially infringe upon individuals’ privacy and civil liberties—in particular, Fourth Amendment protections from unreasonable searches and seizures. In general, courts have found that “mere observation” of an object in plain view does not implicate the Fourth Amendment, which suggests that law enforcement’s initial reading of a license plate using an ALPR is ordinarily not a Fourth Amendment search absent additional circumstances. The ALPR caselaw typically focuses instead on the related question of whether law enforcement queries of certain databases containing ALPR information amount to a Fourth Amendment search. No federal appellate court has decided that issue, although one circuit court judge discussed it in a concurrence. A number of federal trial courts and some state courts have upheld law enforcement access to such databases, while cautioning that warrantless surveillance through ALPRs could violate the Fourth Amendment in some circumstances. This In Focus provides an overview of ALPRs, select Fourth...

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## First Amendment: Government Retaliation for Protected Expression

**By Eric N. Holmes | Published 2025-07-10**

The Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech.” The clause applies to any government action, whether federal, state, or local. Individuals may be able to challenge violations of their free speech rights in a variety of ways. One basis for such a challenge may be that an official took adverse action against an individual in response to the individual engaging in protected speech—often known as a First Amendment retaliation claim. First Amendment retaliation may arise in a variety of circumstances. For example, during its 2023 term, the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case involving an alleged retaliatory arrest of a former city councilmember. In 2025, law firms have raised First Amendment retaliation claims against the Trump Administration based on the President’s executive orders aimed at specific firms. This Legal Sidebar first provides an overview of the elements of First Amendment retaliation. Although lower courts vary in their precise formulation of these elements, the Supreme Court has identified three general considerations. To demonstrate First Amendment retaliation, an individual must show that (1) they have engaged in expression protected by the First Amendment, (2) a government official took an adverse action against the individual, and (3) the individual’s protected expression motivated the official to take the adverse action. The Legal Sidebar concludes with a brief discussion of the relief available for First Amendment retaliation claims. Protected Expression Plaintiffs claiming First Amendment retaliation must first demonstrate that they have engaged in expression subject to the protection of the First Amendment’s Free Speech Clause. The written and spoken word are paradigmatic examples of “speech” protected by the First Amendment. As discussed in this essay in the Constitution Annotated, the Free Speech Clause applies to a range of expressive conduct...

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## Electric Vehicle Technologies and Selected Policy Issues for the 119th Congress

**By Melissa N. Diaz | Published 2025-08-27**

Electric vehicles (EVs) remain a focus of transportation and energy policy in the United States. EVs—comprising hybrid-electric vehicles (HEVs), plug-in hybrid-electric vehicles (PHEVs), and battery-electric vehicles (BEVs)—are alternatives to conventional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles powered by petroleum-based fuels. EVs are part of a broader effort to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, decrease reliance on petroleum-based fuels, and promote domestic manufacturing. Light-duty EV sales have grown steadily since 2010, reaching 3.2 million units sold in 2024—approximately 20% of all U.S. light-duty vehicle sales. The deployment of PHEVs and BEVs, collectively referred to as plug-in electric vehicles, is closely linked to the availability of charging infrastructure. EV charging technologies are categorized into three charging levels, differentiated by the voltage of the electrical source: Level 1 (120 volts alternating current [AC]), Level 2 (240 volts AC), and direct current (DC) fast charging (Level 3). Different applications are available for residential, workplace, and public use. Public and private investment, including federal support through grant programs and tax incentives, has contributed to an expanding national network of EV charging stations. Continued expansion of access to charging infrastructure remains a key factor for future EV adoption. Federal policies supporting EVs and vehicle electrification have been shaped by laws such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) and the law commonly referred to as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA; P.L. 117-169). These laws have created or expanded programs and other incentives to support EV adoption, charging infrastructure deployment, and vehicle and infrastructure production. Key programs and incentives include the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program, Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Grants, and tax credits for purchases of new and used EVs, for installation of EV charging infrastructure, and for domestic production of EV components and critical minerals. During the 119th Congress, executive...

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## Defense Acquisition Reform: Executive and Legislative Branch Actions

**By Alexandra G. Neenan | Published 2025-08-26**

Background The Department of Defense (DOD) procures its weapon systems through the defense acquisition system (DAS), which typically determines the process by which DOD develops and buys goods and services from contractors. Over the past year, both the executive branch and Congress have introduced efforts to reform the DAS. Such efforts continue over a decade of DAS reform initiatives. While some analysts assert these initiatives have improved DOD acquisition processes, other analysts have argued that such acquisition reform efforts have generally yielded limited results, due in large part to DOD’s bureaucracy and processes. Title 10, Subtitle A, Part V, “Acquisition,” of the U.S. Code, addresses DOD-specific procurement policy. Title 10 also designates the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) as the “chief acquisition and sustainment officer of the [DOD] with the mission of delivering and sustaining timely, cost-effective capabilities for the armed forces (and the Department).” The Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) implements this statute. DOD Directive (DODD) 5000.01, “The Defense Acquisition System,” is one internal DOD issuance that further implements statutes and regulations, and outlines policies and responsibilities for the operation of the DAS. Executive Branch Actions The Trump Administration has made deregulating government functions, including DOD acquisition, a policy priority, and issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14192, “Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation,” in January 2025. Its stated aim is to “alleviate unnecessary regulatory burdens,” a goal reflected in subsequent E.O.s and DOD-specific memoranda. Selected Executive Orders In April 2025, President Trump issued E.O. 14275, “Restoring Common Sense to Federal Procurement.” The E.O. called for “removing undue barriers, such as unnecessary regulations, while simultaneously allowing for the expansion of the national and defense industrial bases.” Also in April 2025, President Trump issued E.O. 14265 “Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base.” This E.O....

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## Appellate Courts Divided on Whether a Single Incident of Sexual Harassment Can Trigger Title IX Liability for Schools

**By Jared P. Cole | Published 2025-08-26**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits sex discrimination in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Recipient schools can be liable under Title IX for an insufficient response to sexual harassment by a teacher or between students in certain circumstances. Federal appellate courts have taken diverging positions over when a school may be liable for its response to student-on-student (peer) harassment. The disagreement turns in part on how to interpret Supreme Court decisions establishing the general parameters of school liability in cases of sexual harassment, as well as legislation enacted pursuant to Congress’s spending power under the Constitution. The Supreme Court has repeatedly interpreted Title IX as enacted pursuant to Congress’s authority under the Spending Clause, which means legal obligations that flow from the law must be clear and unambiguous. A decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (Seventh Circuit), Arana v. Board of Regents of University of Wisconsin System, has deepened the divisions among federal appellate courts on two distinct but closely related legal questions that arise under the framework adopted by the Supreme Court for establishing school liability in cases of peer harassment. First, courts disagree about whether a single instance of harassment that is sufficiently severe can trigger Title IX liability; second, courts are split as to whether a plaintiff must show that a school’s deliberate indifference to harassment resulted in further acts of harassment, or whether simply leaving a student more vulnerable to harassment is sufficient. This Sidebar begins by briefly describing the legal framework for sexual harassment claims available under Title IX, as established by two major Supreme Court decisions: Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District and Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education. It continues with a discussion of the developing splits...

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## Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations

**By Clare Ribando Seelke | Published 2025-05-30**

Colombia has been a key U.S. security and economic partner in South America for decades, although bilateral relations have grown tense over the past two years. Colombia has been among the top recipients of U.S. foreign assistance since the FY2000 launch of Plan Colombia, a counternarcotics and security initiative. U.S. assistance helped the Colombian government train and equip its security forces, regain control of territory from illegal armed groups, improve security, and compel the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgency to negotiate. A 2016 peace accord with the FARC ended a half century of civil conflict and contributed to reductions in crime and insecurity. Since the FARC’s demobilization, other groups have fought for control of territory used for drug trafficking, alien smuggling, and other illicit industries amid a continued lack of state presence in many rural regions. In August 2022, Gustavo Petro, Colombia’s first leftist president and head of the Historic Pact (Pacto Histórico, or PH) coalition of left-leaning parties, took office for a four-year term. Petro promised to enact reforms to combat inequality, promote inclusion, and achieve peace through negotiations with the country’s remaining armed groups. The Petro government shepherded tax and pension reforms through the legislature and adopted a drug policy focused on land redistribution. In April 2025, Petro’s approval rating stood at 37%, considerably lower than when he took office. Observers have attributed Petro’s flagging approval to the gradual collapse of his governing coalition, scandals involving his family and Cabinet officials, and rising rural violence. Petro has largely abandoned his Total Peace initiative, which involved simultaneous negotiations with several armed groups—including the National Liberation Army (ELN)—that the military is now confronting. Implementation of the 2016 peace accord has faltered and may face further setbacks in the absence of initiatives formerly funded by the U.S. Agency for...

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## Salaries of Members of Congress: Congressional Votes, 1990-2025

**By Ida A. Brudnick | Published 2025-08-26**

Article I, Section 6, of the U.S. Constitution requires that compensation for Members of Congress be “ascertained by law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States.” Congress has relied on three different methods in adjusting salaries for Members. Specific legislation was last used to provide increases in 1990 and 1991. It was the only method used by Congress for many years. The second method, under which annual adjustments took effect automatically unless disapproved by Congress, was established in 1975. From 1975 to 1989, these annual adjustments were based on the rate of annual comparability increases given to the General Schedule (GS) federal employees. This method was changed by the 1989 Ethics Act to require that the annual adjustment be determined by a formula based on certain elements of the Employment Cost Index (ECI). Under this revised process, annual adjustments were accepted 13 times (scheduled for January 1991, 1992, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009) and denied 22 times (scheduled for January 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025). Since January 2009, the salary for Members of Congress has been $174,000. Subsequent adjustments were denied by P.L. 111-8 (enacted March 11, 2009), P.L. 111-165 (May 14, 2010), P.L. 111-322 (December 22, 2010), P.L. 112-175 (September 28, 2012), P.L. 112-240 (January 2, 2013), P.L. 113-46 (October 17, 2013), P.L. 113-235 (December 16, 2014), P.L. 114-113 (December 18, 2015), P.L. 114-254 (December 10, 2016), P.L. 115-141 (March 23, 2018), P.L. 115-244 (September 21, 2018), P.L. 116-94 (December 20, 2019), P.L. 116-260 (December 27, 2020), P.L. 117-103 (March 15, 2022), P.L. 117-328 (December 29, 2022), P.L. 118-47 (March 23, 2024), and P.L. 119-4 (March 15, 2025). Although provisions prohibiting...

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## Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management

**By Anthony R. Marshak | Published 2025-08-25**

Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM; Figure 1) is a systems-level management approach for living marine resources (LMRs) that accounts for an ecosystem’s physical, biological, economic, and social components. This approach to fisheries management aims to maintain ecosystems and their dependent fisheries in healthy, productive, and resilient conditions to ensure they can provide services to human and biological communities. EBFM provides various benefits to complement traditional single-species (or single-stock) fisheries management, according to some experts. For example, EBFM may provide additional information regarding how ecosystems function and how ecosystems may respond to multiple stressors and their cumulative impacts. EBFM also may provide insight into trade-offs among different stakeholder priorities for LMRs and their fisheries. This information can inform fisheries management decisions. Experts also have identified challenges regarding EBFM and its implementation (e.g., potential lack of resonation with stakeholders). Congress continues to be interested in LMR management that includes considerations for marine ecosystems. Congress has authorized the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to manage U.S. LMRs under multiple mandates, such as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA; 16 U.S.C. §§1807-1891d) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§1361-1423h). In these laws, Congress has included directives for LMR management to account for species’ roles in marine ecosystems. Figure 1. Various Levels of Ecosystem Management / Source: CRS, modified from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Notes: Illustration of the various hierarchical levels of ecosystem management, particularly focused on the fisheries sector. From bottom to top, it depicts management of fisheries and other sectors in a marine ecosystem, building from (1) single species fisheries management of a particular stock in a fishery management plan (FMP) to (2) an ecosystem approach to fisheries management accounting for environmental effects (i.e., climate, habitat, ecology)...

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## Constitution Day and Citizenship Day: Fact Sheet

**By Kelly M. Hoffman | Published 2025-08-25**

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day is a federal commemoration observed annually on September 17 by encouraging citizens to learn about their civic responsibilities and opportunities. This fact sheet is designed to assist congressional offices with work related to Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. It provides authoritative information resources, including links to legislation, CRS reports, sample speeches and remarks from the Congressional Record, and presidential proclamations and remarks. It also links to additional government resources and selected advocacy, educational, and cultural organizations. [Summary suppressed. Tags: Constitution, citizenship, national observances, civics education, naturalization, immigrants.]

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## Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Public Transportation

**By William J. Mallett | Published 2025-08-25**

Federal funding assistance to public transportation agencies is provided primarily through the public transportation program administered by the Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The federal public transportation program was most recently authorized from FY2022 through FY2026 as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58). The IIJA authorizations are set to expire on September 30, 2026. Congress may consider a number of issues and policy options related to possible reauthorization of public transportation funding. The overall level of funding for the public transportation program is typically a major topic in surface transportation reauthorization. The IIJA provided about a 67% increase (in nominal dollars) in annual funding for public transportation compared with the prior authorization, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act; P.L. 114-94), as extended. Public transportation program funding authorized and appropriated under IIJA averaged $21.4 billion annually in FY2022-FY2026. Inflation, particularly in 2021-2023, has eroded some of the purchasing power of this funding. The source of funds for the public transportation program, along with the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and its two accounts—the highway account and the mass transit account—may be another issue in the reauthorization debate. Traditionally, 80% of program funding has come from the mass transit account of the HTF. Outlays from the account have outpaced receipts, excluding U.S. Treasury General Fund (general fund) transfers, for over two decades, an imbalance the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects will continue in the future under current law. Bringing the receipts and outlays of the mass transit account into balance would involve a cut in program spending, an increase in revenues paid into the account, or a combination of the two. An increase in revenues could involve a commitment to regular transfers from the general fund. In addition to funding from...

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## The U.S. Army’s Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV)

**By Andrew Feickert; Ebrima M'Bai | Published 2025-08-25**

The Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV) The ISV (Error! Reference source not found.) is a lightweight, unarmored ground transport vehicle developed by GM Defense (headquartered in Detroit, MI) intended to enhance the mobility of Army Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs), Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs), and Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF). According to the Army, the ISV was designed to move nine soldiers and their equipment rapidly across terrain where heavier vehicles such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) or High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) may be less practical or effective. Figure 1.Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV) / Source: GM Defense, https://www.gmdefensellc.com/site/us/en/gm-defense/home/integrated-vehicles/infantry-squad-vehicle.html, accessed August 25, 2025. Background The JLTV, HMMWV, and ISV constitute the Army’s Light Tactical Vehicle (LTV) fleet. The Army has evaluated the ISV in exercises as part of the Army’s Transformation in Contact (TIC) modernization program with the intention to improve infantry mobility. Previous reliance on HMMWVs and JLTVs, which offered greater protection, reportedly presented challenges in terms of speed, cross-country mobility, and air transport. The Army adopted a commercial offtheshelf (COTS) acquisition approach for the ISV to minimize costs and field the vehicle quickly. GM Defense’s Chevrolet Colorado ZR2 mid-sized truck was chosen as the baseline ISV platform, deriving 90% of its parts from COTS components, with modifications made for suspension, structure, and loadcarrying capacity. ISV Specifications The ISV is approximately 17 feet (ft) in length, 6.8 ft in width, and 6 ft in height, with a payload capacity near 3,200 pounds. The ISV is about the same size as the HMMWV, smaller than the JLTV, and has less payload capacity than the HMMWV and JLTV. According to GM Defense, the ISV has a Roll Over Protection System (ROPS) and can be flown to the battlefield by means of a low-velocity air drop by parachute or...

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## Overview of FY2026 Appropriations for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS)

**By Nathan James | Published 2025-08-18**

This report describes actions to provide FY2026 appropriations for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) accounts. The annual CJS appropriations act provides funding for the Department of Commerce, which includes bureaus and offices such as the Census Bureau, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology; the Department of Justice (DOJ), which includes agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Prisons, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Offices of the U.S. Attorneys; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; the National Science Foundation; and several related agencies such as the Legal Services Corporation and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (FY2025 CR, P.L. 119-4) provides FY2025 funding for most CJS accounts at the FY2024 enacted level. The CR reduced funding for several CJS accounts relative to the FY2024 enacted appropriation. The reductions were the result of eliminating certain funding in CJS accounts that was for community funding projects (also known as earmarks) in FY2024. The CR also increased funding for two DOJ accounts and increased the obligation cap for the Crime Victims Fund. For FY2026, the Administration requests a total of $67.719 billion for the departments and agencies funded through CJS. This amount is $14.781 billion (-17.9%) less than regular FY2025 enacted funding for CJS ($82.501 billion). The Administration’s request includes $9.020 billion for the Department of Commerce, which is $1.368 billion (-13.2%) less than the FY2025 regular appropriation; $35.271 billion for DOJ, which is $1.695 billion (-4.6%) less than the FY2025 regular appropriation; $22.722 billion for the science agencies, which is $11.186 billion (-33.0%) less than the FY2025 regular appropriation; and $705 million for the related agencies, which is $532 million (-43.0%)...

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## U.S.-China Tariff Actions Since 2018: An Overview

**By Karen M. Sutter | Published 2025-08-26**

Since 2018, the U.S. government has imposed a series of tariffs on imports from the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China) with the stated intention of addressing U.S. concerns about PRC trade practices and foreign policies. Since January 2025, the Trump Administration’s trade policy and tariff actions have maintained a focus on China among other countries. Some actions explicitly target China; others involve sectors that affect China. The PRC has responded to U.S. tariffs with its own tariffs and market restrictions. Given the trade imbalance (China exports to the United States more than four times what it imports), China has fewer goods on which to raise tariffs. China has focused its tariffs on top U.S. exports and canceled orders, implemented export controls on some production inputs, and imposed market restrictions on some U.S. firms. Both sides have exempted some products from tariffs. Members of Congress may consider whether to support, modify, or oppose the Administration’s approach to tariffs; whether to sustain, expand, or pull back trade authorities Congress delegated to the President; and whether to require approval by Congress for trade deals that result in tariff changes. Escalating Tariff Rates By mid-April 2025, U.S. and PRC average tariff rates on the other country’s goods were about 164% and 146%, respectively (not accounting for tariff exemptions). Average tariff rates fell to 49% (U.S.) and 31% (PRC) in mid-May 2025 when both sides agreed to reduce “reciprocal tariffs” to 10% for 90 days during tariff negotiations, and, in mid-August extended this interim rate until November 10, 2025. Most U.S. tariff actions on China are cumulative (Table 1). U.S. tariffs: In 2017, the average U.S. tariff rate on PRC goods was about 2.7%. The rate rose to about 19% by 2023 with tariffs imposed under Section 301 of the Trade Act of...

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## The Void-for-Vagueness Doctrine in Criminal Law

**By Cassandra J. Barnum | Published 2025-08-25**

Vagueness as Constitutional Violation Defendants in federal criminal cases often challenge their prosecutions by arguing that the laws they allegedly violated are unconstitutionally vague. The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution requires that no person “be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” (The Fourteenth Amendment applies the same standard to state and local laws.) Under the void-for-vagueness doctrine, due process requires that criminal laws define prohibitions with “sufficient definiteness that ordinary people can understand what conduct is prohibited and in a manner that does not encourage arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement.” The Court has emphasized that while this vagueness doctrine “focuses both on actual notice to citizens and arbitrary enforcement,” the “more important aspect of vagueness doctrine is not actual notice, but the other principal element of the doctrine—the requirement that a legislature establish minimal guidelines to govern law enforcement.’” Absent such guidelines, a law risks permitting a “standardless sweep [that] allows policemen, prosecutors, and juries to pursue their personal predilections.” While the doctrine applies to both civil and criminal statutes, the Court has stated that the standards of precision are higher for criminal laws given the comparatively severe consequences of a violation. The Void-for-Vagueness Doctrine in Practice Courts have distinguished between challenges alleging that a statute is unconstitutionally vague on its face, meaning “no standard of conduct is specified at all,” and challenges alleging that statutes are unconstitutionally vague as applied to the facts of a particular case. In either situation (and defendants can argue both), the bar for a finding of unconstitutional vagueness is high: The Supreme Court has recognized the “strong presumptive validity that attaches to an Act of Congress” as a reason to avoid deeming statutes to be unconstitutionally vague “simply because difficulty is found in determining whether certain marginal offenses fall...

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## Establishment Clause Limits on Government Support for Religion

**By Valerie C. Brannon | Published 2025-08-22**

The first two provisions of the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment, known as the Religion Clauses, state that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Together, the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses require the government to be neutral toward religion, neither providing impermissible support nor demonstrating impermissible hostility. The Supreme Court acknowledged in Walz v. Tax Commission, 397 U.S. 664, 668 (1970), that the Religion Clauses “are not the most precisely drawn portions of the Constitution.” Over the years, the Supreme Court has employed a variety of different tests to analyze whether government support for religion violates the Establishment Clause. Among other methods of analysis, the Court employed the three-part Lemon test for several decades. The Lemon test asked courts to ensure that the challenged government action has a secular purpose, that its primary effect neither advances nor inhibits religion, and that it does not foster excessive government entanglement with religion. In 2022, however, the Supreme Court announced that it had “long ago abandoned Lemon.” Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, 597 U.S. 507, 534 (2022). Instead, the Court instructed lower courts to interpret the Establishment Clause by “reference to historical practices and understandings.” Id. at 535. While Kennedy announced this new “historical practices and understandings test,” it did not overrule prior decisions that applied the Lemon test or other types of analyses. Lower courts are still bound to follow the outcomes of any Supreme Court precedent that has direct application, even if those cases applied the Lemon test. The Kennedy decision did not instruct courts on how to conduct an analysis by reference to historical practices and understandings, but older Supreme Court precedent contains some guidance. For example, the Court looked to Founding-era understandings and practices to invalidate state laws requiring public...

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## EPA’s Proposed Reorganization of Its Office of Research and Development

**By Jerry H. Yen; Angela C. Jones | Published 2025-08-26**

On May 2, 2025, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced and opined on a reorganization effort that would integrate scientific staff from EPA’s Office of Research and Development (ORD) into existing EPA program offices (e.g., Office of Air and Radiation, Office of Water). Additionally, Administrator Zeldin announced the establishment of a new Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions (OASES) to “align research and put science at the forefront of the agency’s rulemakings and technical assistance to states.” Subsequently, on July 18, 2025, EPA announced a reduction in force (RIF) that “will impact” ORD. According to EPA, the agency expects the RIF and its ORD reorganization efforts to reduce spending. EPA’s reorganization efforts may be of interest to Congress in its oversight role as it assesses agency staffing, funding, and activities to implement various environmental pollution control statutes (e.g., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Solid Waste Disposal Act) to achieve a range of statutory objectives. Typical ORD research and development (R&D) activities have included monitoring and modeling of pollutants and contaminants within the environment, assessing the toxicity of various pollutants and contaminants on human or ecological health, and developing and evaluating environmental remediation technologies. These R&D activities, whether they are conducted by ORD or some other entity (e.g., federal or state agency, academia, industry, nonprofit), may help EPA program offices assess whether environmental conditions necessitate a regulatory or response action and whether particular regulatory or response actions are effective. ORD generally has had discretion in determining which R&D projects to support with its funding and whether R&D projects would be conducted internally by its own staff or through external grants or cooperative agreements. ORD’s current organization consists of four headquarters offices and four research centers, which are further divided into divisions and branches. While most divisions...

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## High Court Rejects Private Challenges to Medicaid Provider Requirements

**By Wen W. Shen; Jennifer A. Staman | Published 2025-08-25**

In June 2025, the Supreme Court issued its decision in Medina v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, holding that private litigants cannot sue under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (Section 1983) to challenge a state’s decision to exclude health care providers that offer certain abortion services from participation in a state’s Medicaid program. In Medina, the Supreme Court held that Section 1983, a federal statute that allows a person to sue state government actors based on a deprivation of constitutional or federal rights, cannot be used to enforce violations of Medicaid’s so-called “any-qualified-provider” provision, as the Medicaid provision does not confer a privately enforceable “right.” This Legal Sidebar provides background on the Medicaid program and Section 1983, discusses the Court’s decision in Medina, and concludes with selected legal considerations for Congress. Background Medicaid The Medicaid program is a joint federal-state program that provides medical assistance for a diverse group of low-income individuals. To participate in Medicaid and receive federal funding, a state must have a plan for medical assistance approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), and, in general, this plan must comply with a wide array of federal standards. Among these standards, states must cover specified groups of individuals and provide particular types of health benefits to these individuals. If a state fails to meet these requirements, the federal government may withhold the state’s federal Medicaid funds. Relevant to the Medina litigation, the Medicaid statute generally restricts states’ ability to exclude certain providers from program participation. More specifically, under the so-called “any-qualified-provider” requirement (sometimes referred to as the “freedom of choice” provision), state plans must allow Medicaid beneficiaries to obtain medical assistance “from any institution, agency, community pharmacy, or person, qualified to perform the service or services required.” As the Supreme Court previously described, this provision gives Medicaid...

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## Dismissals of Members of Puerto Rico’s Financial Oversight and Management Board

**By D. Andrew Austin | Published 2025-08-25**

On Friday, August 1, 2025, President Trump dismissed five of the seven members of Puerto Rico’s Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB or Oversight Board): Arthur J. Gonzalez, Cameron McKenzie, Betty A. Rosa, Juan A. Sabater, and Luis A. Ubiñas. On August 13, 2025, a week after FOMB member Andrew G. Biggs described the dismissals as a “setback for Puerto Rico,” he received a notice of dismissal from the White House, according to an Oversight Board statement. John E. Nixon is the sole remaining member of the Oversight Board at present. The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA, P.L. 114-187), enacted in June 2016, established the Oversight Board and created processes for restructuring Puerto Rico’s public debts, among other provisions. PROMESA Title III established a bankruptcy-like process that has been used for most debt restructuring cases. Title VI established a process similar to sovereign debt workout procedures. The federal district court overseeing Title III cases ordered the board to report on its status by August 25, 2025. How Are Board Members Appointed? Members, including those purportedly terminated, are appointed through a process established in Section 101(e) of PROMESA. In that process, six of the seven board members are appointed by the President from lists submitted by congressional leaders. For the original members, the Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader each submitted two lists for the appointments of two members (four members total). The House Minority Leader and the Senate Minority Leader each submitted one list for one appointment. The President appointed a seventh member in his sole discretion. Each Oversight Board vacancy thereafter is filled in the same manner in which the original member was appointed. PROMESA (48 U.S.C. §2121) also allows the President to send board member nominations to the Senate for confirmation. Thus, if the...

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## Defense Primer: Department of the Navy

**By Ronald O'Rourke | Published 2025-07-07**

One Military Department with Two Military Services The Department of the Navy (DON) is a single military department that includes two military services—the Navy and the Marine Corps. As such, DON has a single civilian leader, the Secretary of the Navy, and two four-star military service chiefs—an admiral whose title is the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), and a general whose title is the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Although the title “Secretary of the Navy” includes only the term “Navy,” the secretary serves as the civilian leader for both the Navy and Marine Corps. The CNO and the Commandant of the Marine Corps are members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). As of August 25, 2025, the Secretary of the Navy is John Phelan, the CNO is Admiral Daryl Caudle, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps is General Eric Smith. “Naval” Refers to Both the Navy and Marine Corps Although the term “naval” is often used to refer specifically to the Navy, it more properly refers to both the Navy and Marine Corps, because both the Navy and Marine Corps are naval services. Even though the Marine Corps sometimes operates for extended periods as a land fighting force (as it did, for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq), and is often thought of as the country’s second land army, it nevertheless is, by law, a naval service. 10 U.S.C. 8001(a)(3) states that “The term member of the naval service’ means a person appointed or enlisted in, or inducted or conscripted into, the Navy or the Marine Corps.” DON officials sometimes refer to the two services as the Navy-Marine Corps team. See also the section below entitled “The Naval Service.” “Navy” in DOD Budget Documents Can Mean DON DOD budget documents that divide the DOD budget into four military...

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## Presidential 2025 Tariff Actions: Timeline and Status

**By Keigh E. Hammond; William F. Burkhart | Published 2025-08-22**

Since the beginning of his second term on January 20, 2025, President Donald J. Trump has increased tariffs on U.S. imports from all global partners. To implement these tariffs, the President has cited authorities in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA, 50 U.S.C. §§1701 et seq.) and Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 (Section 232, 19 U.S.C. §1862, as amended). The Trump Administration has also initiated investigations under Section 232 which may result in additional sectoral tariffs. The Administration may also consider tariffs as a remedy for unfair trade practices under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 (Section 301, 19 U.S.C. §§2411-20). Since announcing these tariff actions, the Administration has been in negotiations with some partners on tariff and nontariff matters, and some trade partners have announced retaliatory tariffs on U.S. exports. Between April and August 2025, the Administration reached framework agreements with the United Kingdom and the European Union, and a temporary tariff truce with China. In July 2025, the Administration also announced initial details of preliminary agreements with Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. Some negotiations appear to have stalled (e.g., with Canada and India); other negotiations are ongoing (e.g., with Mexico and China). The conclusion of ongoing talks and the implementation of agreed terms may further alter the details of the tariff actions summarized in the following tables. This report begins with a one-page summary of U.S. actions (Table 1). The report then outlines in more detail the tariff actions initiated by the President (Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5) and retaliatory tariff actions initiated by foreign governments (Table 6) from January 20, 2025 through August 21, 2025. These tables are based on official government documents; they include the status of each action and a brief...

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## DOD Replicator Initiative: Background and Issues for Congress

**By Kelley M. Sayler | Published 2025-08-25**

Introduction Replicator, unveiled on August 28, 2023, is a Department of Defense (DOD) initiative, led by DOD’s Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), to field thousands of uncrewed systems by August 2025. Replicator’s first line of effort (“Replicator 1”) is to field all-domain, attritable autonomous (ADA2) systems. Attritable systems are comparatively low-cost systems with which DOD tolerates a greater degree of risk of system loss. In a September 27, 2024, memo, then-Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced that Replicator’s second line of effort (“Replicator 2”) is to focus on countering small uncrewed aerial systems (C-sUAS). A key issue facing Congress is whether to approve, reject, or modify DOD’s funding requests for Replicator, and whether Congress has adequate information about Replicator to assess its merits and conduct effective oversight of the initiative. Background DOD officials state that the Replicator initiative draws from lessons learned in the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict, in which Ukraine has leveraged large numbers (estimated by observers to be as many as 10,000 per month) of low-cost attritable systems to counter the Russian military’s advantage in force strength. Former Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks has stated that Replicator is intended to “help [the United States] overcome [the Chinese military’s] advantage in mass: more ships, more missiles, more forces.” DOD officials describe Replicator 1 as an all-domain initiative that could include autonomous aerial, ground, surface, sub-surface, and/or space systems representing a range of capabilities and mission sets. For example, former Deputy Secretary Hicks stated that Replicator could include “distributed pods of self-propelled ADA2 [sensor] systems” to provide near-real time intelligence, “fleets of ground-based ADA2 systems delivering novel logistics support ... or securing DOD infrastructure,” or space-based ADA2 systems to provide resilient communications. Intent Replicator 1 is to deploy uncrewed systems en masse, allowing the U.S. military to disperse combat power over...

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## Health Provisions in P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 Reconciliation Law

**By Evelyne P. Baumrucker; Bernadette Fernandez; Jim Hahn; Elayne J. Heisler; Abigail F. Kolker; William R. Morton; Ryan J. Rosso; Varun Saraswathula; Laura A. Wreschnig; Alison Mitchell | Published 2025-08-18**

The budget reconciliation law commonly known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21), enacted on July 4, 2025, includes a number of health provisions that impact Medicaid, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicare, private health insurance, and rural hospitals and providers. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the health provisions in the reconciliation law will reduce federal outlays by $1.1 trillion and reduce revenues by $27.8 billion over 10 years (FY2025-FY2034). CBO also estimates that the health coverage provisions in the reconciliation law will increase the number of individuals without health insurance by 10.0 million in FY2034 (relative to CBO’s January 2025 baseline). Medicaid and CHIP Most of the Medicaid provisions in P.L. 119-21 are expected to reduce federal Medicaid outlays and revenues. One provision establishes Medicaid community engagement requirements (i.e., work, participation in a work program or community service, or enrollment in an education program) for certain individuals. The reconciliation law also amends the federal requirements for Medicaid provider taxes and state directed payments. Another Medicaid provision in the reconciliation law adds cost-sharing requirements for some of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA; P.L. 111-148, as amended) Medicaid expansion population. Multiple provisions in P.L. 119-21 amend various federal rules related to Medicaid and CHIP eligibility and Medicaid provider participation. The law delays or prohibits the implementation of specified provisions of three final rules: (1) the eligibility and enrollment final rule, (2) the Medicare Savings Programs final rule, and (3) the nursing home staffing final rule. The law eliminates a financial incentive for states to implement the ACA Medicaid expansion. The law also requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ chief actuary to certify that Medicaid Section 1115 demonstration waiver submissions are budget neutral to the federal government. Two Medicaid provisions are...

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## Financial Data Transparency Act: Implementation Status of Data Standards and Related Data Collection Issues

**By Natalie R. Ortiz; Darryl E. Getter; Graham C. Tufts | Published 2025-08-25**

The Financial Data Transparency Act (FDTA, P.L. 117-263 §5801 [136 Stat. 3421]), enacted in 2022, requires agencies that oversee the activities of financial institutions to adopt data standards to govern the collection of information from such financial institutions. The FDTA defines data standard as “a standard that specifies rules or formats by which data is described and recorded” (12 U.S.C. §5334(a)(3)). Proponents of such data standards argue that they can improve the electronic collection of data, particularly from multiple data providers that use different information technologies. For example, in a 2024 letter urging financial regulatory agencies to adopt the data standards required by the FDTA, several Members of Congress stated that implementation will alleviate regulatory reporting burdens and will improve the accessibility, uniformity, and usefulness of federal financial data for the public.... It will also improve the collection and dissemination of federal financial data. This will spur innovation and facilitate the responsible use of technology to fully utilize the publicly available data [covered] agencies publish. This In Focus informs Congress on the progress of the FDTA’s implementation to date. It identifies the covered federal financial agencies implementing the data standards and summarizes the standards they have proposed, including an identifier for financial entities. The In Focus also discusses a certain data standard for some financial data reporting that is already underway. The distinction between data formats and definitions, which is also discussed, is important to consider. Many data collections must be tailored to specific policy mandates, possibly limiting the extent to which data standards can be jointly implemented. Implementation of Data Standards The FDTA builds upon requirements in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (P.L. 111-203) for data collection, analysis, and standardization. Specifically, the FDTA amends Title I of the act, the Financial Stability Act of 2010...

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## Supreme Court to Examine Liability of Internet Service Providers for Their Users’ Copyright Infringement

**By Kevin J. Hickey | Published 2025-08-25**

The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear arguments in Cox Communications, Inc. v. Sony Music Entertainment during its October 2025 term. Cox v. Sony is a high-stakes copyright dispute brought by record companies and music publishers against an internet service provider (ISP) that resulted in a $1 billion jury verdict against the ISP. The Court’s decision in Cox v. Sony may have substantial implications for how ISPs address copyright infringement by their users and, in particular, when ISPs must terminate users’ internet access based on repeated accusations of copyright infringement (e.g., unauthorized downloading of copyrighted music). This Sidebar reviews the copyright law underlying the dispute in Cox v. Sony, the history of the case in the lower courts, and the legal questions that the Court agreed to hear in its October 2025 term. Copyright Infringement and the Internet Copyright Basics Copyright law grants the authors of original creative works (e.g., books, visual art, music, movies) a set of exclusive rights in their creations, including the exclusive right to copy, adapt, perform, or distribute the work. A person who takes one of these actions without the copyright holder’s permission is said to infringe the copyright and may be liable for monetary damages or other legal remedies. In addition to damages based on actual economic harm, the Copyright Act allows successful plaintiffs to seek statutory damages of between $750 and $30,000 per work infringed, or up to $150,000 per infringed work if the defendant’s infringement is “willful.” Cox v. Sony involves the purported liability of ISPs when their subscribers illegally download music over the internet. Copyright law protects the work of both the songwriters who write music and lyrics and the artists who perform and record music. It is common in the music industry for songwriters to transfer their copyrights to a...

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## Interim and Acting U.S. Attorneys Raise Open Legal Questions

**By Valerie C. Brannon | Published 2025-08-22**

There are 93 U.S. Attorneys’ Offices across the country, charged with enforcing federal law and representing the United States in federal courts. The U.S. Attorneys at the head of these offices are appointed to four-year terms through presidential nomination and Senate confirmation. As political appointees, U.S. Attorneys often step down during a transition to a new President. Until new U.S. Attorneys can be confirmed, the functions of these vacant offices are often performed temporarily by officials who are not confirmed to the offices. Two statutes potentially allow temporary service for U.S. Attorneys: the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998 (Vacancies Act) and 28 U.S.C. § 546. (U.S. Attorney offices may also be filled temporarily by recess appointment, though this constitutional power has not been used since 2012.) The interaction of these two statutes can raise complicated legal questions, as illustrated in recent litigation over Alina Habba’s ability to serve temporarily as the U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey. This Legal Sidebar discusses these two federal statutes and Congress’s options to amend them, including possible constitutional limitations on Congress’s ability to do so. Statutes Governing U.S. Attorney Vacancies Vacancies Act The Vacancies Act, discussed in detail in a CRS report, broadly governs acting service in vacant Senate-confirmed positions across the executive branch. The law outlines who can serve and for how long. Who Can Serve The Vacancies Act authorizes three classes of people to serve temporarily: (1) the first assistant, (2) Senate-confirmed officials, and (3) certain senior agency officials. As a default rule, under 5 U.S.C. § 3345(a)(1), the first assistant to an office automatically becomes the acting officer. The term “first assistant” is not defined in the Vacancies Act, and the statutes governing U.S. Attorneys do not designate a first assistant. A general Department of Justice regulation provides...

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## Proposals to Limit Member of Congress Financial Activities: Analysis of Introduced Legislation in the 119th Congress

**By Jacob R. Straus | Published 2025-08-22**

In recent years, some Members of Congress have proposed reforms that would prohibit the purchase, sale, or ownership of certain financial instruments by Members of Congress and other specified congressional officers and employees. In the 117th Congress (2021-2022), the Committee on House Administration held a hearing on these proposals, with several Members and witnesses focused on legislative proposals to require divestiture, limit the sale or purchase of certain assets, and enhance public disclosure. Members of the House of Representatives and Senate are not currently required by law or by House or Senate rules to divest themselves of assets or holdings upon taking office. Legislation has been introduced to propose limitations on the financial activities of Members of Congress as a potential means to address real or perceived conflicts of interest. Analysis of introduced legislation reveals several options should the House and/or Senate desire to limit financial activities for Members of Congress, spouses and dependent children, and covered officers and staff. These measures propose to prohibit or limit covered individuals from the holding, purchase, sale, and/or active management of certain types of financial assets; to define the assets that would be included and excluded from filing requirements; to allow or require certain assets to be placed in qualified blind trusts; to broaden public access to Member financial disclosure statements and other filings; and to amend or create penalties for noncompliance. This report examines bills and resolutions introduced in the 119th Congress (2025-2026) that propose to limit or prohibit Members of Congress from owning, buying, or selling certain assets. The report provides an overview of current financial disclosure requirements for Members of Congress and covered congressional employees, analyzes bills in the current Congress that would limit or prohibit certain financial activities by Members of Congress, and discusses the most common approaches included...

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## The Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument: Commercial Fishing Interests and Considerations for Congress

**By Anthony R. Marshak | Published 2025-08-25**

Introduction The Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument (PIHMNM; Figure 1), known as the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument until January 2, 2025, is an area in the Central Pacific Ocean that encompasses over 495,000 square miles (nearly twice the size of Texas). It contains seven U.S. Pacific Island territories (Howland and Baker Islands; Jarvis Island; Johnston Atoll; Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll; and Wake Island), most of which are uninhabited, and their surrounding marine environments. On January 6, 2009, President George W. Bush used his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 (54 U.S.C. §§320301-320303) to establish the PIHMNM under its previous name. On September 25, 2014, President Obama expanded the monument to its present size under the same authority. The PIHMNM is one of five U.S. marine national monuments (MNMs) that was designated to protect and conserve historic structures, ocean ecosystems, and other objects of historic or scientific interest. The PIHMNM is the second-largest of the MNMs after the nearby Papahnaumokukea MNM (geographically, the Northwest Hawaiian Islands). Figure 1. The Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument (PIHMNM) / Sources: Created by CRS using data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Sovereign Limits international boundaries database, accessed April 29, 2025; Department of State; and Environmental Systems Research Institute. See also Presidential Proclamation 5030 of March 10, 1983, “Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States of America,” 48 Federal Register 10605-10606, March 14, 1983 (PP 5030). Notes: The extent of the PIHMNM is shown in red, along with its proximity to the Hawaiian Islands and with global reference (upper right corner) to the western Pacific region. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the United States, as defined in PP 5030, refers to “a distance of up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of...

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## The U.S. “One-China” Policy and Taiwan

**By Susan V. Lawrence | Published 2025-08-18**

Introduction Since establishing diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1979, the U.S. government has recognized the PRC as “the sole legal Government of China” and maintained relations with Taiwan on an unofficial basis. This approach forms the core of the U.S. “one-China” policy and underpins U.S.-PRC relations. The U.S. “one-China” policy is distinct from the PRC’s “one-China principle,” which holds that “there is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory, and the Government of the [PRC] is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.” In stating their commitment to the U.S. “one-China” policy, successive U.S. Administrations have described the policy as being “guided” by U.S. law and executive branch commitments. In the second Trump Administration, a U.S. Department of State spokesperson stated from the podium on July 29, 2025, that “[T]he United States remains committed to our longstanding one-China’ policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.” She added that, “The United States is committed to preserving peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.” The historical context that produced the U.S. “one-China” policy and the disparate elements that guide and thus expand it are discussed below. Historical Context Austronesian peoples first settled Taiwan about 6,000 years ago. Dutch and Spanish settlers arrived in the 1600s. The Dutch drove out the Spanish, and encouraged large-scale migration from what is today mainland China. An exile from the Qing Empire—the predecessor polity to modern China—expelled the Dutch. The Qing took control of Taiwan in 1683, made it a Qing province in 1885, and ceded it to Japan a decade later. Revolutionaries toppled the Qing Empire in 1911, and established a republic on mainland China, the Republic of China (ROC), in 1912....

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